



# Invest in the US

## A Guide for Irish Companies

Setting Irish companies  
up for success in the US

[#AmCham4Growth](#)







## AmCham Emerging FDI Programme

The Chamber's Emerging FDI programme is aimed at supporting the Irish companies choosing to enter the US market.

The Chamber draws from the expertise of our established working groups and Transatlantic networks, offering best practice sharing and peer support. This working group meets every 6-8 weeks. If you would like to learn more please contact Stephen Hopkins – [s.hopkins@amcham.ie](mailto:s.hopkins@amcham.ie)

## Our team is here to support yours

If you work for an Irish company and are planning to expand into the US market- this guide is here to help! We have drawn from the insight and experiences of Irish companies that have successfully expanding into and across the US. They have shared with us things that they wished they had known from the start, and their key tips for beginning the journey.

Our team, along with our partners in Enterprise Ireland and Select USA will make every effort to support yours- we wish you every success!

In association with



## Mentors: Meet Our Leaders Supporting Your Team

### #AmCham4Growth Mentoring Programme

The Chamber has established a panel of leaders from both recently established and well-established Irish companies operating across the US to provide support as required to Irish companies looking to expand into the US market or looking to scale. The mentoring programme matches the leaders of Irish companies looking to expand with the leaders of established Irish companies in the US.

If your team is interested in engaging in the mentoring programme, contact Stephen Hopkins at [s.hopkins@amcham.ie](mailto:s.hopkins@amcham.ie)

The Chamber offers a discounted corporate membership rate for Irish companies newly established in the US.



**Joseph Barrett**  
Chief Operating Officer, Applegreen

Applegreen operates 121 service stations, employing 1,200 people in the USA. Applegreen continue to roll out its growth strategy in co-operation with existing real estate investor partners. CrossAmerica Partners and Getty Realty. They see their U.S. expansion to be slow and steady, and will continue their strategic partnerships with well established fuel brands such as Mobil, Shell, BP and popular food retailers 7-Eleven, Burger King, Subway and Pizza Hut.



**Dermot O'Shea**  
Co-Founder/Joint CEO, Taoglas

Since their foundation in 2004, Taoglas have combined forward-focused technological thinking with a determination to understand and respond to the real needs of our customers. Their cross-cultural business-solutions approach means research, design, production and customer support services are based at their world-class technology centres in Ireland, Germany, the United States, China and Taiwan.



**Patrick Ryan**  
Managing Director, USA East Region, Linesight

Linesight has been providing independent construction consultancy services to the global industry. From 20 offices around the world, the team works with Tier One clients across a multitude of sectors, including Commercial, Data Centres, Life Sciences, High-Tech Industrial, Residential, Hospitality, Healthcare and Retail. Linesight US is working on projects in excess of \$10 billion across 22 states.



**Liam Foley**  
Director of Strategy & Development, PM Group

PM Groups' USA operation comprises offices in Boston, Massachusetts and San Francisco, California. Both offices provide Project Management, Process Consultancy, Architectural and Engineering Design, and Commissioning and Qualification services.



**Ronan Murphy**  
CEO, Smarttech

Smarttech247 opened in the US in Q2 2019. The company established operations in Boston to drive the sales and technical engagements in the US. The Smarttech247 offering is a combination of 24x7 Managed Cybersecurity services and SaaS software. The US team is currently 12 people and steadily growing.



**Dan Kiely**  
Co-Founder, Voxpro

Voxpro - powered by TELUS International is an award-winning provider of Multilingual Customer Experience & Technical Support solutions. Voxpro powers the Customer Operations of some of the world's most iconic global brands such as Airbnb, Google, and Robinhood. Headquartered in Cork, Voxpro has offices in Dublin, San Francisco & Folsom in California, the Philippines, Romania and Latin America.



**Sean Sheehan**  
Chief Executive, Wisetek

Wisetek provide Manufacturing services (CTO), Data Sanitisation, Data Centre decommissioning and I.T asset disposal services to USA Companies. They have five locations in the USA: (Hyattsville) Maryland, (Winchester) Virginia, (Boston) Massachusetts, (Austin) Texas and (Sacramento) California. They currently employ 130 people in the US.



**Roisin Hennerty**  
Managing Director, Ornuia Global Foods Division

Ornuia Foods North America is responsible for the sales and marketing of Ornuia products including butter, butter spreads, milk powder and cheese under the Kerrygold brand for the United States, Canada and Latin American markets. Ornuia Foods North America's head office is based in Evanston, Illinois with sales and marketing teams based in regions across the US.



**Kevin Buckley**  
CEO, Spearline

Spearline provides the world's largest in-country number testing platform which allows clients to proactively test, monitor and troubleshoot their global telecoms footprint, enabling them to achieve the most efficient telecommunications experience possible.



**David Walsh**  
CEO, Netwatch

Established in 2003, Netwatch is a Global Risk Management company specialising in business continuity, risk management and security services to clients across Europe, Africa and the USA. Netwatch is an award winning provider of visual asset management. These game changers are responsible for pioneering some of the greatest advances in security technology.



**Conor O'Byrne**  
CEO, Relatecare

RelateCare is a healthcare communications consultancy and outsourcing organisation that provides patient access and patient engagement solutions to leading healthcare organisations around the world. RelateCare began as a joint venture between the world-renowned Cleveland Clinic and in 1990 founded Irish Business Process Outsourcing firm, Rigneydolphin. RelateCare now has over 370 employees across the U.S. and Ireland with approximately a 50/50 employment split between both countries.



**Martin McVicar**  
Co-Founder, Combilft

Combilift is the largest global manufacturer of multi-directional forklifts and an acknowledged leader in long load handling solutions. More than 45,000 units have been sold in over 85 countries since Combilift was established in 1998. The driving force behind Combilift's operations is a desire to deliver innovation in the material handling arena. Responsiveness to the ever-changing needs of the customer permeates every area of the business.





## Top Considerations before entering the US Market

1. The US is a highly serviced and diverse marketplace, **market research** and segmentation is crucial.
2. Assessment at **individual State Level** is required. Carefully consider US policy and procedures or regulatory and licensing requirements as it may vary State by State.
3. **Legally** things are different especially employment contracts etc. so ensure you have new contracts and documents in place before hiring anyone.
4. Evaluate your product and/or service **adaptability** for the US market.
5. Understanding **cultural nuances** or differences "...the USA is a continent not a country"
6. Be clear on your **Unique Selling Point** for the US Market. Review your own business strengths and capabilities.
7. **Visas** for the team members that move over can take a lot longer than anticipated when setting up
8. Do not set up a virtual office, make sure you are **physically present**. To gain the trust of decision makers you have got to be present in the moment and understand both national and local business drivers. US decision makers appreciate and value regular facetime, relationship building and integrity.
9. **Costs** are a lot higher than expected for salaries and you need to think about other benefits that are essential for good employees like healthcare and 401k etc.
10. Investigate **distribution partners or representative network** partners as they can help you get to market quicker. Also, customers often value the support/communication from that offering.

"New entrants need to recognise that every USA state is different; don't make the mistake of thinking the whole market is the same."

Joe Barrett, Applegreen

"Investing in the US needs to focus on a small volume of clients and delivering a higher level of service. US industries are very loyal to vendors that seek to continuously improve and exceed expectations. If an Irish company entering the US market adopts this approach, growth will be a natural by-product."

Patrick Ryan, Linesight

"Route to market is critical – direct, channel or distribution or all three options. What does the competitive landscape look like and can you differentiate your offering in a very mature and well serviced market. Where will you start, it's a massive market and segmentation is crucial."

Ronan Murphy, Smarttech

"You cannot be all things to all people. You need to clearly define your value proposition and stick to it. Being spectacular at one thing is far better than being average at lots."

David Walsh, Netwatch

## Picking the right location

### Top 5 Considerations

1. Getting the balance right between basing yourself in an unaffordable area while ensuring that you're not left out in the cold.
2. Availability of talent needs to inform the location you choose.
3. Is the location close to your key strategic partners?
4. Is the facility close enough to your customer base?
5. How good is the connectivity? From a practical point of view, access to the US market through good airport connections allows frequent visits, this gives you the the ability to develop your network until your business has scale to expand your teams.

"Local business organisations are a great way to get the lay of the land. Contact the local Chamber or council in the area for advice. In our case, the Greater Sacramento Area Economic Council played a significant role in us choosing the Folsom site."

Dan Kiely, Voxpro

"If setting up a Manufacturing site, local support structures- State and City Level- may be available for your business".

Roisin Hennerty, Ornua

"Consider what functions need to be run locally in the US when entering the market and what can be run from Ireland"

Kevin Buckley, Spearline

"Every U.S. State has a local enterprise board/ investment agency who are always keen for companies to set up operations in their region. These agencies can be utilised as an excellent resource to learn more about the region, get introductions to potential customers and learn more about grants/incentives available to international companies."

Conor O'Byrne, RelateCare

"We initially tried to grow the business organically ourselves but could not give it the time. We eventually did an acquisition which made penetrating the market place a lot easier."

Sean Sheehan, Wisetek

SUPPORT & INFORMATION  
CAN BE FOUND AT  
[WWW.SELECTUSA.GOV](http://WWW.SELECTUSA.GOV)



## Growing business & avoiding surprises

### Top Considerations

1. US immigration, customs, employment and tax laws are complex, highly regulated and constantly changing and therefore specialised legal advice is necessary.
2. Complexities can arise when your operations and sales expand beyond the borders of a single state. You may have to withhold taxes for several states, depending on the employees' states of residence and the location of their workplaces. Most states impose a personal income tax but there are a few anomalies.
3. In Ireland we can take our close relationship and history with the USA for granted. The US has a remarkable level of diversity which influences the culture in all walks of life.
4. The American healthcare system and the types of insurance benefits you can put in place for your employees is much more difficult than it appears at first.
5. The length of time to get planning permission described as Permits in the USA, varies significantly from State to State. Delays can impact your budget plans.
6. Don't underestimate the time difference – it can make life difficult at times.
7. The American Business environment can be ruthless. You will be held accountable on every detail.
8. Have a dedicated USA resource to manage day to day activities – this should not be managed from Ireland.
9. Be well funded, otherwise you will drown – it will always require more investment than you initially thought.
10. Spend time on recruitment – in Ireland we have the luxury that everyone is connected in some way or another! In the US it is completely different, so be careful about who you recruit, always check references and not just employers, also former clients.

**“Based on our experience,** US employees tend to be very much task orientated and devoted to succeeding in the specific role they have been given. They prefer clear instruction and performance metrics aligned with their role.

In contrast, Irish employees tend to yearn for role variation and can sometimes be motivated a little differently in that sense. Despite the fact we are all speaking English, I could share countless anecdotes whereby task instructions and directives have got lost in translation! Adopting a “local” approach that is respectful of a corporate culture and way of doing things that plays a reverence to local subcultures.”

**“When we initially started** our research in the US market I was over and back every second week. This became a big problem and led to severe scrutiny by TSA. US immigration, customs, employment and tax laws are complex, highly regulated and constantly changing and therefore specialised legal advice is necessary. In hindsight I would have applied for the work visa earlier because it takes time to complete.”

**“We learned** very quickly that due to the size and scale of the US market, any company investing in the US needs to focus on a small volume of clients and delivering a higher level of service. US industries are very loyal to vendors that seek to continuously improve and exceed expectations. If an Irish company entering the US market adopts this approach, growth will be a natural by-product.”

**“We found out the hard way** that our expat employees' personal tax returns often lead to taxes being owed, and this can obviously lead to some anxiety following the tax return. The personal tax system in Ireland is far less complicated than the US system. Our HR department is now well versed in this area, and we can readily assist our expat team members, to ensure there are no major surprises when they complete their tax return.”

## MENTORS FINAL ADVICE

"Similar to other global locations, within the US, great service and a strong culture will lead to good business relationships that ensure sustainable growth and future prosperity."

Patrick Ryan, Linesight

"Be open and share your experiences. Every American citizen I've met has been delighted to help and assist in our expansion plans in the USA. American culture is 'can do'."

Joseph Barrett, Applegreen

"Be open and be friendly. America, and its people, are very welcoming and are used to building new relationships very quickly - so say yes to that social invitation the first time it is extended."

Roisin Hennerty, Ornua

"The USA is home to some of the world's leading brands and companies but expect to put the hard yards in."

Liam Foley, PM Group

"Our Irishness opened those doors - but it didn't win us business. There are lots of people who will say 'no' on the way to the person who will say 'yes'. So stick with it."

David Walsh, Netwatch

"I would recommend that you invest upfront and take advice and counsel from other people who may be further along the journey than you"

Conor O'Byrne, Relatecare

"Long before we put a move in motion, we were building up a network in North America. Irish organisations such as the American Chamber of Commerce Ireland, the IDA and Enterprise Ireland can open doors, so tap into these resources as much as you can."

Dan Kiely, Voxpro

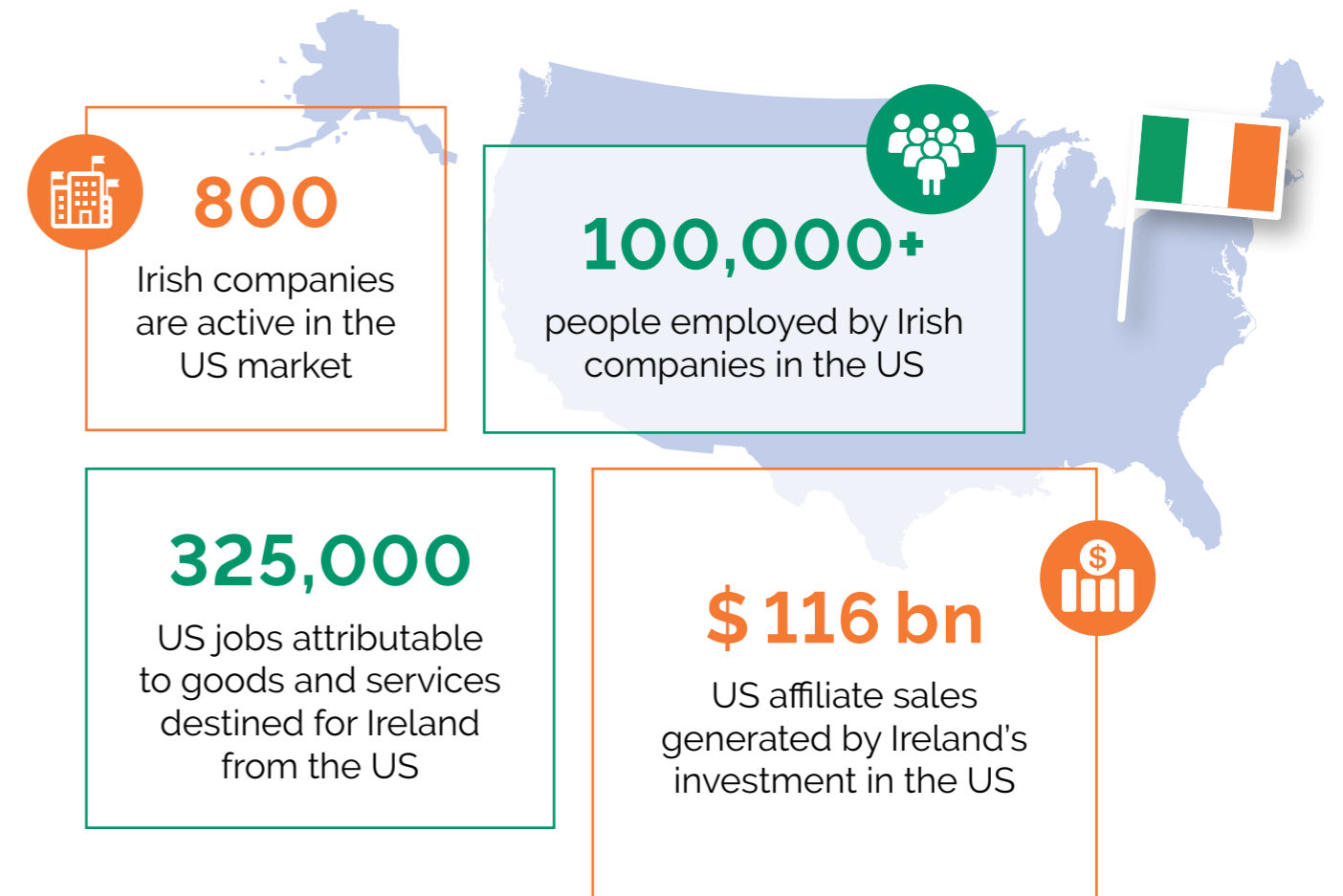
"Just do it, the opportunities are massive and it's an easier business environment to succeed in quickly than Europe"

Dermot O'Shea, Taoglas

## KEY STATISTICS

### Irish Investment in the US

Irish investment in the US is at an all-time high and continues to see strong growth. Irish companies continue to partner with US companies creating mutual value in bringing world class technology solutions in biometric border security, vaccine and drug delivery, IoT, Connected vehicles and other sectors.





# Investing in the United States is a great way to grow your **Irish business.**

- **CONNECT** to economic development professionals,
- **NAVIGATE** regulatory environment,
- **RECEIVE** counsel from industry experts.

## SelectUSA can help!

- Gain access to world's largest consumer market,
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- Join a streamlined supply chain with global reach.

Receive counsel from  
industry experts

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or contact

**Conor Kenny** at  
[conor.kenny@trade.gov](mailto:conor.kenny@trade.gov)



## Enterprise Ireland Support

Supporting Irish companies to enter and scale in the US market, Enterprise Ireland's USA team operates out of 5 primary office locations; New York, Boston, San Francisco, Austin and Chicago, with a 6<sup>th</sup> office in Seattle.

Our team of Market Advisers are largely drawn from the private sector in the US, specializing in the particular sector to which they are assigned. Each Market Adviser works with a client portfolio for that sector providing a range of supports. These supports include: facilitating introductions to relevant buyers; providing access to expert advice from mentors and advisory boards; helping Irish companies understand routes to market, distribution channels and supply chain dynamics; supporting client companies set up a new market presence, including connecting with local professional service providers; undertaking in-market trade, promotional and networking events; facilitating the visit of key procurement and buying personnel to Ireland; developing in market meeting itineraries to help Irish companies conduct the primary research necessary to validate, or negate, market or product assumptions; leveraging our robust network on in market consultants (pathfinders) across the US; working closely with our other agency colleagues to optimize capability for our client companies across the Team Ireland network.

Additionally, our Irish Advantage export marketing campaign promotes the capabilities and innovation of Irish exporters to

international buyers through our IrishAdvantage.com website, localised for international markets, targeted sector focused buyer lead generation campaigns and in market PR at key trade events and missions.

We also work closely with our Ireland based colleagues to ensure there is close cooperation and alignment, and that our total support package have an impactful role in the strategic growth plans of our client base. A key part of our Ireland based supports are in the form of Executive coaching and internationalisation training provided by our Capability and Mentoring Development department.

Over the past 4 decades in particular the US has been a strong growth market for Irish companies. In 2019 Irish FDI to the US is valued at \$146BN by the US Bureau of Economic of Economic Analysis. Ireland is the 9th largest source of US FDI. Irish companies operate across multiple locations in all 50 states, employing 100,000 people. Over the past 2 years Enterprise Ireland supported the establishment of 119 offices by client companies.



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# About the American Chamber

(AmCham Ireland)



Former Speaker of the House of Representatives John Boehner addressing AmCham members on Independence Day 2015

April 2019 Speaker of the United States House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi addressing AmCham Members

→ **NETWORKING WITH PURPOSE** Networking at all levels is done through membership networks, programmes and shared best practice events. These networks support deep collaboration and peer-to-peer learning.

→ **ADVOCACY WITH PURPOSE** Joining the Chamber gives companies a powerful voice as part of what is recognised as one of the most influential business groups in the country.

→ **BUSINESS GROWTH** The Chamber runs a high-quality event programme covering a range of subjects.

The Membership of the American Chamber of Commerce Ireland (AmCham) are the Irish operations of US companies, Irish companies with operations in the United States and organisations with close linkages to US-Ireland trade and investment.

Our members are global leaders in key industry sectors from life sciences to social media. They range from the world's largest ICT companies who have been present in Ireland for many decades, to operations engaged in life sciences, engineering and internationally traded services, to emerging global leaders in cyber-security who have recently established here.

For more information on membership please contact: Ciara Rushe at [c.rushe@amcham.ie](mailto:c.rushe@amcham.ie)

"The Republic's most influential business lobby group."  
The Irish Times

"As the voice of US Business in Ireland, AmCham does a fantastic job in bringing US business and Government closer together."

Heather Humphreys TD, Minister for Business, Enterprise & Innovation

"The American Chamber does a fantastic job in bringing together the broad family of the US FDI community in Ireland, identifying common areas of interest, articulating a position and getting direct access to key policy makers."

Peter Keegan, Country Executive Ireland at Bank of America Merrill Lynch

**OUR VISION** Ireland is an inclusive location-of-choice for talent and innovation with global impact

**OUR MISSION** is to strengthen Ireland's Transatlantic Business Relationships through advocacy & networking with purpose.