



Local Enterprise Office  
Making It Happen

# STARTUP STORIES: BIG RED BARN

MODULAR FIRM TAKES STEP BY STEP APPROACH: HOW LEO MAYO HELPED BIG RED BARN BECOME A BIG SUCCESS

**Making It Happen:** Elaine Moyles of Local Enterprise Office Mayo and Donal Byrne of Big Red Barn

## WHEN MAYO MAN DONAL BYRNE GOT A JOB AS EVENTS MANAGER FOR THE LONDON OLYMPICS IT GAVE HIM AN IDEA FOR A BUSINESS.

"We had a lot of marquees and they used to break my heart because they were always blowing away like kites because they were made of flimsy canvas," he says.

When the games were over he used his redundancy money to design a steel framed, timber clad, modular alternative – a Big Red Barn.

He turned to Local Enterprise Office Mayo to help him develop a business. It advised him to enter the Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur programme.

Winning at county level secured him €20,000, which he used to develop another product, a portable wedding venue called The Little White Chapel.

In 2015 he stopped outsourcing their manufacturing and began making the products himself. The following year he moved to a 5,000 sq ft manufacturing warehouse.

In 2017 he bought a 15,000 sq ft factory on three acres just outside Swinford and, a year later, doubled its size.

Local Enterprise Office Mayo funding helped at every stage. "I received a LEO Business Priming Grant for business equipment and for some of the staff

required to run it. It meant I didn't have to borrow a huge amount of money to get the business started," he says.

Most recently he moved into the manufacture of modular housing, designing steel framed, A-rated energy homes, spanning 1600 sq ft, that take just 18 weeks to complete.

Today the factory runs two shifts a day to keep up with demand. "I've a very good relationship with LEO Mayo. People can go in to them with just an idea but in my case I wanted to prove I had something first, because that's when I knew I'd need a boost. That's exactly what the LEO gave me," he says.

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*Donal Byrne of Big Red Barn*

Last year Big Red Barn became a client of Enterprise Ireland, where it is a High Potential Start Up.

“Having HPSU status helps us scale up and develop export sales,” says Byrne, who now sells into the UK and US.

“Bringing manufacturing in-house required a serious investment for Big Red Barn. In 2015, Donal was approved for a Business Priming Grant from LEO Mayo to help with these costs, followed by a Business Expansion Grant, for equipment and employment,” says Elaine Moyles of LEO Mayo.

“Our main remit is to grow and scale businesses locally. Part of the process of becoming a client with Enterprise Ireland is showing export and growth potential;

we help develop the capabilities within businesses to bring them to that next level of investment,” says Moyles.

LEOs have a very wide-ranging function, she points out. “We are very hands on with clients. It’s not just money either, it’s being available at the end of the phone if an issue arises, understanding the goals of the business over the long term and making connections to others who can help them achieve those goals.”

A key strength for LEOs is the fact that they are locally based and easily accessible. “We are the first stop shop for businesses locally. If something comes up a business can call us and ask if we know anyone who can help. That’s the real power of the LEOs, especially at the startup stage when advice and encouragement is key. It’s all about

developing the entrepreneur, so come in and talk to us, pick up the phone or email – everything you say to us is confidential.”

Proceeding with an idea for a business can be a testing time, she acknowledges, and can feel overwhelming.

“We will work with you to validate your idea, to make it a bit less daunting. We will help you with Start Your Own Business training and, if you decide to go ahead, we can provide specialist mentoring, as well as financial assistance in certain circumstances to help get things off the ground. So come and talk to us. That’s what we are here for.”

**TALK TO US TODAY. TOGETHER, WE CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN FOR YOUR STARTUP.**

