

IMAGE BUSINESS

PRESS RELEASE

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MARY ANN O'BRIEN SCOOPS BUSINESSWOMAN OF THE YEAR AWARD AT
IMAGE MAGAZINE BUSINESSWOMEN AWARDS

Mary Ann O'Brien of Lily O'Briens chocolates was announced IMAGE Businesswoman of the Year at an awards ceremony last night (*Wednesday February 28*) in the Merrion Hotel. The awards, a first for the magazine, grew from IMAGE Business, a magazine edited by IMAGE Deputy Editor Meg Walker, dedicated to women who "do business with style." The awards were developed in association with *The Sunday Times* and Brown Thomas to recognise leading women in Irish corporate and entrepreneurial life.

Mary Ann's inspiring journey from humble beginnings making chocolate in her kitchen in 1992 to an internationally recognised brand in a 33,000 square foot production facility with 125 employees and a turnover of over €20m today, along with her commitment to the charity she founded to help terminally ill babies, The Jack and Jill Foundation, made her an obvious choice for the judging panel, chaired by IMAGE publisher Kevin Kelly, who were looking for pioneering women in business who had advanced the interests of women and served on the boards of charities or artistic bodies.

The panel also included *The Sunday Times* Business Editor Brian Carey; Jacky Byrne, General Manager Brown Thomas Dublin; Liz O'Donnell TD; Nick Barniville, MBA Programme Director UCD Michael Smurfit School of Business; Nick Mulcahy, Editor, *Business Plus*; Oonagh Doyle, Sales Director, Newbridge Silverware; PR Caroline Kennedy and restaurateur Domini Kemp.

Sandra Lawler and Aldagh McDonogh of Alternatives, a company providing marketers for the marketing community, were winners of the IMAGE Entrepreneur of the Year category. Judges commended their success since the company's inception in 2001, developing along the way a client base that includes Ulster Bank, Bank of Ireland, AIB, Irish Distillers, Bord Bia, Glanbia, Eircom and O2. Special mention was also given in this category to Michelle Power of organic liqueur company, Boozeberries and Natasha Scanlan of Dome Telecom.

IMAGE, *The Sunday Times* and Brown Thomas also sought to recognise the next generation of businesswomen storming the ranks with the IMAGE Young Businesswoman of the Year award, aimed at inspiring achievers under the age of 30 who demonstrate huge promise in their chosen fields. Olga Gashi of Word Perfect Translations, a company that is now the largest supplier of interpretative and translation services in Ireland with a reported turnover of over €2m, was announced as the winner in this category, with special mention going to Claire Lanigan of Mollys.ie, an online pet boutique with a soon-to-open pet spa and bakery, and Richael Connolly of Joup, a natural food company based in Cork.

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