

# BUSINESS

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## Visitor numbers to Ireland fall sharply from Britain

OFFICIAL figures show a big drop in the number of visitors to Ireland in July, led by a sharp fall in trips from Britain.

There were 856,400 visits to Ireland in July, down just over 8 per cent compared with the same month last year.

The numbers coming from Britain fell by 17 per cent to 341,800, while visits from North America were down 6 per cent to 137,100.

The number of visits from other areas of Europe was little changed at 311,600.

For the first seven months of the year, trips to Ireland are up a marginal 0.4 per cent compared with the same period last year, with growth in visits from continental Europe and other areas offsetting falls from Britain and North America.

Overseas trips by Irish residents in July were 856,400, up 6 per cent on July last year.

## Croke Park in profit

CROKE PARK is forecasting revenues of up to €45million for this year and is set to make an operating profit of around €15million.

According to GAA estimates the profits will be used to reduce the stadium's debt, while a contribution of more than €10million will be paid to the GAA.

The profit and turnover figures are broadly in line with the stadium's results for 2007.

The figures have been boosted in the past two years by revenue received from leasing out the stadium for soccer and rugby internationals.

The GAA receives €125million per match from leasing the stadium, and it has now decided to ring-fence that money for national strategic infrastructural projects.

## Bankruptcies up

THE CONTINUING credit crunch has contributed to a significant increase in the number of Irish businesses facing liquidation or going into examinership so far this year.

Hundreds of companies are now in this position, figures released by the collector general have indicated.

It said around twice as many struggling businesses have faced court applications for liquidation or have applied for examinership so far this year as in the same period last year.

## Fuel breakthrough

AN IRISH team of researchers has made a breakthrough in converting algae into biofuel which can be used in cars.

New sources of biofuel are being researched with concerns growing around biofuels made from crops. Biofuels derived from crops such as grain or oilseed have fallen out of favour due to concerns that they are pushing up food costs.

Irish biofuels company AER and the National University of Ireland in Galway (NUIG) have developed the new technology, which converts algae to commercially-viable transport fuel.

## IN PROFILE - Entrepreneur Oisín Lunny

# Techno boffin is global

Irish musician turned businessman Oisín Lunny is the man behind 54,000 kilometres of fibre optic cables that carry worldwide networking services

BY FIONA AUDLEY

AFTER years spent plucking away at the guitar strings and writing music for the masses one Irish businessman has discovered a new niche — ensuring such content is only a click away via the internet.

Oisín Lunny is currently enjoying an impressive career in a little-known but extremely important technical world.

He works for London-based Interoute Communications, a company which provides a technological backbone — 54,000km of fibre optic cables to be exact — which allows online media and video content to be carried across the world.

And the musically-minded man believes a varied career, which ranged from forming a band to becoming a technical support worker and website designer, has led him to his current role as product manager — where he is responsible for content delivery networks.

The Dublin-born musician explains: "I have been working for Interoute communications, which owns and operates Europe's largest voice and data network, for four years.

"We are talking about a company which provides 54,000kms of fibre optic cable that runs such content to places such as America, Dubai and all around Europe.

"My role there is concerned with content delivery networks, such as media streaming and media services and I am the global product manager for that area."

The importance of such a role may not be obvious to the everyday internet user.

Our consumption of video, music and media via the internet is probably something we now take for granted — thinking little of what brings those images and sounds to us live and on our screens at the touch of a button.

It is networks like those provided by Interoute and technological whizzes such as Oisín who ensure there is a secure, expedient and reliable platform for the content to fly along to the countless pc's, laptops and hand-held devices in use across the globe.

The 38-year-old, who is also a member of the Irish International Business Network

### Business fact file...

**Name:** Oisín Lunny  
**Age:** 38  
**Hometown:** Rathgar, Co. Dublin  
**First Job:** Kebab shop worker  
**Time in Britain:** 20 years  
**Current Position:** Product manager, Interoute Communications  
**Career High:** "Supporting U2 and Depeche Mode with the band"  
**Career Low:** "Hitting a brick wall in the music industry — not knowing how I was going to pay the rent!"  
**Ultimate Business Goal:** "In any job to make a real difference to the company I work for, my continual goal is to find opportunities and situations that will bring together all my previous experience and add a new element on top — so to continually evolve and make a difference."  
**Business ethos:** "Do everything with passion and take every opportunity to push yourself into new situations"

(IBN), said: "Our company underpins any kind of voice based communication, such as a call on a mobile phone — which must connect to a large network that carries the voice minutes."

"A lot of companies also use our networks for VPN's — virtual private networks — which is a way for different branches of a company in different geographical locations or continents to appear as if they are all on the same network and be accessible as such."

"We also have a product that enables companies to make secure phone calls over the internet — a lot like Skype, but more superior and reliable."

"The bit I look after is to do with distributing content, which could be anything — for example you might want to access footage of Amy Winehouse live in concert on a website."

"It seems easy enough to find online but you need a lot of specialist equipment and



capacity behind the scenes to make that happen, which is where we come in.

"We are one of the leading content distribution networks globally, and a huge range of European internet content is going over our backbone network at any time."

The company plans to build Europe's largest content distribution network and Mr Lunny believes this to be easily achievable in the current climate of fast technology and increasing internet dependency.

"There is a huge increase in the stuff people are now accessing online and things are getting faster and faster with home broadband connections" he states.

"Somebody somewhere has to build a huge next-generation infrastructure to make sure the content reaches the end user — even to access an everyday site such as Youtube for videos there has to be a lot of behind the scenes plumbing to make it work."

And after 20 years living in Britain — leaving his hometown of Rathgar, in Co. Dublin aged 19, Mr Lunny claims taking his passion for music to a more technological level was a natural progression.

"It made sense — when I became aware of it — for me to end up in a job like this", he

explained.

"My past jobs, from being a full-time musician to becoming a technology consultant, have always been based on having a passion for what I was doing."

"When I was making music I was very much into the technology of it too — mixing that with more traditional elements."

"I actually started off working as a tape op at a recording studio — so I was basically a gopher who was there to make life easier for them."

"But it was a great way to get into the industry."

Two decades later he is an accomplished songwriter, guitarist and all-round music man and even spent six years working full time as a musician. His band Marxman formed in 1992 and in four years enjoyed a whirlwind career which included signing record deals and even supporting top live acts including U2 and Depeche Mode.

But when the group disbanded in 1996 and Oisín's solo music career 'hit a brick wall' he, turned his sights on other avenues, while retaining some element of his musical creativity.

"In 1996 we disbanded but I did keep working on other projects", he explained.

"I had a solo album out in 2000 and then I worked on MTV

Europe Music awards in Dublin in 1999 — so I always kept doing bits and pieces on the music side of things."

"If a genuine passion for me and the interest has ultimately stayed but when I realised I was quite limited — as a musician without a record deal at the time — I got into the technology of internet music."

"In 1998 I was lucky enough to get on a training course for those who wanted to run businesses on the internet."

"It was very good for me, to get advice on the internet — how to use it and make it work for you — really showed me what it could do."

"That few months of training really changed my life."

Taking and constantly advancing that knowledge — which was learnt well before the internet boom we have witnessed in more recent years — has led Oisín to where he is today.

And while he is still making music, most recently putting together a piece for Ireland's RTE channel recent rebrand, he is still adamant that the future lies in online entertainment.

"I was very lucky to get involved in technology at a relatively early stage", he claims.

"The future lies in entertainment content as the demand for online video content will never get smaller."

### Oisín's tips...

#### How to be a successful entrepreneur:

- Work on your personal profile.
- Use social networking websites to find like-minded individuals such as LinkedIn.com or the IBN network.
- Networking is crucial, you can never have too many contacts.
- Always be open-minded to new opportunities.

### What Interoute can do for you...

- Interoute's suite of products includes VPN's, content delivery, media streaming and secure communications solutions, for 14,000 customers worldwide.
- Find out how we can help you at our website [www.interoute.com](http://www.interoute.com)

### The burning question...

#### Is entrepreneurialism born or bred?

- Oisín says: "There definitely seems to be a character trait in serious entrepreneurs, they have gone through the mill and come through it somehow — imagination, persistence and energy are some of these. I think it's a mixture of both there are inherent traits that entrepreneurs have but they need to be in the right environment to bring these out."