National
Software Directorate

SUPPORTING THE IRISH SOFTWARE INDUSTRY

Mission Statement

For Irish providers of software products and services, good news – you now have an addition to your team: the National Software Directorate.

Formally established in 1991 under the auspices of the Industrial Development Authority, the National Software Directorate has a central, coordinating role to play, acting as a facilitator and a catalyst for change.

The Industrial Development Authority (IDA), Irish Trade Board (ITB) and other agencies and educational institutions provide a supportive environment for the software industry. The National Software Directorate will complement and coordinate their activities, and evolve the strategy for the industry, in order to stimulate growth and exploit fully the industry's potential. The Directorate will also facilitate interaction between companies, and foster strategic marketing alliances where appropriate.

Our brief also covers a number of specific actions and initiatives which are briefly outlined in this guide. Some of these aim to generate new opportunities for individual players in the industry; others aim to create an environment conducive to the growth and prosperity of the software development community as a whole.

We are committed to establishing and maintaining constructive two-way communications with the software industry. To this end, we welcome all enquiries from software developers, and will respond speedily and in confidence to requests for assistance.

Our ultimate objective is to see the software industry in Ireland grow into the major industry it can and should be by the end of the decade.

Quality Culture

Software quality is becoming a critical determinant of commercial success. Irish firms must respond to this market requirement, and must take the lead: we cannot afford to wait, or to be ambivalent. Our aim is to establish the Irish software industry as the prime site for quality software development, to make 'Irish software' synonymous with 'quality software'.

Only by investing the necessary time and resources in Quality training will Irish software developers raise the level of professionalism within the industry – and position themselves to reap the rewards accruing from high quality standards, both at home and abroad.

The National Software Directorate has formulated a programme to assist companies in this area. We expect that our efforts will enable indigenous firms to pursue the goal of total quality in a relatively inexpensive and efficient manner.

Industry Funding

Securing adequate funds for establishing and developing indigenous software companies has always been difficult, and particularly so in recent years. It now presents a barrier to growth, and is limiting the industry's capacity to exploit areas of opportunity which are well suited to Ireland and which give high-value employment.

In spite of a small number of well-publicized failures, the industry as a whole has achieved an annual employment growth rate in excess of 20%. Nevertheless, the financial community has in recent years tended to avoid the software industry.

The National Software Directorate aims to improve the climate for investment in software. We are pursuing this aim by working with the financial community to identify areas where investment will be most beneficial, and the conditions under which risk can be reduced. We will, in certain circumstances, encourage investment which is linked to reinforcement of the company's general and financial management, and its marketing resources.

Major Irish and International Trading Companies

The National Software Directorate also assists in identifying opportunities for the sale of products and services to major general trading companies based in Ireland. The aim is to establish a satisfactory relationship with the Irish operations, and to build on it to secure further sales in the foreign subsidiaries, branches and head offices of these companies.

In addition, the National Software Directorate promotes Irish software companies as sub-contractors to major companies who have insufficient internal resources for large development projects.

Other Irish Software Companies

At home, the Linkage Programme seeks to harness the vast amount of goodwill in the sector, and convert it into profitable business opportunities. There are, for example, a number of companies that could, with little additional effort, promote the interests of non-competitive and complementary Irish software companies among their client base.

As a first step, the National Software Directorate is working to build up its knowledge of the industry's capabilities, and of the particular products and skills of individual companies.

We are compiling a comprehensive directory of the industry, so that all participants can be fully informed of the capabilities of the industry as a whole. Such a directory clearly has a significant part to play in other areas of the Linkage Programme.

The National Software Directorate will also initiate a number of other measures designed to stimulate closer co-operation between software companies. Among these will be such activities as workshops on strategic partnerships and alliances, and assistance in the initial establishment of special interest groups within the industry.