

At Kinsale's Entrepreneur Experience, 24 emerging entrepreneurs met seasoned entrepreneurs for a packed 24-hour schedule of presentations, group sessions and ideas. After a weekend spent in an atmosphere of commercial generosity and financial honesty, first-timers Michael Kane and David Hickey relate their experiences to John Daly

Venture wows budding entrepreneurs and mentors

The Entrepreneur Experience presents a unique annual opportunity for emerging entrepreneurs to gain access, advice and mentoring from some of Ireland's most successful business leaders.

Held at Kinsale's Trident Hotel — where CorkBIC partnered with Cork County Council, Ernst & Young and the *Irish Examiner* — the event attracted a host of Irish business icons, including Pádraig Ó Céidigh, founder of Aer Arran; Jim Barry, The Barry Group; Johnny Walker, Health Founders; Peaches Kemp, Ita Bagel, and Michael Dwyer, Pigsback.com.

"It exceeded my expectations hugely," says emerging entrepreneur David Hickey of Golf Miles on his first visit to the event.

"I've attended many gatherings of a similar nature, but can honestly say nothing matched the Entrepreneur Experience for the depth of business wisdom and enormous positive energy flowing through that space over the two days. It was incredible, and you could not help but be energised by it.

"You are in the company of people who have been there and back, been knocked down and gotten up, and whose vision and drive anchored in one location for a single weekend was a privilege to be part of."

**Entrepreneur
experience**

Trident Hotel, Kinsale, Co Cork
Friday 22 - Saturday 23,
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MEDIA PARTNER

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As a sounding board for his ambitions for Golf Miles, the gathered community presented many potential commercial options for his fledgling enterprise.

"I came to the event with an open mind, and left it 24 hours later with a number of definite initiatives for Golf Miles that I am going to act on straight away. In that regard, it was invaluable," he says.

To budding entrepreneurs considering being part of next year's event, Mr Hickey's advice is succinct: "Be open to meeting people, be prepared to be challenged, and then go there and network for all you're worth. You can't be shy or reluctant, and the effort you put in will be returned in spades. These are some of the smartest business brains in the country in one space for a short period, you have to work that for all it's worth."

For fellow emerging entrepreneur Mike Kane of Curious Wines, the 24 hours in Kinsale were

similarly well spent. "It was a buzz to be there, it was the kind of energy you really needed to be there to fully appreciate," he says.

"There was a huge groundswell of goodwill and support in the room, and, more than that, a real smell of money. There were a lot of wealthy individuals there, people who've experienced the full gamut of business, from boom to bust and back again. Ironically for such a positive 24 hours, one of the recurring themes was failure — but specifically, how you recover from failure. Most successful people have failed along the way, but they've learned from those mistakes, and have gotten back up quickly."

Mixed with the aforementioned aroma of money, Mr Kane was also impressed with the humility on display.

"One of the abiding memories of the weekend was the generosity of time and spirit coming from these hugely successful people; they, quite literally, couldn't do enough for you," he says.

With definite intentions of returning next year, Mr Kane has simple advice for other entrepreneurs considering a visit to this 24-hour commercial hothouse of business ideas: "Beg, steal, or borrow to get there. It may not change your life, but it will surely change the way you look at your business."



Mike Kane from Curious Wines at the CorkBIC 2013 Entrepreneur Experience at the Trident Hotel Kinsale.



Emerging entrepreneur David Hickey from Golf Miles. The event exceeded his expectations hugely, he says.



Lisa O'Donoghue, ALR Innovations with mentor Charles Garvey, Nitrosell.



Mick O'Driscoll, Home Instead Senior Care Cork; Grainne Kelly, Bubblebum; Colm Piercy, Digiweb and Michael O'Connor, CEO CorkBIC.

Pictures: John Allen