



Jenny Taaffe

iZest Marketing Group

GOING FOR GROWTH PROFILE

NAME:

Jenny Taaffe

BUSINESS

iZest Marketing Group

POSITION

Founder and CEO

WHAT WE DO

Digital Marketing,
Marketing Strategy &
Reputation Management

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Having worked in the hospitality sector from an early age, a degree in hotel management was Jenny Taaffe's first choice after secondary school. Her ambition was to become a general manager of a 5-star hotel. After her degree, Jenny decided to pursue a MBS in Marketing Management from Smurfit. During a guest lecture towards the end of the MBS programme, Jenny met David

Bunworth, who had just taken up the role of marketing director at the Gresham Hotel Group. *"I got chatting to Dave during a talk he gave to my MBS class, and he asked me to come in and meet him in the Gresham, and luckily he offered me a Marketing Executive role. It meant that before I completed my final exams I had landed the perfect role – managing a rebranding project for a large hotel chain."*

Jenny had admired the Irish company Pigsback.com since its launch in 2000 and when they offered her a job, she jumped at the opportunity. Starting out as an account manager, Jenny spent over six years with Pigsback, changing roles regularly and became Managing Director of the Irish business at the age of 29. *"Pigsback grew rapidly and I learned so much from working there. Over the six years, the company's staff numbers increased from seventy to over 70. The business had a real 'start up' feel and attitude. The environment really suited me as I'm very self-motivated."*

In the back of her mind, Jenny always wanted to become an entrepreneur, but wanted to gain some experience before setting up on her own. Despite the global economic recession, Jenny established the iZest Marketing Group in 2011. *"I think the only right time to start your own business is when it's right for personal reasons. Economically, things were still very weak, but when you're starting from nothing, you've nothing to lose."*

iZest experienced steady growth in 2011 and 2012 before Jenny's husband Alan McGovern joined the company. Since then, the business has gone through significant growth, with 45% growth in 2015. Today, the iZest Marketing Group employs 12 people in their Dublin Office on Fitzwilliam Square. The team is made up of expert strategists, designers and technical advisors across two brands - iZest Marketing and iZest Influence. iZest Marketing is a strategic marketing agency with a digital edge, focusing on the travel, retail and FMCG industries. *"We work with clients in Ireland, the UK, Denmark, the USA, Qatar and Dubai on projects including branding, marketing strategy, marketing planning and website design/development. Approximately 60% of our business is now international and we have begun looking for opportunities to grow our team internationally."*

In June 2015, the group launched iZest Influence, an agency that assists high profile individuals, including celebrities, sportspeople and business people, create or manage their digital profile, develop commercial opportunities and manage their reputation. At present, iZest are the only agency that is offering these exclusive digital services to celebrities in Ireland.

During the same year, Jenny successfully completed the 7th cycle of Going for Growth. She also completed the Continuing the Momentum programme in 2016. *"Despite the diverse range of businesses within our group, we all faced similar challenges and were able to advise, help and support each other. The sessions were extremely productive and I was delighted to get the opportunity to take time away from the day to day running of iZest to focus on my goals."*

As the business expands further and more staff are hired, Jenny has put the necessary structures and processes in place to manage growth. *"In five years' time, if we continue to grow at the same rate as today, we expect to employ over 40 people, have expanded into new markets, and to have set up some satellite offices internationally"*

Jenny has enjoyed developing and growing the iZest brand and her team over the past five years. *"I'm very proud of what we have achieved. It has been a whirlwind. Alan handles the technical project management and my focus is on managing our client relationships and business development and bringing iZest Marketing Group to the next level."*

