

Retail Forum Working Group Minutes: Future of Retail – Digitalisation and Skills

4 September 2024

Meeting 11

CHATHAM HOUSE RULES APPLY

Attendees: Appendix A

Minutes: The minutes from this meeting are to be agreed under Silence Procedure and will be available on www.enterprise.gov.ie

Item 1: Welcome

The Chair for this meeting was Lisa O'Brien, E-Commerce Head, Easons.

Item 2: Introduction by the Chair

The Chair introduced herself and the topics to be discussed and invited members to introduce themselves.

Discussion topics

- The challenges in the digital transformation of retail
- The opportunities that digitalization present
- Gaps where government support could be most beneficial
- Aim to anticipate future trends

Comments Arising

- **Challenges**
 - Businesses plan in 3-year cycles; often schemes to support businesses announced annually
 - Other costs – living wages, pension auto-enrolment etc
 - Workers suspicious of technology – role displacement threat
 - Covid pushed online – need to plan for 'beyond online'
 - Arrival of Amazon.ie could put Irish retailers under pressure to improve their service levels (fulfilment & delivery) to meet customer expectations – squeezed out
 - Upskilling – training of retailers and retail workers very important – member mentioned availability of training resources on .IE (The Great 28)
 - Awareness exists about benefits of AI but the practical application is lacking. How to apply AI practically to a business is key.
- **Opportunities**
 - Technology can reduce inefficiencies; improve deliveries, use of self-service tills
 - Digitisation of processes – assist stock control and ordering
 - Using digital technologies to promote/market retailers

- Amazon.ie could provide small Irish retailers the chance to reach a wider audience online but upskilling required
- AI can be used to add value and grow business' top line
- **Gaps/Supports**
 - Grants for improvement of operational efficiencies
 - ORS mark 2
 - Look beyond online (retail scheme 2.0 that is inclusive of small businesses)
 - Look at how technology can be used to lever 'shop local' campaigns at a national level
 - Need to understand impact of digital transformation on workers
- **Future Trends**
 - AI
 - Training and skills development important

The Chair mentioned the development of a survey to gain an insight into the thoughts of the wider sector on the impact of digitalisation. The survey would target employers and employees.

Item 3: Presentation from Sarah Bealin, Digital Economy Policy and Data Access Unit on Grow Digital.

Sara Bealin informed members that the purpose of the Grow Digital Portal is to provide information to all enterprises on the benefits of digitalisation and provide a signpost to potential supports. Businesses can take a 5-minute self-assessment through the Portal to assess how 'digital ready' they are.

Comments Arising

- A copy of the presentation to be forwarded to the Group after the meeting.
- A member thanked Sarah for a very informative presentation

Item 4: AOB

The Chair thanked members for their contributions to the meeting. She mentioned that Digital Business Ireland had offered complimentary tickets to their Digital Summit in Croke Park on 5th September and that interested members should contact the Retail Secretariat.

The Secretary to the Retail Forum raised a number of points under AOB.

- **Retail Transition Pathway – the call for initiatives**
DG GROW launched a call for initiatives under the Retail Transition Pathway. Through this call, stakeholders have the opportunity to help advance the green and digital transition of the retail ecosystem and support its resilience by sharing their initiatives linked to the actions of the Retail Transition Pathway. Members have been asked to consider putting forward any Digitalisation and Skills initiatives that highlights best practice within the sector.
- **Rotating Chair**

The secretary of the Retail Forum thanked Lisa O'Brien for volunteering to be the first rotating chair of the Digitalisation and Skills Working Group. She asked members to contact her if they wish to be the chair of the next meeting of the Digitalisation and Skills Working Group on the 20 November 2024.

Retail Section
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
19 September 2024

Appendix A

Retail Forum Working Group: Future of Retail – Digitalisation and Skills

Attendees

Organisation	Representative
Basecamp	Aoife Prunty
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment	Marian Cassidy (Secretary to the Retail Forum)
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment	Sarah Bealin
Eason	Lisa O'Brien
ICTU	Gerry Light
Retail Excellence	Keelan Bourke
.IE	Oonagh McCutcheon
LEO Network	Kathleen Prendergast

Presenters

Organisation	Representative
Eason	Lisa O'Brien
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment	Sarah Bealin