

## **RIKON researchers win award at Lean Business Ireland Award 2019**

Dr Michael O' Meara and Dr Felicity Kelliher, members of the RIKON research group ([www.rikon.ie](http://www.rikon.ie)) at Waterford Institute of Technology School of Business have won the Lean Learning Award at the Lean Business Ireland Awards Ceremony 2019. Sponsored by University of Limerick and attracting entrants from across the third level education sector, the Lean Business Awards celebrate enterprise excellence and recognises researchers whose work makes a significant contribution to improving Lean practice and operational excellence in Ireland.



Dr Felicity Kelliher and Dr Michael O' Meara.

"The award", Dr O'Meara says, "is a clear recognition of the importance of this research and the currency it holds by those representing the community of experts in lean enterprise excellence."

Dr O'Meara and Dr Kelliher's study is entitled 'The articulation and codification of tacit knowledge in the Irish medical technology sector'.

Funded by the Government of Ireland Scholarship programme, this research documents research undertaken over a three years period which explores how undocumented knowledge is articulated and recorded in the Irish medical technology sector. The nationwide study focuses on those organisations who have won industry excellence certification, such as the highly prestigious Shingo Award.

Findings suggest that employees are an important but often untapped knowledge resource and that people's knowledge is released most efficiently when people are motivated to speak and share their knowledge with others in formal and informal ways. Once people have shared what they know, the challenge is that the organisation must then capture that knowledge, and ensure that it is not recorded elsewhere. The study reveals that immediate informal knowledge capture techniques are essential to maximise the recording of valuable knowledge that will otherwise be forgotten or remain intangible. Even when documented, the study highlights the need for knowledge to be disseminated in formats that are easy to access, amend and update. Significantly, the study also finds that knowledge is lost when employees are burdened by complex and time-consuming codification techniques, reinforcing the need for fast, simple capture techniques.

On a practical level, the research by Drs O'Meara and Kelliher, provides a framework to inform and guide Lean practitioners on how best to elicit and make explicit employees' tacit knowledge and embed this knowledge within their organisations. Findings of the study support the OECD's bid to increase competitive advantage among manufacturing firms and aligns with the Irish Centre for Manufacturing Research (2016) objectives relating to manufacturing excellence.

Dr O'Meara contends that, "This research will support the drive towards continuous improvement within Irish manufacturing and support Irish businesses to remain competitive within national and international markets."