



# Work Better Together



ESM SPEAKS TO DECLAN CAROLAN OF ECR IRELAND ABOUT THE EFFORTS THAT THE GROUP HAS MADE TO PROMOTE COLLABORATION IN THE IRISH MARKETPLACE.

**E**CR Ireland was formed in 1998 and has been a major driver of collaboration between retailers, manufacturers and service providers within the Irish market in the years since.

A core tenet of the group's activities is the development of peer-to-peer networks.

"These forums have been fundamental in introducing many new processes to the Irish sector, including the ECR Consumer & Shopper Journey Framework, shopper-marketing techniques, macro-space-planning templates, and a template to review promotions forecasting accuracy, says ECR Ireland general manager Declan Carolan.

"The concept of working together has proved invaluable, regardless of the prevailing domestic economy. During the 'Celtic Tiger' boom years, or throughout the recent recessionary period, ECR Ireland has shown that retailers, manufacturers and service providers work better together."

A recent ECR Ireland survey of members highlighted Brexit and digital transformation as the major focus areas for 2018.

## Brexit Impact

The many implications of Brexit illustrate the importance of the ECR principle of collaboration, with all Irish businesses speculating on the nature of the Brexit negotiations.

"ECR Ireland has been keeping its members informed on the latest developments and likely outcome of Brexit from the outset, by engaging with experts to offer the best advice and expertise on the subject," says Carolan. "PwC Ireland has led the way [[pwc.ie/campaigns/brexit.html](http://pwc.ie/campaigns/brexit.html)]."

## Digital Transformation

The retail and consumer goods industries will likely change more in the next ten years than at any stage over the past 40. One force is responsible for this shift: digitalisation.

"From what we know at the moment, we expect that shopping behaviour and store design will change, routine purchases will be automated, stores will become more experiential, AI and predictive analytics will propel personalised shopping, and robotics will become the norm," says Carolan.

"Customers are leading the way in the use

of tech, and retail is struggling to keep up. What is certain is that the digital future of retail will be determined over the next decade, as game-changing technologies, new business models and digital disruptors appear."

With this in mind, ECR Ireland has introduced the ECR Digital Forum, a series of workshops to discuss, debate, better understand, and track the impact of digital in the grocery sector. This has seen high-level participation from member companies including Heineken Ireland, IBM and Fujitsu.

"The forum includes all digital activities along the path to purchase that are consumer- or shopper-facing, with an emphasis on interactive round-table discussion," says Carolan.

"These breakout groups and corresponding feedback encourage networking and the development of better working relationships."

Furthermore, ECR

Community is responding to demand from multinational companies to set up an international industry-driven forum to focus on the digitalisation of the retail and CPG sector. The proposed ECR Community Digital Transformation Forum is scheduled to commence during the latter half of 2018.

## Feeding Ireland's Future

Finally, Feeding Ireland's Future is an initiative between ECR Ireland members and government bodies including the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection and the Department of Education that seeks to offer pre-employment training to early school leavers and young unemployed people, highlighting their state of readiness for job-seeking.

The objective is to assist those seeking employment while promoting the grocery industry as a sector for a worthwhile career. Participating companies can make a difference and significantly assist young people. The 2018 Feeding Ireland's Future event takes place in May. ■

For more information, visit [ecrireland.ie](http://ecrireland.ie).

