

PRIVATE EQUITY AND VENTURE CAPITAL SUCCESS STORY

Lily O'Brien's



Country	Ireland
Region	Dublin
Investor	The Carlyle Group, Cardinal Capital Group

The Carlyle Cardinal Ireland Fund ("CCI") acquired a majority stake in Ireland-based Lily O'Brien's, an export-led manufacturer of premium branded chocolates and potted desserts, in 2014. The business had significant scope to grow, but needed investment in production capacity and support to build a more diversified offering and customer base. Under CCI's ownership, Lily O'Brien's invested significantly in people, new product development and production facilities. CCI focused on diversifying the business across new geographies, product formats and sales channels. This resulted in revenue increasing by almost 50%, UK retail revenue doubling, web sales tripling and EBITDA doubling. With the company set on the path for continued strong growth, CCI sold the business in January 2018 to Colian Holdings SA.

50%
increase in revenues 2014-17

2x
increase in profits



What did the business need?

- Capital to expand production capacity and allow the business to capitalise on growth opportunities
- Consolidation of the shareholding base and positioning for future growth
- De-risking for the founder and equity incentives for the broader management team

How did private equity backing create lasting value?

- Doubled production capacity to remove constraints
- Enlarged UK sales team from 1 to 5 people and invested in marketing to increase brand awareness
- Diversified product range beyond gifting and seasonal chocolates

CCI has been a fantastic partner for Lily O'Brien's and the management team over the last four years, as the company increased its international sales, invested in new production capacity and enlarged the employee base

- Invested in a new web platform and own store formats to broaden sales channels
- Strengthened management team and board with new Head of Sales, new Production Director and industry Non-Executive Director
- Accelerated the company's international expansion using the Carlyle global network

EOIN DONNELLY

CEO

Lily O'Brien's

What outcomes did private equity investment achieve?

- Increased total revenue by almost 50% and created significant production capacity for future growth
- Doubled UK retail revenue through new customers and deeper penetration among existing customers
- Diversified product range led to snacking becoming almost 10% of revenue at exit
- Tripled web sales and doubled own store revenue

More information

[The Carlyle Group](#)

[Lily O'Brien's](#)

