

# Kilkenny Gift Card

A Case Study

MICONEX



TOWN & CITY  
GIFT CARDS

## Executive Summary

Following a rigorous search for the right Gift Card provider, Kilkenny Chamber of Commerce successfully transitioned from a labour-intensive paper voucher program to a physical and digital Gift Card in partnership with Miconex in November 2024. Working in tandem with their Local Enterprise Office, they secured funding for their new Kilkenny Gift Card. Key benefits included reduced administration for merchants, their local Sales Point and the Chamber, plus improved corporate ordering. With a competitive commission structure, strong merchant support and local authority collaboration, the Kilkenny Gift Card has established a sustainable model for success. **John Hurley, CEO, and Róisín McQuillan, administrator & business development officer, at Kilkenny Chamber of Commerce** told us about their experience:



€160,000 in sales in 6 months



130 participating businesses - all merchants transferred from paper program



St Canice's Credit Union maintained as a local Sales Point



Local Enterprise Office funding support



## From paper to digital: finding the right provider

“We launched our paper Kilkenney Gift Vouchers in 2014 with €1.3 million in sales - at its peak we were selling €250,000 of paper vouchers per year. But the paper based scheme was very labour intensive because the paper vouchers are like cash. Every single voucher had to be checked in and checked out, so not only were we selling gift vouchers we were redeeming them as well. We have limited personnel resources at Kilkenney Chamber as it consists of just the two of us, and we’d talked for a long time about upgrading to a digital program to ease the administrative burden. The move to a high tech program also removed a concern we had in managing so much money.

“In terms of launching a new Gift Card program, we were very keen to do it once only and get it right from the outset. We were aware of different approaches being used by different entities with varying degrees of success and satisfaction. One option we explored was working with a software company to develop our own solution. Waterford Chamber had operated a paper program similar to ours and had also done quite a lot of work in trying to create their own app or high tech solution to their manual paper program. They signed up with Miconex and their experience was very good, so we started a conversation with Miconex ourselves and launched our own Gift Card.

“From the outset we were concerned to have a solution that was going to work and would satisfy the needs and wants of a wide range of people. It was important that this would work seamlessly and would be successful from a reputational point of view. Having the dual aspect of a physical and digital card made it more appealing to more people, including employers who might buy them in bulk and appreciate the features that Miconex offered such as the ability to send e-cards to multiple employees at once on their chosen date/time.”

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## Working in tandem with the Local Enterprise Office

"With so many projects and initiatives, Chamber money tends to be hard to come by, so we approached Kilkenny Council's Local Enterprise Office in relation to funding and collaboration. Running a Gift Card program isn't our core business as a Chamber but it is an important thing to do in support of local businesses, so it is appropriate for us to be involved in this space. The Gift Card program was consistent with the Local Enterprise Office's remit too. They have a very strong Shop Kilkenny brand and run campaigns throughout the year which we promote. So, we took the decision to work in tandem with the Local Enterprise Office - they took a leap of faith with us and us with them. We did our homework and made various projections for the success of the program, and received Local Enterprise Office funding towards the set up of the program to cover the immediate costs on the basis that it would take time for the initiative to become sustainable.

"It is important for all Chambers of Commerce to foster a good relationship with all sections of the local authority. They are basically the local representatives of government, and of government policy, and the access route to significant funding. Chambers are ground up organisations, very well established in some towns and not so much in others, and their relationships with the local authority can be good, bad or indifferent. Indeed no two local authorities operate in the same way, so it's quite a fluid space but if everyone can work together and find ways to actually partner and collaborate it can work for everybody. Even if funding isn't an option, it's certainly worthwhile to develop a strong relationship with your local authority from a Gift Card promotion perspective. We certainly have a good working relationship with our local authority, and they have a very good track record with lots of positive things going on in Kilkenny due to good management and planning over the years."



## Onboarding merchants to a new high-tech Gift Card

“We focused on our existing partners and reached out to them to explain we were going to introduce a new, more efficient, easy to use, user-friendly Gift Card to replace the paper vouchers and they were very supportive. The merchants who received a lot of paper vouchers had to keep track of all of the serial numbers of the vouchers, collate them, and get them to the office where we then had to go through the whole rigmarole too. So it was quite a lot of work for everyone and they were happy to see an easier, more user-friendly alternative.

“Our onboarding approach was dictated by the resources we had available to us. We were fortunate to have had the old program so we already had a target list of everyone that was on the old program and an objective to sign them up to the new one. We made contact initially by email explaining the new Gift Card and that a colleague would be in to visit them. One of the challenges we had was that onboarding was happening at the busiest time in the Chamber year, the Kilkenny Business Awards, so we were quite strapped for resources. We were fortunate to take on a staff member, Adrienne, for a few weeks to do the specific job of visiting businesses, and some businesses had to be visited a few times if the required person wasn't there the first time. Adrienne had a lovely way about her; she understood and liked the program, and believed in what she was talking about, onboarding 120 businesses, so that was a good start and gave us a strong foundation to build upon. I think the personal call works well. We're all so busy in business so you mightn't see an important customer from one year to the next and this was a nice opportunity to make contact with them and explain an additional benefit of their membership or engagement with the Chamber of Commerce. There is a cost attached to it because time is money but the benefits were strong for us.”

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## Clear support local messaging to drive corporate sales

“It was a huge job to facilitate corporate orders through our paper program. We had a core group of corporate organisations who would buy every year and I would send them an email mid November reminding them to place their order in good time before Christmas so we could process it. Our biggest order was €56,000 which was all broken down into €10, €20 and €50 vouchers - it was a nightmare. And not only did we have to do that but the organisation would have to double check everything to ensure it was correct. So that was a nightmare for them too but still they felt they were supporting local and that was the really important element of it. And we know that we had other organisations who were put off buying because of the clunkiness of the paper system.

“When it came to promoting our new Gift Card to organisations, in all of our messaging in the run up to Christmas, including events, newsletters and social media, we’d encourage organisations to support local with the Kilkenney Gift Card, reminding them about the Shop Kilkenney campaign. We also reminded them about the Small Benefit Exemption scheme, and the fact they could avail of it to reward their staff tax free. In the switch to our new Kilkenney Gift Card, we retained all of our corporates and we’ll be staying in touch with them again this year. We have some huge organisations in our community so our goal is encouraging them to make the switch to the Kilkenney Gift Card. This Christmas, our approach will be personal calls from myself as Chief Executive explaining the benefits and how simple it can be to use the Kilkenney Gift Card.”

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# Engage tourism businesses to enhance

“Tourism is a key industry sector for Kilkenny. We have lots of tourism offerings to make it a destination of choice for weekend breaks, long holidays plus stag and hen holidays. In terms of the Kilkenny Gift Card, we have brought all of the hotels on board with the Gift Card and while our focus initially was on getting the nuts and bolts right with the Gift Card, in the future we will look to engage with tourism activity businesses and tourism organisations to bring the card to different audiences.”





# Enhancing accessibility with a local Credit Union Sales Point

“St Canice’s Credit Union was an in-person location to buy the paper Kilkenny voucher in the past. It sold many vouchers and was very popular so we were delighted when they agreed to be a Sales Point for the new Kilkenny Gift Card. With the paper system, the Credit Union had to track the monies, send all paperwork back to us, and let us know how much they had sold every month, so the new Gift Card is much easier for them as a Sales Point which is really important. We had various other in-person locations to buy the paper vouchers in the past but many fell by the wayside because of the administration involved in the paper system.

“In Ireland, banks have very much stepped back from direct contact with customers. But the Credit Union model is very different in Ireland. People queue up to speak to a cashier and do whatever they need to do. So it fits very well as while people are in the queue they may think to get their Kilkenny Gift Cards too. Kilkenny Chamber isn’t a customer facing business and we can be quite hard to find. When someone rings up wanting to buy a card and we can let them know they can buy it in person from the Credit Union, there is a sense of relief because they know exactly where it is and are happy to go down and buy it from there. And of course they are open on Saturdays as well, which we are not as a Chamber, with every visit increasing footfall in Kilkenny. The Credit Union has one of their busiest days on Christmas Eve, so being a Sales Point increases accessibility of our Gift Card, making it available where people want to buy it.”





## Support that is second to none

“The ongoing support we have from Miconex is appreciated, particularly as a small Chamber of Commerce, to talk about an idea or a challenge we may be facing. We really enjoyed the conference Miconex hosted in Mullingar in May 2025 to meet other programs who are either starting on their journey or have operated their program for some time, and to meet and spend time with the Miconex team. The service we receive from Davin and Shea is second to none, including the technical support, which was particularly important in the early stages as we got used to the technology. And of course there is the customer support line so if we get queries from customers, we can give them the number and say ‘ring this number and they’ll look after you’ with full confidence that they will be looked after. We would be happy to recommend Miconex on the basis of our experience to date. The indications are that Miconex is going from strength to strength.”

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Take the first step on your Town & City Gift Cards journey today:

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