



Making change happen



L-R: Catherine Corcoran, Head of Consulting, John Glennon, Managing Partner, Áine Farrelly, COO and Niall May, Audit and Advisory Partner

Catherine Corcoran, Head of Consulting with RSM Ireland, speaks to eolas about the company's HR and Change advisory achievements within the Public Sector.

When RSM Ireland take on a consulting assignment either in the public or private sector there is one end goal: to deliver value that the client is satisfied with. That's why the recent announcement that three Dublin colleges would soon merge as one technological university brought a smile to my face.

It struck a chord because RSM Ireland had worked with the DTUA back in 2013 facilitating their arrival at their joint application for Technological University Status. It was our first big consultancy job in the public sector and to see it culminating in a more than satisfactory conclusion brought back many great

memories of our collaborative work with them.

Since then, we've gone from strength-to-strength where public service consultancy work is concerned. As has the sector itself which has over 300,000 employees – an impressive chunk of Ireland's two million-strong workforce. RSM Ireland has been very successful at winning public tenders with advice tailored according to the organisational needs of a body such as the Charities Regulatory Authority (CRA) or larger departments or agencies.

There's no doubt that the country has

undergone massive changes both employment and management wise over the last decade. Since the recession hit, both private and public sector workforces have faced uphill battles where restructuring, rightsizing and streamlining services were concerned. This had to be done with one aim in mind: survival.

The scale and challenges of the reform that faced civil servants as the country healed post-recession was significant. This is where we could step in and ensure any and every workplace transition was a smooth and strategically viable one. It is for this reason that RSM Ireland has firmly established itself as a

leader in the field of HR advice with areas of expertise including the fields of technology, education and finance.

My own background is one of 20-years of experience in senior management and HR roles across a variety of sectors including the public service, retail and professional services. I joined RSM Ireland in 2000 where I am a consulting partner and head of our consulting division.

We've worked with many agencies in building a strategic HR action plan by which they can realise their strategic plans through their own people. Essentially, this ensures that HR activity doesn't concentrate solely on delivering a short-term agenda and instead focuses on a much bigger picture.

Our operational HR support includes a team of HR experts working closely with the public sector in conducting independent workplace investigations, managing recruitment competitions and offering a bespoke consultancy service. We provide independence and supplement resources to meet peak requirements. In other words, you don't have to recruit or look beyond your existing staff for talent.

Of course, all of this was done against a backdrop of reform and a government-led appetite for change across the public service. Huge strides have been taken in the delivery of reform which have been recognised for their zest for improvement. These include the OECD's observations in their assessment of Ireland's second public service reform plan, a document that focuses on the changes implemented during 2014 and 2015. That report recognised achievements that included: a Civil Service Renewal Plan; the establishment of the Office of Government Procurement (OGP); the National Shared Services Office; and new employment structures such as Intreo for job seekers and local enterprise boards.

The sector was strengthened further last year with the publication of the new framework for development and innovation in the public service – Our Public Service 2020. The visionary document relies on three key pillars, one of which is 'Developing our People and Organisations'.

A key tenet of all the reform plans has been the recognition that staff were critical to achieving the ambition in the reform plans. On the ground, RSM

Case study:

RSM undertook an operational structure and resources review for the Charities Regulator in 2016. The review was appropriate and timely as on 5 September 2016, Part 4 of the Charities Act (2009) was enacted which empowered the Authority with investigative and protective powers. This also provided the Authority with powers to impose sanctions if a charity breaches certain obligation.

The Authority operating model needed to be configured in such a way as to ensure that their organisational structure was appropriate to meet these new challenges.

RSM assessed the current operating model, evaluated the Authority's structure and resources through a combination of primary and secondary research and against comparable international charity regulators.

We generated a viable, workable 'to be' target operating models from which the Charities Regulator worked with us in selecting a final preferred operating model (POM), capable of underpinning the successful performance of the Authority's functions as defined by the Charities Act 2009 and the delivery of its objectives over the period of its initial strategic plan.

A central element of all proposed preferred operating models was a system which enabled and increased lateral mobility across the Authority to discourage any divisional silo mentality and encouraged knowledge transfer and development.

RSM also developed supporting documents such as job descriptions, organisational charts and financial projections regarding the necessary investment required.

A key tenet of our work at RSM is to be work collaboratively with our clients and this was very much the case with our work with the Charity Regulator. RSM worked closely with agreed internal stakeholders to arrive at a deeply informed operating model from the range of choices that we provided.

Engaged people, HR initiatives and structures that speak to strategic goals are imperative and unlocking these three key elements by good, well thought out interventions are very much sought after by our public sector clients.

Ireland has worked alongside both the Civil Service and broader public service in delivering this 'reform agenda'.

There are some very important factors to consider when reviewing workplace plans and resources, a skill we have honed to a fine art. A key requirement in building a workforce of the future is to ensure you have the right people in the right place at the right time. Workforce planning and resources reviews are the mechanisms by which this is forecasted. RSM have done a good number of these by drawing together the various ingredients essential. These include: staffing; skills; learning and development; financial resources; and succession planning.

What all of this means is there are exciting times ahead for the public sector. With the right strategic planning and long-term vision, combined with staff engagement and a real sense of self, there is no reason why Ireland's model can't become a global leader. With our

expertise in employee engagement, reward and remuneration, technology, process, people metrics, employee relations, recruitment and organisational design, we can make a difference. Together, we can make change happen.

RSM Ireland is one of the top 10 accounting firms in Ireland. It is one of the fastest growing firms serving the midmarket and was named practice of the year in the 2018 Irish Accountancy awards.

The RSM network is the 6th largest global network of independent audit, tax and consulting firms, with firms in over 120 countries.

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