

Recruiting from the diaspora

The improving economy means many who left are considering coming home, but they should do their homework before buying a ticket, writes Gareth Naughton

The flight of talent leaving Ireland in the last six years has been well documented, but with the economy stabilising and skills shortages emerging in a range of sectors, many of the diaspora may be tempted to consider a return.

Recruiters are reporting a rise in enquiries and applications from Irish people living overseas. Much like the Irish economy itself, however, returning migration trends are following a twin track.

If you are in IT, financial services or other sectors that have seen growth in recent years, you can be relatively confident of finding a job in Ireland. If you are in construction or retail, however, it is going to be a much tougher process.

Kieran McKeown, manager at Matrix Recruitment, said the people who had contacted his company regarding a return home were mostly doing so for personal reasons.

"They may have been away for too long; they are coming back for family. We have one person who has been away for nine years in Australia working as a civil engineer, and they have decided that now is the time to come back, even though they don't have a job. An awful lot of it is driven by things like being married with children – your time is limited there because of schooling," he said.

Most returning migrants are willing to compromise on salary to secure a job here.

"They want to be home, and that is the key driver of everything. The salary differentials are not a consideration and, if you are in Perth where you could be earning huge money, but you want to come back to Ireland, you need to be saving money so that when you come back you won't notice the financial impact as much," said McKeown.

Although the idea of emigration is often steeped in negative sentiment – and there is no denying that it is hard on those left behind and on families coping with life in a new country – not everybody

left Ireland over the last few years out of necessity.

Some made the choice to leave because they wanted to advance their own careers as well as experience life in another part of the world.

"When things went on hold here, a lot of people's career paths stagnated," said Frank Farrelly, director at Sigmar Recruitment.

"It wasn't just people who lost jobs who moved, it was also people who wanted to progress in their career. Necessity was one reason, and opportunity was the other. A lot of people have done two or three years and they are coming back to Ireland with an increased skill-set and they are pursuing opportunities here as demand picks up."

Recruiters are increasingly looking to the diaspora for candidates, as demand outstrips supply in several sectors. They are beginning to identify talent pools in Britain and beyond as a potential source of top-quality candidates for companies here.

"They want the best candidate, so the great thing about having such a large Irish diaspora is that you can tap into it and get them to return. If Ireland Inc is up against France Inc, France will recruit from France, but Ireland will recruit from Britain, Australia and Canada," said Farrelly.

While this message might not yet have reached Irish people living abroad, there are opportunities available for returning emigrants who have the up-to-date skills required in the Irish economy, according to McKeown.

"There are plenty of jobs in accountancy at the moment – albeit 90 per cent of them are in Dublin and the same with financial services," he said.

"In engineering, there is an abundance of jobs in industry – chemical engineers, process engineers, validation engineers – and they are all around the country. Supply chain is another area where there are plenty of roles.

"The digital and IT area is very strong, particularly in Dublin. If you are qualified and experienced in any of those sectors you are certainly



Frank Farrelly, director, Sigmar Recruitment: "When things went on hold here, a lot of people's career paths stagnated"

going to have an opportunity to get a job upon your return.

"If someone is coming back from Australia and they are an accountant, they are not panicking. It may take them a couple of months to get a job, but they know they are going to get a job."

If you are looking for work in one of the sectors that has failed to rebound, however, McKeown advised a proactive approach to up-skilling or re-skilling before making the move home.

"You can make the decision that in say five years' time you are going to come back

to Ireland, but to do that you will need a different skillset, so when you are abroad you could do a different course. Prepare yourself to come back. Our role is to make people aware of that," said McKeown.

"You have to be honest with people about their own sector, but you can also highlight all these other sectors where there is positive news. They can then make the conscious decision to do something different."

Accessing the jobs market while overseas is undeniably difficult, but it is easier now than it ever has been. McKeown recommends keeping

abroad of job announcements and checking job sites – but also individual company websites – and using LinkedIn to keep your professional connections and maintain that network that can be so crucial in securing a job here.

Farrelly advises anyone considering making the move back home to get in touch with a reputable recruitment firm to see the lie of the land.

"Send on a CV and say, 'Look, I am thinking of returning', state the timeline and look for advice. Ask 'Is it worth my while?'" he said.

"I would call the recruiter as well if I could, get the feedback on the market. Before making the decision to leave Australia, educate yourself on how long it will take you to get a job and if you are comfortable with that, start the process."

Farrelly also recommended dipping into easily accessible networks to get the word out that you are looking to go home.

"Whatever networks you use, be it playing for your local football team in Australia or whatever it is, once you start letting people know you are looking for a job at home, you



Kieran McKeown, manager at Matrix Recruitment

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will be amazed at how quickly the information will get to you. The 'mammy network' in Ireland is one of the strongest networks in the world," he said.

'Family are missing us terribly'

For chartered engineer John Morris, returning to Ireland from Britain becomes all the more pressing every time he and his partner Margaret McCormack visit home with their seven-year-old daughter, Roisin.

"Every time that we go to the airport now or driving to the ferry, the two of them break down because they are lonesome leaving Ireland. I hate going back at all, I try to stay away because if I don't know what I am missing, it is not so bad. Family are missing us terribly, too, and I never realised that a grandchild meant so much to grandparents. It changes things immensely," he said.

The couple, who are both

employed as civil engineers with a local authority, have been living in Scotland for the past nine years, but are now looking at a possible move back to Ireland.

They find themselves in a Catch-22, where they have done all the right things by up-skilling – McCormack is almost at chartered status, too – but jobs at that level are few and far between in Ireland, and employers are inclined to think that someone more qualified will want to move on quickly.

"There were very few civil engineering jobs in the past few years, there are a few more now, but it is definitely an employer's market," said Morris.

They also face the challenge of finding a job in a country where networking plays a huge role in securing a position – difficult to do when you are not physically present.

"We are only over here in Scotland and it only takes 45 minutes to get into Dublin, but people would think you are in the other end of the world. If you are around, you are more attractive and more people know about you," said Morris.

Like many coming home, the couple is willing to sacrifice salary and seniority for the sake of a better quality of life and the chance of a career at home, close to family and friends.

The urge to return to Ireland is something that many of their friends who have emigrated are also feeling, according to Morris.

"We know people all over the world – in Canada, America and Australia – that are desperate to move home and are miserable in the places where they are. They feel they have to get money together to move back so they can survive while they are finding a job. People are willing to move back without a job," he said.

People Problems Relationship Breakdown

Liquidation can pose problems for Employment Appeals Tribunal rulings

BY GERALD FLYNN

Dublin socialite and restaurateur Ann Marie Nohl has been ordered to pay €15,000 compensation to the former manager of her Express Bar Café, a restaurant that went into liquidation last year.

Dagmara-Sala Heidrych, the former manager, said that she had been undermined and ignored at times by the owner. She had started as a waitress in 2003 at the restaurant in Ballsbridge, Dublin 4, popular with U2, Gabriel Byrne, Mary Harney and former Taoiseach Albert Reynolds, but was later promoted to supervisor and, eventually, to manager.

She said that the owner "spoke to her in a rude manner", which she complained about both verbally and in writing.

Because of this treatment, she quit her job in late 2011. Last year, the café-bar went bust. Nohl blamed a fall-off in business and a lack of available bank finance.

Nohl also ran La Rouge restaurant in Cabinteely, south

Dublin, which closed its doors last summer.

Neither Nohl nor the joint director of her restaurant company, Braytex, accountant Jane Cathcart appeared at the Employment Appeals Tribunal hearing into Heidrych's constructive dismissal due to the way she was treated by the owner of Express Bar Café.

Her case highlights a growing concern where employees have been badly treated, but the company may have since ceased operations, been wound-up or gone into liquidation or receivership.

They go to the expense of taking a case to the Employment Appeals Tribunal where there is currently a delay of up to 80 weeks to secure a hearing.

If the employer as "respondent" does not attend, the employee usually secures a walk-over, but will have to meet any legal costs they might have run up if they used a solicitor or barrister, as many do.

The person awarded the compensation will usually have to go to the Circuit Court to get an Enforcement Order as there is no automatic



Gerald Flynn

mechanism for employment relations bodies to ensure its awards are honoured.

If the court order cannot be enforced, payment can be sought from the overstretched insolvency insurance fund. If a business shuts down without becoming legally insolvent, however, the employer remains responsible for the payment of employees' pay and other entitlements.

Recently, Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation Richard Bruton referred to one such case, which he described as "problematic".

"The main difficulty encountered being that there are no assets remaining in the company the subject of the award and, as such, securing payment has not been possible," said Bruton.

"In addition, as the company, the subject of the award was not in formal insolvency, receivership, or liquidation, the award did not qualify for possible payment through the Insolvency Insurance Fund, which is within the remit of the Minister for Social Protection".

There are two significant issues that arise in this case. Firstly, the matter of seeking to enforce the payment of an award made by one of the employment rights bodies and, secondly, on this not succeeding, the potential to have recourse to the Insolvency Payments Scheme for payment arising from that award.

One might think that, if the state can use orders to get payments of a few hundred euro in local property charges from someone's salary, it would be more than capable of ensuring that awards of many thousands of euro are actually paid

over by an errant employer.

Unfortunately, repeated governments have done little to address this important aspect of employment rights enforcement.

In limited circumstances, the National Employment Rights Authority (Nera) can seek to secure a payment order through the Courts Service.

Nera advises that "if the employer fails to pay over an award within six weeks, the employee or the employee's trade union may make an application to the Courts for an order directing the employer to carry out the determination. Where they are not in a position to do so, they can refer the matter to the Enforcement Services Unit, which may in certain circumstances, make an application to the Courts for an order on their behalf".

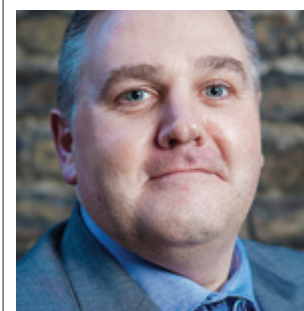
Hardly very reassuring for Heidrych that she will get her €15,000 EAT award any time soon.

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■ Boardmatch Ireland has appointed a new chief executive. Fergal O'Sullivan is joining from the Make-A-Wish Foundation where he was a special project manager for 12 months, having spent the previous five years as a board member.



■ Aidan McKee is joining Irish HomeCare as resourcing manager. He was previously partner with Energis Global for two years and head of operations with Grafton Employment Group for three years.



■ Jeanne Murphy is the new managing director of Contracting 365. She had been general manager with the company for 12 months. Before that, she was a business development manager with Contracting Plus for six years.



■ Ann-Marie Fleming is the new general manager of Nova Broadband. She has been the company's customer account manager for two years. Prior to that, she was a maintenance co-ordinator with KCC Architectural for four years.



■ SEPAM has appointed Padraig Conneely to the role of general manager. Conneely was formerly executive assistant to the operations director at Kenmare Resources for two years. He was also a senior engineering manager with the Irish Air Corps for two years.

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