



Alison Ritchie

Polar Ice Ltd.

GOING FOR GROWTH PROFILE

NAME:

Alison Ritchie

BUSINESS

Polar Ice Ltd.

POSITION

Managing Director

WHAT WE DO

Manufacture dry ice products

CONTACT US

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From the time Alison Ritchie first became involved in mini company projects in transition year, she developed a real passion for business. When she was sixteen, her father, together with two of her uncles, set up Polar Ice Ltd. The company specialised in the importing and supply of dry ice. After spending her school holidays working in the family company, when the time came to decide on a third level course, Alison knew that Business was where her future lay.

When she graduated from DCU in 2002, Alison joined her father and uncles on the Board of Polar Ice Ltd. She was centrally involved in changing the strategic direction of the company to concentrate exclusively on dry ice manufacturing. By 2004, Polar Ice's new state-of-the-art manufacturing facility was operational. Polar Ice is now to the fore of dry ice suppliers, supplying 70% of the market on the island of Ireland.

In 2006, at the age of 26, Alison joined with her brother, father and a friend to set up Polar IceTech Ltd. A sister company to Polar Ice, the new venture focused on 'Dry Ice Blasting', an environmentally friendly alternative to other high pressure abrasive cleaning methods.

Alison feels lucky to have such strong family support. When her daughters were born it was her father who swapped the role of MD to become a full time Granddad/carer to identical twins Emma and Kate, offering Alison the peace of mind needed to fully focus on the business. Going for Growth appealed to Alison as it would provide her with valuable thinking time away from the day to day pressures of the business. Speaking of the benefits of the roundtable sessions Alison comments "Sometimes when planning for the future, my mind would race with a thousand ideas and I'd find it hard to get really focused. Going for Growth made me identify what was really important and build my strategy from there."

Alison also found the experience of being part of a group of fellow female entrepreneurs very rewarding. "I'd given up talking to friends about the business, and even though it's a family business, you want to have time at home when you're not talking about work. Having such a supportive group to bounce ideas off, who were all going through the same challenges and aiming for the same high level of growth, was amazing as we really related to and understood one another very well."

Alison also feels that being part of a group made her impose time limits on her planning. "There was a certain amount of self-imposed pressure connected with being part of the group. You wanted to be sure to have made progress and 'done your homework' from one meeting to the next, so that you could report back positively to the group. This was a real bonus for me as it kept my focus where it should be!"

Since completing the 3rd cycle of Going for Growth 2011, Alison has retained a focus on growth in the business, and has taken part in two rounds of Continuing the Momentum, most recently in 2015. Looking to the future, a commitment to growth and continued professional development remains high on Alison's agenda. "We plan to maintain a high level of service in our core business, and develop new innovative uses of the product. We are also looking to increase the number of people we employ. Today we have offices in Laois, Dublin, Cork and Portadown, Northern Ireland."

Alison is optimistic about the future. "I couldn't be happier with the direction that the companies are going at the moment. Some people can't sleep at night because of worry, for me, it's because I'm so excited about the future!"

