



Pamela Laird, Founder, Moxi Loves

## Start: Moxi Loves

**Making It Happen:** Irish beauty brand prepares for customs, thanks to LEO Dublin City

Despite suffering a setback which would have been fatal to most businesses, Dublin entrepreneur and BBC's *The Apprentice* contestant Pamela Laird has successfully pivoted, launched new products and has plans to re-enter the UK market in the coming months. Her company, Moxi Loves, is an innovative beauty business which currently sells its products through Penneys and over 900 pharmacies and retail outlets in Ireland.

"We have just launched in Primark and Dunnes, and we are also selling into Germany through the QVC shopping channel, and into Spain through an online retailer," says Pamela.

The company's quite unusual name is a reflection of both of its owner and the target market she has in mind for her products. "In America, if you've got determination and drive you've got moxie," she explains. "It's quite a feminine word over there. It can apply to a woman who knows what she wants and isn't afraid

to bend the rules. I took the 'e' off to make it a unique word for the business."

She established the company in 2016 and got going in earnest the following year. "I really started off in 2017 when I got a stocking loan," she says. "I had been working on my first product called Eye Catcher for about a year. It was a liquid-filled cotton bud which allowed you to cleanse and touch up make-up on the go, wherever you are."

The product proved a hit straightaway and was soon selling in retailers across Ireland as well as Primark and Boots in the UK. But trouble was around the corner.

"When the new EU rules on single-use plastics were announced, it meant we had to phase out the product," says Pamela. "The rules won't come in until 2020, but I decided to move early. I used it as an opportunity to pivot the range."

She developed a replacement product called Bare Faced. "It's a cotton square which is infused with a cleanser," she explains. "You activate it with water, and it turns into a face wipe for removing make-up. The pads biodegrade in six months, whereas it takes 100 years for a traditional wet wipe to break down."

Her decision to start up a beauty products business was no surprise. "My mother has a beauty salon in Dublin and I've always worked around beauty products," she points out. "I loved that and while I was working in the salon, I noticed that there were lots of products that weren't available and a lot of others that could be improved. I made a list of the products I thought I could make and the ones I could improve on."

That led her to come up with the idea for Eye Catcher first and later for Bare Faced. Her latest product is the Powder Pod Cleanser. The pods are filled with a powder with exfoliating, cleansing and hydrating properties.

The products are performing well, she adds. "We are doing extremely well with new products. We are in Penneys and have just launched into Primark. We are in most of the group pharmacies in Ireland and have launched into Dunnes. We also sell through a number of Irish distributors. My ambition is to be back in the UK by January."

That ambition means Brexit could be an issue. "Brexit is definitely something on my mind," says Pamela. "I took part in the Local Enterprise Office Prepare Your Business for Customs workshop earlier this year and that was really interesting. It made me aware of a lot of things I hadn't thought of. Our safety assurance is done in the UK, for example. That might no longer be valid after Brexit. The course is a great eye opener. It helps you make sure you've got all the boxes ticked when it comes to something like Brexit. Even if you are not exporting to the UK yet, you soon might be. The workshop helps you to ask the right questions and prepare better."

Fully funded by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation through Enterprise Ireland, the one-day

workshops are run by the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) all over the country and cover areas such as what export and import procedures apply, how tariffs work, and how to correctly classify goods.

"The workshops help businesses to understand the administration process around import and export procedures," says Greg Swift, Head of Enterprise with LEO Dublin City. "This includes customs formalities at borders, the Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) process, tariffs and the cost implications of tariffs, as well as import procedures, such as the Electronic Declaration Process and Automated Entry Processing (AEP)."

The workshop is essential for anyone who exporting to the UK, he adds. "It's a very practical programme

and helps businesses prepare for the problems which may arise in relation to imports and exports. There will still be customs issues in the end, and firms have to be aware of them. They also have to be aware of the cost-increasing implications of customs and tariffs, and we offer Lean programmes to help companies become more efficient and improve their competitiveness."

"I find the LEO services brilliant for SMEs," says Pamela. "As well as the Customs workshop I received a TAME Grant and I've availed of mentoring, which was pivotal for my business."

"The 'Prepare Your Business for Customs' workshop helps you to ask the right questions and prepare better."

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Moxi Loves

TAME stands for Technical Assistance for Micro Exporters. It is a LEO grant that can be used for exploring and developing new market opportunities, as Pamela explains: "I went to a trade show in Bologna last year with help from the TAME Grant. It was a great opportunity to look at other markets beyond the UK. I met with potential customers from Australia and New Zealand there."

Her future plans involve continued innovation and expansion. "I have a new product coming out," she says. "It's eco-friendly and is something that's not currently available on the Irish market."

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