

Top executive wants Ireland to host awards

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By Nicola Cooke

The only Irishwoman nominated for the International Business Awards in the US later this year had an unusual reaction to the news that she had been nominated as a finalist in the category of best executive in Europe.

Bernice Paolozzi, a business consultant from Clontarf, north Dublin, who has an Italian father and Irish mother, immediately decided to contact the organisers of the prestigious event to ask if they would consider hosting it in Ireland next year.

"Up to a thousand top executives attend this event each year - think of the major business opportunities that might arise by having all those people networking in Ireland," she said.

Paolozzi, a mother of two, previously trained as a Montessori teacher and also worked for a spell in the printing industry.

She has also been involved in a range of social enterprises, from helping to establish a drug rehab clinic in Rialto, Dublin, to working with business ethics enterprise networks in India.

Paolozzi also co-founded Open Door Communications, which has developed sponsorship strategies and identified opportunities for Aer Lingus, Bank of Ireland, Diageo and Failte Ireland.

Putting "conscience into commerce" has resulted in her receiving plaudits from the Dalai Lama and President Mary McAleese.

Last April, she organised the inaugural Ireland India Trade Forum in Dublin, which resulted in a €7 million agreement between an Indian shipping company and an Irish firm.

A second trade forum was held in Cork last Thursday and a third is planned for Belfast next month.

Paolozzi is currently heavily involved in the development of solid trade links between Ireland and India, helping to organise a concerted bid to bring the International Indian Film Academy (IIFA) Awards - or so-called 'Bollywood Oscars' - to Ireland.

"The Indian economy is expanding hugely and, with a billion people living there - including a growing middleclass of approximately 300million - it is a market Irish companies should want in on," Paolozzi said.

The Irish bid for the awards is being led by Paolozzi, who has identified venues and is working on securing government and private financial backing for the event.

The awards attract a televised audience of roughly 500 million people, generate around €20 million for the local economy, and could see Bollywood movies being filmed in Ireland.

The event is always hosted outside India; it was held in Yorkshire last year. Amsterdam, Dubai and Singapore have previously hosted the awards.

“The two venues under consideration are the Royal Hospital in Kilmainham, Dublin, and the Phoenix Park,” Paolozzi said. ‘We have met tourism minister Seamus Brennan about the bid, and have a meeting with environment minister John Gormley on September 17.

“However, we are vying with three other countries, so we need to get a letter of intent from the government within weeks if we are to be in with a chance,” she said.

Paolozzi has also been invited to take an Irish delegation to a Europe -India Chamber of Commerce Leadership in Business symposium at the EU Parliament in December.

Business leaders from India and other European countries will gather in Brussels to discuss trade and challenges in the global markets.

Paolozzi was the only Irish person to attend the event last year; she sees it as a platform for the development of more trade contacts between Ireland and India.

“There are a lot of parallels between Ireland’s Celtic Tiger economy and the emergence of India’s ‘dancing elephant’ economy. We should be trying to break into this vast new market and make India a gateway for Irish business in the east, and Ireland a gateway for Indian business in the west.”