

SPECIAL REPORT

Strong partnerships key to securing vital products for health service

Decades-long relationships helped Oxygen Care respond quickly to Covid-19 pandemic

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Linda Ryan, head of sales, and Etáin Moran, marketing communications executive at Oxygen Care.

 Strong customer and supplier relationships enabled medical-device solutions provider [Oxygen Care](#) to respond swiftly to the Covid-19 pandemic. Etáin Moran, marketing communications executive, distinctly recalls the Friday evening in early March when manager Karl Goulding said: “This is coming and it will be like nothing we have seen before.” She still wonders whether it was the possible impact of what “it” could be or the calm delivery of the warning that unsettled her the most.



It was clear from the outset that the company was going to face dramatically increased demand for its solutions which include anaesthetic equipment, specialised incubators for very sick babies, patient-monitoring systems and clinical information systems for anaesthetic and intensive-care unit workflows.

“We found ourselves in a very unusual situation,” says Linda Ryan, head of sales. “Every country in the world was looking for the same life-saving equipment as Ireland was. Due to the strength of our business partnerships we had built over the decades, we were in a great position to secure necessary products that were urgently needed for our hospitals.”



Karl Goulding, general manager at Oxygen Care.

Communication was key, according to Goulding. “The strength of the business partnerships we had built up over decades allowed for very direct and efficient supplier conversations. Similarly, the valued and trusted customer relationships we had fostered over many years enabled very open and prompt conversations to determine what was needed and how we could help. Our hospitals had no time to waste. We did all we could to secure products which were in massive international demand to ensure we could alleviate some of the pressures on our health service.”

Challenge

Securing supplies and getting them to where they were needed was just part of the challenge. “Covid-19 immediately presented a myriad of unprecedented challenges for our business,” says Ryan. “This included shipment of these products into Ireland and conducting our day-to-day business whilst social distancing. Ensuring safety of our own staff was also key to us. We are so proud that each and every one of our team played a crucial role in ensuring high levels of continued support to our customers. There was frequent communication to our own staff regarding Covid protocols and the new way of working through the pandemic to stay safe. Working very closely with the HSE, I am pleased to say we were able to deliver what was asked of us. Our mission became not only about supporting our clinicians but providing life-saving equipment for the patients of Ireland.”

Looking to the future, Goulding believes strong local ties across the medical-device supply chain will be more important than ever. “There is obviously a clear divide in society at present between those who are busier than ever and others who are not working or can’t engage in their regular activities due to lockdown restrictions,” he says. “The next couple of years will undoubtedly be tough. However, with what has happened during Covid there will be increased focus on what local partnerships and businesses can provide and support. There will be stronger consideration of in-country resources which might not be as affected or impacted by international challenges.”

And there will be other changes for the industry. “The future of medtech will be brighter than some believe with increased need for medical devices as they are now known to be necessary tools,” says Goulding. “There is an increasing emphasis on managing patients at home and keeping them out of hospital, which is only possible with the support of technology. It is my considered view that the future will be bright. There will be deepening collaboration of medical-device suppliers bringing innovative technologies and working with healthcare providers to ensure Irish patients get the best possible care in the future.”