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Sitting high above Manhattan on the 71st floor of the World Trade Centre, Michelle Lynch used to be able to feel the building sway and see helicopters fly by below her.

Today, her environment couldn't be more different. Together with her business partners Carol Lynch (also her sister-in-law) and Eamonn Flood, the former senior vice president of the World Trade Centre Association, she now masterminds their highly-acclaimed company Crannagh & Co in Belturbet.

Some might wonder what drew Michelle from cosmopolitan New York back to her native Co Cavan, but she quips: "if it's good enough for Sean Quinn, it's good enough for me."

Crannagh & Co, which recently won the National Enterprise Awards, is a boutique firm that provides international trade services to multinationals. In particular, this involves advising clients on import and export issues. "It's very, very specialised," Michelle says.

"We have saved one particular company €30 million over a period of time. When you can make those types of savings for a company . . . it helps them stay competitive and that helps them stay in Ireland."

Although just 18 months in existence, the company has experienced phenomenal growth, and staff numbers have shot up from two to 11. More impressively, its client base now boasts 17 of the top Fortune 500 companies and 12 of the 100 largest private companies worldwide.

After three years in Dallas and another three in New York, Michelle was headhunted by Tony O'Reilly's organisation The Ireland Fund. She then became chief executive of the organisation in Ireland.

When they felt the timing was right, Michelle and Carol, former head of KPMG Ireland trade and customs practice, began looking at business opportunities. "We both had a very serious business network, so it made an awful lot of sense to set up," Michelle recalls. "However, we didn't anticipate this level of growth."

Although their line of business may be male-dominated, gender has never cropped up an issue for either of them. "The reality is that we're women in business, but we're professionals first and foremost," says Michelle. "From our point of view, we fit in with the biggest and the best and there's never an issue."

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