

JANUARY 2021 BLOG

LUDGATE HUB



HUB MANAGER AT
LUDGATE

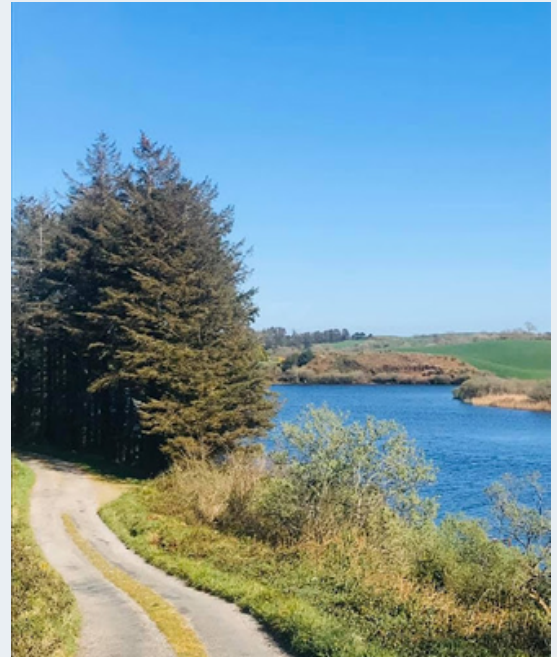
LIFE AS THE HUB MANAGER

by Elma Connolly

Hello and welcome to January's Blog. Let me introduce myself. I am Elma Connolly and I am the Hub Manager here at Ludgate. I recently celebrated (while of course social distancing) 3 years here at Ludgate. This month is my turn at Ludgate's monthly blog, while I would be encouraging (some would say pestering) my colleagues each month to write something for the website, to be honest I am not too good at putting myself out there!

WEST CORK

For those of you who do not know me let me give you some background. I was born and raised in West Cork. As with many of my peers I left Skibbereen when I was 18 seeking new adventures. I got as far as Cork City. Here I studied at CIT and The College of Commerce. I then worked in cork for 10 years before making the best decision to move back to West Cork. I used to come back to Skibbereen most weekends in my late 20s to see family and friends. The older I got the harder it was to head back to the city. When you are enjoying a coffee or a pint sitting outside the Glandore Inn or any pub in West Cork on a Sunday evening in the middle of summer that drive back to Cork City is the worst. More often the drive back on Sunday was nearly always cancelled and instead I would get up at stupid o clock on Monday morning to get back to the office. It was during this time I really appreciated the quality of life that West Cork can offer.



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On my return to West Cork, I was lucky enough to find a position with a local inbound travel company. This resulted in me working in the travel industry for 14 years. During this time, I was able to travel quite a bit. I got to enjoy working in Glasgow for 9 months, I was also afforded the opportunity to work on and off in the Boston office for many years (this may be why some people ask me what part of the states I am from, its annual leave Elma not vacation time!)

LUDGATE

In January 2018 I started at Ludgate Operations here in Skibbereen as the Hub Manager, what does the role mean?? Well anything and everything goes. One day you are showing The President, The Tánaiste or even an Irish International Irish Rugby player, around the building and introducing them to Ludgate members, taking pictures dealing with the press and 30 minutes later dealing with a blocked shower drain!!

But I love my job. You never know who you could meet at The Hub. My position here at Ludgate has offered me many opportunities and new experiences. I oversee the accounts, I am heavily involved in the marketing, PR and the general day to day running of Ludgate. No two days are the same and I also get to work with a great team and all of Ludgate members.

One of my main roles here in Ludgate is front of house, I deal with all Ludgate members and of course all users of The Hub, if you come into The Hub, I am your main point of contact and happy to advise about the Hub or even where to get the best cup of coffee in town (No prizes for guessing where I will send you). Over the past three years I have met so many interesting people here at Ludgate. I have been fortunate enough to get to know these people and call many of them friends now. I get excited for them when I see the success that they have achieved, and delighted that Ludgate plays a (indirect) part in helping them achieve this. Ludgate has many success stories from Deloitte Fast 50 winners, West Cork Business and Tourism awards to an international award-winning film producer and an EOY2020 finalist.



So what is my blog on?? Well given the current climate Covid-19 is an obvious choice, but if you are like me and super excited to the day that not every conversation with everybody you meet is about Covid-19. I am going to try and focus on the positives and some of the new skills I learnt in the last year. (I'm a "the glass is half full" type of girl). I am also trying very hard to limit the number of times I use the word Covid-19 in this blog.

In March 2020 to my horror, our team was instructed to work from home during the level 5 restrictions that were in place. How was this going to work?? How to do work from your Kitchen table when your connectivity is poor at home (In The Hub we have 1Gb connectivity so having been spoiled at work with a connection faster than Dublin, anything less than that I thought that was going to be an issue for me!) But I learnt to cope with it only with the security of knowing it's not going to be forever, and we would be soon back in The Hub.

GOING VIRTUAL AT LUDGATE

Some of my new skills ?? Well our website needed a fresh new look. A colleague and I were appointed to the roles of designing and populating a new website. I need to add that neither of us had any experience, but we do like a challenge. We must acknowledge a member of Ludgate here, Granite Digital who helped us greatly with the development side of this on a pro bono case. This offer of help shows that Ludgate has a great community spirit. So, thanks again Robert and Niall for all your help there.

As a direct result of the lockdown all of planned in person networking events we had scheduled could now no longer go ahead. What to do? We asked ourselves?. Here is where I am introduced to the new way of networking. The virtual event. Somewhat different to the Ludgate Presents series we had been running. Where a Guest speaker would come in, they spoke on their topic, an audience is there, we have a Q&A session, this was then followed with some networking (many a time moved to the pub next door at this stage). So how do we do this virtually?? In steps Ludgate member Deividas who kindly offered his expertise on hosting webinars (again pro bono). Deividas has a huge amount of experience as his current role is with Atticus Education. So we picked the date, the topic, secured the speakers and did all of the promotion work.

The result was a success. We were delighted with the number of guests who registered, and the fact that we had more on at the end of the webinar than when the webinar began speaks volumes (or so we have learnt). The feedback we received after the event was huge, even when doing my essential grocery shop in town on the Friday after, I was approached by several attendees to say they really enjoyed the topic and the speakers. The webinar was on the importance of E-Commerce in the current climate, more information can be on our website. Since then, we as a team have hosted 3 more virtual events, with each one, the team grows in expertise and knowledge. Our last event was fully supported in house by the team. (Of course, there were a few tiny glitches, but we are learning and improving with each one).

One of the biggest lessons I learnt last year was this whole work/life balance that everyone speaks about. You see my work life can be very social, in a way part of my job is to chat to people who come into the hub. On Weekends I was always chasing myself trying to be in 10 different places at the same time. Going from speaking with up to 50 people each day in the hub, to working from home and only speaking and seeing those in my tiny bubble was a bit of a challenge. With pubs being closed and not being able to go out for dinner or drinks with my friends (The last time i was in a pub was February 29th 2020!!) was an issue.

I enjoy meeting people and spending time with them. But I learnt to enjoy the down time. Instead of the pubs the whole zoom bar became extremely important every weekend there was one (The bartender at these zoom bars can be far too generous with the glasses of wine!). But we all stayed connected, and some even reconnecting after losing touch over the years. When the 5k limit was lifted we met up in small groups for walks and hikes and I rediscovered the joys of living in West Cork.



We were lucky with weather and I got to spend more time outside, BBQs were the way to go, I enjoyed not feeling rushed and the fact that there was no pressure to be here to meet so and so and on somewhere else to meet with another. I even had time to try some baking, but we will just leave that there.



LUDGATE REOPENS

On June 29th the Hub reopened, and I do not think anyone was as happy as I was. Albeit we did have to make changes to how we did things, to protect our team and members. I loved seeing all of the members returning to the Hub, but we also got to welcome new members, who some like me are now benefiting from a life in West Cork. The seasonal visitors this year all stayed longer. Normally people would come in for a day or two, but in line with our health and safety guidelines a minimum of 5 consecutive days was introduced. This meant that we got to know these people a bit better as well, many of whom have already planned to return this summer and we look forward to seeing them again. Now here we are in January 2021, and in a similar position to where we were in March 2020, but in recent weeks the pandemic is spreading faster. We made the decision this week to reintroduce the guidelines from the summer. Ludgate remains open for its members and essential workers. The 5 (consecutive) day minimum weekly pass is also back. For further information please email info@ludgate.ie As I write this I am back at the kitchen table with slightly better connectivity this time, but now is time for all of us to act in protecting ourselves, our family and our communities. I am optimistic that we will all get through this and when we have, we can all enjoy the benefits that a life in West Cork has to offer.

I will finish with a quote from Seamus Heaney (We were going to use this last year in one of our newsletters at the start of the Lockdown but Leo Varadkar beat us to it when he addressed the nation in April, and then everyone was using it)

‘If we winter this one out we can summer anywhere’

Please stay safe and I and the team look forward to seeing you all again in Ludgate.

PS I only mentioned "that" word 3 times!

