

Business experience Via a new consultancy

By Niall Byrne

Joe Hussey has bucked the trend in the risk-averse recession by setting up a new consultancy, Via Consulting. Hussey, who officially launched the consultancy in June, has spent the last few months bringing together a six-person team versed in a range of IT and business specialities.

Hussey has 30 years' experience in IT, 18 of those at senior business and IT levels. Having come close to branching out on his own a couple of times since the dotcom boom of 2000, opportunities presented themselves that swayed him into staying in the corporate world.

"It was something I had always thought about over the years, and last year I decided that if I didn't do it now, I never would," he said.

Hussey has worked with VHI, Standard Life, Bupa Ireland, Quinn Healthcare and Fiat subsidiary CNH Capital, where he was on the board as European IT director.

He spent a six-month period working for CNH Capital on a consultancy basis following that company's transfer of their headquarters from Dublin to Paris. He began working with Bupa Ireland in 2007 on a consultancy basis before being offered a full-time position with the company.

"The idea of establishing a business-focused IT consultancy was there over the years, so I decided to take the plunge early this year."

Hussey's team at Via comprises a high-tech financial systems developer, a data specialist, a project manager, a general IT and business manager, and a chartered accountant. Two are based in Dublin and four in Cork. All have come from full-time business positions.

"They are people I have known over the years," said Hussey. "I've also been approached by a number of companies and individuals who



Kevin McCarthy, analyst/consultant, John Foley, developer/project manager, Joe Hussey, principal consultant, Diarmuid Keane, developer/project manager and Stephen Sheridan, senior consultant

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offer services, such as technical IT services, project off-shoring / outsourcing facilities, website development and various software [SaaS] and IT infrastructure [IaaS] services. Depending on a client's needs, we may call upon these to provide ancillary back-up if required."

The firm will assist companies that have little IT experience on hand.

"We seek to minimise the cost to the client by identifying quick 'wins', better use of existing technology, industry benchmark and technology directions," said Hussey. "What I believe we have to offer, which is unique, is the opportunity to get somebody like myself with a lot of experience at an affordable cost. I'm trying to bring expertise to SMEs that wouldn't be able to typically afford consultancies."

Leading Edge, a Cobh-based online training company with offices in the US and Canada, recently employed Via to

help them replace their existing systems.

Via sourced a modern web-based solution that actually costs less than what Leading Edge was previously paying for its systems.

The new system will allow for greater sales as well as a decreased overhead; the only cost to Leading Edge is a once-off set-up cost and a fixed price fee to Via Consulting.

Hussey stated that the aim of the firm was to give its members a similar salary to what they previously earned in business. The strategy is to keep overheads low. The firm doesn't own premises, and the members work from home.

Marketing and sales has been the biggest learning curve for Hussey. He is in line to avail of Enterprise Ireland training in this area and, in the interim, has solicited help through personal contacts.

"The first phase was to get the website [www.via.ie] up and running, and encourage

people to get in touch for a cup of coffee and a chat about their IT requirements," he said. "I'm now in the mode where I'm trying to get the name out."

"While the work we've done so far has been word-of-mouth referrals, I will in future be identifying companies with potential IT requirements and targeting them with a particular message, whether it's around cost reduction or adding value."

Hussey is keen to advocate the value of social media technologies – such as Twitter and Facebook – which may fly under the radar of a lot of SMEs.

"The Twitter community is absolutely enormous," he said. "It's a large community where you have people influencing people – I've seen well-known people twittering about Irish companies. It is more relevant to some companies than others to have a presence on it, but I'd still advise most companies to use it, as it doesn't cost a lot to do so."