

NIGHT VISION

John Tuohy is CEO of Nightline Logistics Group. He has been a member of the IoD since 2010

What is your current role and what does it involve?

I am the CEO of the Nightline Logistics Group, Ireland's largest independent delivery company. That entails overseeing the strategy and development of the business both within Ireland and abroad to ensure that we continue to grow.

Tell us a bit about Nightline and its background

Nightline was formed by myself and Dave Field, the company's COO, in 1992. Even though we started with just €10,000 working capital, we had a vision of how we could offer a distinct and better service than many of our more established competitors.

The enormous growth in popularity of e-commerce in recent years may have generated significant opportunities, parcel volumes and business partnerships, but we have additional strengths in warehouse management, business post and international freight, which are represented in the constituent divisions of the Nightline Group.

What are the company's main challenges at the moment and going forward?

Being an indigenous Irish business, we face stiff competition from multinational carriers that can subsidise their operations here. Trying to grow our business against that backdrop means having to keep a close eye on costs, with labour being one key component. We have found that as the economy has recovered, the employment market has become fluid once again, making talent retention a priority. As we look to grow our business both in terms of volumes and into new territories, we increase the amount of potential competition and, therefore, there is a need for us to remain innovative and on our toes.

What's your own career background?

Prior to launching Nightline, Dave and I had both worked for several years in the parcel delivery industry for other firms.

Can you define your leadership style?

Mine is very much an 'open door' approach. Whilst Dave and I might be ultimately responsible for plotting the direction in which the company moves forward, we have built a very capable team across the various levels and facilities that we operate. Whilst I consider myself to have a good eye for detail, I know that it would be impossible to manage everything. I trust my colleagues to do their job and to

make suggestions that will propel Nightline forward.

What is your philosophy in business?

It's all about fostering an environment in which we can continue to evolve, grow and learn. I am constantly looking for new ideas and new viewpoints – from inside and outside the business – which I think can help me and Nightline to develop.

What has been your biggest lesson in business?

If pushed, I would have to say that it is trusting my instincts. By doing a job, you develop a sense of what works for clients, consumers and Nightline as a business. We have taken some bold steps – choosing to create our own IT platform, known as SmartShip, rather than buy something 'off the shelf' or launching Parcel Motel, our nationwide locker terminal network – which have paid off because of our preparation and understanding of the customer and the industry.

What have been your biggest successes and/or failures in business?

The biggest success is undoubtedly creating a business which continues to grow in a sustainable, novel fashion more than two decades after it was launched. The biggest failure was a fire at our first offices only six weeks after we began trading. We didn't have an insurance policy and so had to start again, almost from scratch.

Who or what are your main influences?

There are many individuals whose thinking or approach to business have inspired me to change what I – or we – do for the better. They include the likes of Anne Heraty, the first female CEO of an Irish company floated on the London Stock Exchange, Prof John Teeling, a serial and immensely capable entrepreneur and, outside of Ireland, Richard Branson, whose wonderful autobiography I have read recently.

Do you have plans for the future – inside or outside Nightline – that you'd like to share?

Nightline has a number of strategic developments for the coming year to continue the process of growth – both in an Irish context and beyond. Beyond that, I've just passed my motorbike test. Whether with Nightline or alone and on two wheels, I regard the future as something of an open road and I plan to capitalise fully on it.

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