



TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY

DUBLIN

BLANCHARDSTOWN CAMPUS

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| Academic term | 2023-24 |
| Year | Year 4 |
| Semester | SEMESTER EIGHT |
| Assignment Submission Date | 7 th of April |
| Title of Assignment | CA3: Entrepreneur Case Study |

| Programme code | Programme title | Module code |
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| TU844 | Bachelor of Science in Horticulture | HTSC H3029 |
| TU884 | Bachelor of Science in Horticulture (Honours) | HTSC H3029 |

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| Module Title | Entrepreneurship & Enterprise Development |
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| Internal Examiner: | <i>Robert Hickey</i> |
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Instructions to candidates:

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| 1. | You <u>must answer all sections of this brief</u>. Please use the template provided on the module webpage https://www.learning101.ie/files/eedca3template23.docx |
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Requirement:

You should read the Case Study below (**A Blooming Success**) and:

1. Describe in detail the achievements of the entrepreneurs and relate it to appropriate entrepreneurship theories.
2. Conduct a brief SWOT analysis of Ian's and Jo's business and recommend three priorities, for future development of the business.

Your two pager should be emailed to Robert.hickey@tudublin.ie before the due date.

A blooming great success

Sean Gallagher meets owners of small and medium-sized businesses and shares the lessons they've learnt in building their companies.

Located near the village of Caragh in Co Kildare, Caragh Nurseries is run by husband-and-wife team Ian and Jo McGarry. Set up in 2014 and spanning 55 acres, the company employs six staff and has an annual turnover of €1.5m. "We grow all manner of trees,



hedging and plants here," explain Ian and Jo. "Our best sellers are specimen plants which are bigger and more mature than regular plants, but we do provide a full range of everything from small potted plants and 2ft hedging, right the way up to mature hedging such as laurel, beech and whitethorn, which can range anything from 5ft up to 9ft in height," adds Ian.

The pair then take me on a tour of the site where acres of ground are dedicated to growing trees, many of which are large semi-mature, up to 22ft or larger and include the likes of birch, alder, oak, rowan, and lime.

"Our customers vary a lot but can largely be broken into three main categories," explains Jo. "Firstly, we work with a wide range of commercial businesses from

hotels and restaurants to large office buildings. We have also recently completed several exciting hotel projects such as Galgorm Resort and Spa in Co Antrim, where we used various plants to enhance this wonderful spa where the hot tubs, saunas and Jacuzzis are all outside surrounded by nature. We have also completed projects for the Keadeen Hotel in Newbridge, the Killashee Hotel in Naas, and the West Grove in Clane. "Our second market is individual homeowners looking for quality plants or who, for example, want to use sizable trees to provide added privacy from neighbouring buildings. "And our third market segment is a business-to-business model where we supply landscape professionals and developers," she adds. In addition to the 55 acres the couple manage themselves, they also source products from three additional nurseries in Europe, two in Holland and one in Italy. "This is because these regions experience more than double the amount of growth that we get here in Ireland due to their climate and so are more suitable for growing unusual plants," says Ian.

Ian McGarry grew up on the grounds of the nursery where his father, then a Garda, first began growing vegetables as a hobby on a small plot surrounding their family home. Over time, he acquired additional lands, erected several glass houses and branched into the business of providing a wide range of bedding plants. Having developed a love of plants and gardening from years spent helping his father in the business, Ian went on to study horticulture at Warrenstown College. It was later while working in Wyevale Nurseries in Hereford, one of the oldest and largest tree-growing nurseries in the UK, that he met Jo. From Preston, Jo's parents were entrepreneurs, her mother a florist and her father an electrical contractor. Jo studied accounting and had spent a few years working in accounts operators before relocating to London where she took on a business development and marketing role in the recruitment sector.

"Ian's skills and mine really complement each other," says Jo. "He has the design and hands-on horticultural experience, while I focus on the sales and marketing side of growing the business". The couple later moved to Ireland and

set up the nursery. "Getting our name out there was a challenge in the beginning because of our location, but the internet has really helped in letting people know what we do," explains Jo. "Finance and cash flow management were also factors, that required careful planning, given that growing trees involves long life cycles where you plant and pay for trees today but might not be in a position to get a return for another three to six years or even longer," adds Ian. The couple have had their own share of setbacks as well as opportunities. "By 2017, we had grown a thriving wholesale business selling to landscapers, developers, local councils and government bodies. Our turnover was growing at 100pc year-on-year. However, the Pandemic and subsequent lockdown in 2020 saw orders dry up. Councils and government bodies stopped spending. To add to this, we lost over €200,000 in bad debts from customers who couldn't pay their bills," admits Jo. "We knew we had to pivot the business. So, we rebranded and recreated ourselves as a budget supplier of hedging and trees to the retail sector. We invested further in our website, built a social media presence, and began pushing our brand to a whole new consumer base.

The couple also suffered significant losses due to the recent Storm Barra, with more than €50,000 worth of damage to their greenhouses, none of which was covered by their insurance policy. But they have also enjoyed some unexpected opportunities, such as when a customer came into their nursery recently looking for plants for his own garden in Dublin. "What we didn't know at the time was that this man was the owner of one of Northern Ireland's leading hotels, the Galgorm Resort and Spa. Having heard good things about the nursery, he was checking to see if we were the right people to work on his hotel project which turned out to be the largest hotel spa and gardens in Ireland and the UK. We passed the test and have now built three gardens at the Galgorm Resort. This in turn introduced us to a whole new specialty, hotel gardens and we are currently involved in a number of these exciting projects," explains Jo.

Business is now booming for the couple as they look forward to a bumper year ahead. They continue to invest in their online presence and see this as an avenue for continued growth.

Jo has much praise too for their staff whose experience and can-do attitude are an essential part of the company's success. "We all love what we do. Above all, we enjoy designing and planting gardens that both we and our customers can be proud of."