

# LEADERS' QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

From image recognition cameras at supermarket checkouts to Limerick being one of Europe's greenest cities, Emily Maree is back with six big questions for six experts

1. US retail giant Walmart has confirmed it uses image recognition cameras at checkouts across the country to detect theft. What are your thoughts on this?
2. Sports brand Vollebak has created a smart jacket that can control temperature and repel bacteria. What do you think is the future of smart clothing?
3. Limerick has been named one of Europe's greenest cities for its effort in building smart homes. What can other Irish cities do to become more eco-conscious?
4. Irish companies have fallen behind in AI in comparison to their US counterparts, according to a new report. In your opinion, what can these companies do to bridge this gap?
5. Name one piece of technology you couldn't live without.
6. What's the best piece of business advice you have ever received?



**Lars Hargaard**  
marketing  
director, Oki  
Europe, North  
West Region

1. There is always a concern when an organisation such as Walmart collects data, in this case images through their image recognition camera scheme. There is no fair proportion between collecting such data to hit a very small group.
2. I think we've just witnessed the very start of smart clothing, but it is interesting to follow how it develops alongside the increasing focus on clothing that doesn't damage the environment.
3. I think creating clever environmental infrastructure will help other Irish cities catch up to Limerick as one of Europe's greenest cities. Energy and transportation are two areas where local cities could probably have the most effect.
4. To help bridge the gap between them and their US counterparts, Irish companies should seek international partnerships because small countries need to reach out to stay in front.
5. The one piece of technology I couldn't live without is my golf watch.
6. Family first. Without the full support and focus from those closest to you, you will never survive in tough business situations.



**Kenneth Arthur**  
chief commercial  
officer, VisionID

1. The cost of theft to retailers is significantly high. Therefore, it is understandable that [companies like Walmart] need to look at as many ways as possible to effectively reduce this cost. There will need to be regulations introduced to protect the individual's rights when image recognition cameras are being used on customers.
2. The use of technology that encourages or facilitates greater participation in sport can only be considered a good thing. On the other hand, perhaps a smart jacket might be a step too far, I mean, the human body can regulate its own temperature well enough.
3. Firstly, other Irish cities can look at addressing public transport shortfalls and develop safer cycling lanes in order to reduce traffic and become more eco-conscious. Individual companies can then look at more collaboration services, perhaps allowing people to work from home and reduce the need for commuting.
4. Companies can bridge the gap between them and their US counterparts with investment and collaboration – creating an AI incubation hub to allow for companies to develop together, sharing knowledge and experience.
5. The one piece of technology I couldn't live without is my iPhone. It gives me the ability to work on the go, while also offering a wide ecosystem of services.
6. "Never give up" by the late Bill Murphy. In business and in life, there will always be highs and lows. It's the person who can continue to battle through the lows who will have the greatest chance of winning the deal.



**Greg O'Donoghue**  
director, Big and  
Bright

1. Walmart is simply making the business more efficient by preventing theft or scanning errors with the introduction of image recognition cameras. I also think it's great that they're using and supporting a Cork-based firm [Irish technology company Everseen] for this rollout.
2. A lot of us can't leave our homes without our phone chargers or power banks in case we end up running out of battery. Smart clothing will allow us to charge our phones from our jeans or hoodies.
3. People walking or cycling to the office every day will help Irish cities become cleaner. Keeping cars out of cities is key to an eco-conscious city. Talks of pedestrianising College Green in Dublin are really progressive.
4. Investing in talent could help Ireland catch up to the United States when it comes to using AI. Education and training are essential in developing the skills required for staying ahead of the AI curve.
5. My iPhone – it doesn't leave my hand. We communicate heavily with our clients on WhatsApp. It allows us to capture their initial thoughts in a short space of time.
6. In terms of the music business, the best advice I have ever received is to get a good lawyer. Too many artists get caught up in contracts that don't have their best interests at heart.



**Richard Barrett**  
co-founder,  
Pundit Arena

1. Businesses lose a huge amount of money from theft each year and as both a consumer and a business owner, I can see both sides of [a measure like this]. The big question would be to understand what Walmart plans to do with the data from the image recognition cameras long term and whether it plans to commercialise that data in some form.
2. There will always be a massive interest in anything that can help to improve athletic performance. The growth in amateur sportspeople using wearable tech is evidence of this, and the more we can understand about ourselves, the bigger the opportunity we have to improve our performance.
3. As a proud Corkonian, it pains me to say it, but the inefficiency of the cycle lane systems in the People's Republic is a major issue. Cork considers itself cycle-friendly, but in truth we are lagging behind so many of our European counterparts.
4. An education piece focusing on the positive impact of AI, as opposed to the negatives, would really help people to further understand just how important AI can become to our lives. AI in the motor industry is about so much more than just self-autonomous cars and has already proven its worth by enhancing safety features in vehicles throughout the country. If people understood that AI can save lives in many areas, then maybe they would be more receptive to the idea of supporting and nurturing our indigenous AI industry.
5. My smartphone, but mainly for music, reading and podcasts.
6. Businesses don't fail because they've run out of money, they fail because they've run out of time.



**Mark Buckley**  
head of sales,  
Auxilion

1. As long as the image recognition cameras are being used for good and do not hamper civil liberties or breach GDPR, this technology is a positive step for all industries.
2. There are many exciting smart clothing applications that have yet to be brought to market. The next evolution will probably focus on the ability of smart clothes to react to the environment they are in.
3. Continuous improvement of safe, connected, public infrastructure will encourage people to use bikes, buses and trains as opposed to driving. These measures would reduce carbon emissions and help cities become more eco-conscious.
4. Clarity of goals, strategy in terms of roadmaps, information and industry knowledge trained by a skilled, knowledgeable team can help companies bridge the AI gap.
5. It would have to be my smartphone. I can work anywhere in the world and I feel close to family members who live abroad, thanks to video calling and instant messaging.
6. Fear of failure should not be a barrier to being innovative and trying something new. If you are going to fail, fail fast, then try again.



**David Shanahan**  
tax partner,  
Deloitte Ireland

1. Privacy issues aside, these image recognition cameras make perfect sense to detect theft – it avoids confusion and it's great to see an Irish technology company supplying the technology for the missed scan detection scheme.
2. This new Vollebak smart jacket reminds me of Marty McFly's self-drying jacket in Back to the Future. No doubt, this type of smart jacket will become a standard piece of clothing if it can be made in a cost-effective way.
3. It seems clear to me that in recent months, there has been an enhanced focus on this area and a strong desire by Irish cities to be more eco-friendly. The technology is there for smart houses and cleaner emissions to name a few, so perhaps improved incentives that balance cost and impact would help.
4. I think this depends on the particular company's automation need and capability. If you aren't doing anything in RPA (robotics process automation) then that is the place to start and get your feet wet – to build your automation know-how. If your company has some RPA capability then you could look to expand this through chatbots and artificial intelligence as the next step.
5. I think back to life without Google Maps. I'd be lost without it.
6. The best piece of business advice I ever received was don't try to replicate someone else's style. Be genuine, be yourself.