



**PROFILE**

**PETER CULLEN**

**COMPANY**

**THE JELLY BEAN FACTORY**

**TITLE**

**MANAGING DIRECTOR  
& FOUNDER**



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**PROFILE PETER CULLEN**

**senior enterprise**  
experience never ages

Peter Cullen's *can do* attitude and enthusiasm for The Jelly Bean Factory, which he started with his son Richard, is as strong as ever, twelve years later.

Peter was what could be called a *necessity entrepreneur*. He and Richard had previously been involved in an earlier entrepreneurial venture which had failed. That failure cost Peter dearly both in financial and reputational terms. "Failure in Ireland is not easily accepted. It may be different in the United States. But here people have long memories and it can be difficult to pick yourself up and get going again".

Peter and Richard Cullen faced into the Christmas of 1997 without a job and with significant financial losses. By the New Year they had decided to pick themselves up and start over again. They knew the sugar confectionary market and had a lot of contacts. Starting to manufacture again at that stage was not possible, as they did not have the resources. Instead they decided to outsource their requirements for jelly based sweets to factories in Spain, Belgium and the Netherlands, which would produce to their specifications.

They decided to concentrate on the marketing side themselves and to build a brand. They bought the name "The Jelly Bean Factory" from the designer, with a one year payment moratorium, as they had no money at the time, and decided to concentrate on jelly beans. What started out in Peter Cullen's home on a garden table with a home computer quickly grew and today their gourmet jelly beans are exported to almost 50 countries.

Having built strong demand for their gourmet jelly beans, in 2005 Peter and Richard made a strategic decision to start manufacturing themselves in order to protect their continuity of supply and because their major Dutch supplier's factory was being offered for sale. The gourmet jelly beans are now manufactured exclusively in Blanchardstown,



Dublin, in a specially equipped facility. The company employs 50 people full time with additional workers being engaged on a seasonal basis.

Along the way the company has won several major awards, and most recently father and son have jointly won through to the final of the Ernst and Young Entrepreneur of the Year competition.

"We are now the largest producers of jelly beans in Europe and have grown from 150/200 tonnes a year to 1,800/2,000 tonnes. We are consistently profitable and get a tremendous buzz from seeing our jelly beans on sale in new and different markets. I was passing through Chicago airport recently and was surprised and delighted to see the jelly beans, made by us in Dublin, on sale there."

Now in his late sixties, Peter Cullen is still energised by what he and Richard have created from scratch against the odds. "Perhaps when I am in my seventies I will be working less hard, but I still see myself at that stage being very much engaged.

It is great to have built the business with my son Richard, who is joint Managing Director. We work very well together and make a great team. Our working relationship has been tested through challenging as well as successful days. It is stronger than ever. While succession management for owner managers can be a challenge, we have that sorted!"

> **STARTING & PARTNERING**

> **INVESTING & ACQUIRING**

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