

## An interview with Bidvest Noonan's new Operations Director, Nick O'Connor

4 years ago



*Bidvest Noonan's new Operations Director speaks about his successes within the company and growth opportunities*

*'A testament to success'*

When he unexpectedly received an offer to study Natural Sciences at Trinity College, Nick O'Connor's heart was set on becoming a chemist. When his student grant ran out, he got a weekend job in security to support his living expenses. The career in science never panned out and Nick found himself putting more hours in at his weekend job. His path in the security industry led him to Bidvest Noonan as a Site Manager. Almost 30 years have passed since he started in the industry, and he is now Director of Operations at the company.

*'We earned this respect'*

Nick credits a large part of his success to treating everyone as equals: "When I talk to my team at Bidvest Noonan, I always encourage them to be supportive of each other and try to approach everything from an empathetic perspective."

Nick remembers that his early days in the retail industry were very different. "At the time, security officers were seen as people in suits that simply stood by a door". While he started out with the task of preventing shoplifting, he learnt much more from his days on the job, "One of the things I learned was that the first person that a customer sees is the security officer at the door and that interaction has to be perfect. Otherwise, their experience is ruined from the start."

When he began his career, he remembers that security was largely focused on stopping theft and customer service was secondary. Nick marvels at how far the industry has come. “When I started out, I felt there was very little respect for security guards, but now, we’ve earned this respect and industry licencing has certainly helped this. At Bidvest Noonan, our teams are trained in everything from first aid, suicide awareness and dealing with a wide range of challenges. The intention is to support our clients in building lasting relationships with their customers.” We have developed a fantastic, motivated and high-achieving team of people supporting tens of millions of shopping experiences annually.

‘The only person we want is Nick’

His first role with Bidvest Noonan was as a security manager at a large shopping centre in Dublin. Although the early part of his career was focussed solely on security, as the service offerings expanded several clients wanted one point of contact overseeing all their services and Nick was asked to oversee them. He recalls, “I didn’t know much about their operation at the time, but I knew how to deal with people. We would start a contract with one service line and try to operate as best-in-class in that area. All of a sudden, we were providing multiple services, so I took that as a sign that we were doing a good job!”

From then, it was a natural progression. Over the next few years, larger contracts would come under his remit. “With time, some of the larger sites would fall under my domain and a few others in retail also came under my management. Today, I oversee all of the larger retail contracts within our retail portfolio in Ireland across multiple service offerings.” Nick has helped to shape and benefited from Bidvest Noonan’s vision: “The vision that the company follows today was one that I grew with, became fully involved in and got to engage with. I try to get my team involved in it as well. At this stage, we are strong leaders in what we do because we are pursuing a clear vision and have strong values.”

‘The sky is the limit’

Although a lot has changed for him over the years, Nick says, “Even when I started out, my thought process was ‘You should compare yourself to the best and not the worst’. I want to be the best, and I want my team to be the best. Now, as an Operations Director, my primary aim is to make sure that my team is the best. And that’s exactly what customers are looking for.”

Having come from humble beginnings, Nick has managed to build an exceptional career. He explains, “If you’ve got the right attitude, the sky is the limit. I always say it doesn’t matter how small you start out, there’s always infinite space to grow. That has been my experience with Bidvest Noonan. If you put time and effort into it, there’s no mountain you cannot climb. I’m a testament to that. I’m at a position where I’m happy with what I’m doing. But it hasn’t happened by accident, and it didn’t happen overnight either. Anyone who knows me knows that I put the effort in.”