

# A sea of opportunity for skincare range

Seavite were pioneers in the use of organic seaweed in skincare products.

#### What is special about your business?

It was started 20 years ago by my late husband, Patrick, a marine scientist who believed passionately in the healing powers of the sea. We are still a family business (based in Galway) and produce a range of organic body, face and hair products for those with sensitive skins. We only use natural ingredients and our products are free from known skin irritants and allergens such as parabens, GMOs and mineral oils.

#### What sets your products apart in your sector?

The quality of our ingredients and the expertise we have in skin and skincare. We have always taken a rigorous scientific approach to product development and my daughters, Jane and Katherine, are both medical doctors who have specialised in cosmetic dermatology. They oversee all of our product development.

We will soon be launching an organic sunscreen, which my daughters have developed specifically for fair skins, having seen so many people in their clinics with sun damage.

#### What has been your biggest challenge?

Picking up the pieces when we discovered Pat had terminal cancer in 2001. Our world unravelled within a month. When he died in 2003, it was as if someone had taken us to the

top of Mount Everest and pushed us off into a dark abyss. But Pat put everything he had into creating Seavite and, as a family, we were determined not to let it go.

The challenge now is to develop exports as the Irish market is mature for us. We are beginning exports to Dubai, Switzerland and, hopefully, Germany. Some might say we haven't exactly rushed to develop outside Ireland but I believe in putting down deep roots. They are what will sustain you.

#### What has been your biggest success?

Still being here after 20 years with a very loyal Irish customer base and a business that is going into its second generation. My son, Patrick, an actuary, is also involved in the business as financial director.

#### What key piece of advice would you give to someone starting a business?

Even if you run out of money and you run out of energy, continue to be courageous and never give up.

#### Who do you admire most in business and why?

Maire Geoghegan-Quinn, EU Commissioner for Innovation, Research & Science. She is a truly remarkable woman and an inspiration to women not just here but internationally.



■ Kaye Mulrooney: "The challenge now is to develop exports as the Irish market is mature for us."

#### What two things could the Government do to help SMEs in the current environment?

Encourage universities and third-level Institutions to share their research, expertise and knowledge willingly with entrepreneurs. Also to work towards building a lasting bridge between academia and the "real world".

#### In your experience are the banks lending to SMEs currently?

Yes. I have always found our bank supportive over the past 20 years.

#### What's the biggest mistake you've made in business?

Not following my own gut instinct and acting on professional advice that turned out to be both costly and time wasting.

#### What is the most frustrating part of running a small business?

Always multi-tasking.

#### What's your business worth and would you sell it?

Difficult to say as it has great potential to grow and expand under the second-generation team, so it's not for sale.

In conversation with Olive Keogh