



Ellen Kavanagh Waxperts

GOING FOR GROWTH PROFILE

NAME:

Ellen Kavanagh

BUSINESS

Waxperts Salon and Waxperts Wax

POSITION

Founder and CEO

WHAT WE DO

We run a multi-award winning waxing salon and distribute our own range of wax hair removal products.

CONTACT US

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Ellen Kavanagh would not have believed you a decade ago if you told her that she would not only be running a successful waxing salon but also a company distributing innovative wax hair removal products

But Waxperts, the salon, and Waxperts Wax, the product, are both thriving and Ellen is now building up her export market. *"I was working in retail and decided to take a beauty course in Dublin's Coogan Bergin Beauty Clinic & College, which I attended on my days off. It sounds strange to some but once I started working with wax I just knew this was for me. There was an instant attraction there,"* says Ellen, who grew up in Rathfarnham.

When she finished her course, she started working in some wax salons in Dublin City Centre. The fusion of her love of the wax-based therapies and her retail experience led to a lightbulb moment and, in 2008, she opened the Waxperts salon. *"I'd worked with every wax brand on the market and found the hot wax ones were either too hot or too brittle to work with. It would leave customers feeling very uncomfortable and I thought there must be a better way,"* says Ellen.

"While there was so much brand development in other beauty therapy areas there was surprisingly little development amongst waxing products. So, I found a chemist to work with to develop a new wax and the rest is history."

Waxperts Wax was born. Business partner Trish O'Brien soon joined Ellen and they used their own wax in the salon, which is based in Dun Laoghaire.

The salon was designed to make body waxing a relaxing and luxurious experience — in contrast to its public image as a painful treatment — and news quickly spread throughout the beauty industry in the capital.

"We knew quite quickly that we were making waves. Other beauty therapists started coming to have their treatments with us. In 2012, we launched our professional brand at the Irish beauty show in the RDS," says Ellen.

Now the multi-award winning product is stocked by over 900 salons in Ireland, throughout the UK as well as in Poland and other European countries. *"Going from giving treatments to arranging distribution and sales has been an exciting and rewarding challenge for Trish and I. Neither of us studied business at college so we've had to learn from scratch. But our backgrounds in the industry have helped us to understand the customers' needs and spot an obvious opening in the beauty market."*

Ellen participated in the 7th cycle of Going for Growth in 2016 with Louise Phelan of PayPal as her Lead. *"I can't put into words how important this programme was for me as an individual and for our business. It was transformative. I learned, not just the basic skills of business but also received vital advice, which I then implemented. The support given and the confidence it produced within me were amazing."*

She was also driven to succeed by wanting to meet the expectations of the other businesswomen in her group. *"At each gathering we'd have to report back on progress we made so there was a great incentive to not let others down. It pushes you in a really positive and communal way."*

Waxperts Wax recently moved into new larger premises and invested an additional €100,000 to acquire warehouse space and training facilities for waxing technicians. The range of products now includes pre-wax oil, after-wax oil, wonder pads, strip wax and cleanser.

"Now it's important we take the next step and build our export market. We want to distribute to the US and Australia. Our product is so highly regarded within the industry that we know this is possible and, with the tools acquired from the Going for Growth programme, we have what it takes to make that a reality."