



Rob Kenny

HAVING GAINED an early profile through the social media site Snapchat, the canny Rob Kenny combines running a PR agency with being a social media influencer in the fashion and lifestyle sphere. The flamboyant 33-year-old is his own best ‘client’ though, as he rarely misses an opportunity to self-promote. Fans of Goldhawk will be aware that he has also dipped his toe in the political PR field courtesy of one Holly Cairns.

Kenny says he takes a “younger, very creative approach to PR and influencer marketing” and his launch events for brands tend to be filled with showbiz hacks and popular young people with social media followings, rather than traditional media. Whether he can make the transition to promoting blue-chip companies and brands has yet to be seen but his approach to promoting the brands he already has on his books can raise eyebrows at times.

For example, Kenny’s agency handled the press event for the recent launch of Virgin Media’s streaming service, which was hosted by *Ireland AM* presenter Muireann O’Connell and TikTok star Eric Roberts. The sparsely attended event attracted about 10 (mostly showbiz) hacks and resulted in only a handful of mainstream media articles. At least the reporters were present, however, unlike Kenny, who was off skiing in the French Alps at the time.

Rob takes to the skies on a regular basis and told the *Sunday Times* that, as he can work from anywhere with his phone and laptop, he loves to book flights and work abroad in “swish resorts”. But leaving such a significant client’s event in the hands of his staff does seem a puzzling strategy.

The admission to the *Times* was made as part of a puff piece interview he did a couple of years ago in association with his fiancé, Shane Cassidy, who has his own practice, Neurolinks, which supports adults and children with neurological conditions through music therapy.

Kenny initially worked as a junior executive at a large PR agency in London that handled fashion brands. Once back in Dublin, he worked with FleishmanHillard, Publicis and PSG Communications (now Teneo). He set up his own agency, Rob Kenny PR, in 2019 and incorporated his company, Rob Kenny PR & Social Limited, in June 2022. His clients have included Unislim, Virgin Media and The Handmade Soap Company, as well as restaurant and bar launches.

Rob handled the launches of Van Gogh Dublin – An Immersive Journey at the RDS, Warner Bros’s *The Friends Experience* and Bricktionary: The Interactive Lego Brick Experience at Point Village.

Kenny also promotes himself as a men’s fashion expert and does regular radio and media slots. With his eye on both strands of his business, he can make his media presence work in his clients’ favour. For example, while speaking to *Image* magazine about his career, Kenny managed to shoehorn in glowing mentions for three of client Eavanna Breen’s skincare products. He also boasted about how his agency has never had to seek out a client, as each one “has come to us directly due to

our stellar word-of-mouth reputation”.

Many eyebrows were raised last year when Kenny announced that he was handling a PR campaign for Social Democrats leader Holly Cairns. He seemed surprised himself as he wrote to assorted media members declaring: “An email I never imagined myself sending! But I am dipping my highly manicured little toe into political PR! I absolutely couldn’t say no when I saw the request was from the (truly) one and only, Holly Cairns.”

Kenny was a surprising choice to work with Cairns given his lack of experience in the political arena. What they have in common, however, is their love of combining the serious day job with glitzy turns in the limelight.



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Cairns was undoubtedly pleased when Kenny landed her a seven-page spread with the *Sindo’s Life* magazine last July. It is unclear exactly what her Kildare Street colleagues made of the accompanying photoshoot – complete with the politician modelling various fashion looks and credits for makeup, hair and styling (see *The Phoenix* 13/7/23).

Later that week, Kenny organised an Evening with Holly Cairns in the South William Street bar and restaurant Farrier & Draper. The event involved Cairns being interviewed, in front of a 50-strong audience, by social media influencer James Kavanagh and Tropical Popical nail bar owner Andrea Horan.

The invitation had Kenny characteristically waxing lyrical. “Widely nicknamed ‘Ireland’s AOC’, Holly Cairns has resonated and connected with a new generation like no other Irish politician has,” he exclaimed. “She’s smart, liberal, eloquent and, as James

Kavanagh recently put it, ‘extremely sound’.”

While Cairns told the *Sindo* that the assembled audience would contain “Social Democrat members and supporters”, the photos published on *Evoke.ie* suggested the audience was dominated by young showbiz hacks and *Dancing with the Stars* dancers.

Despite the razzamatazz, the event generated a relatively small amount of coverage. Kenny and the “extremely sound” Cairns don’t appear to have worked together since.

In September 2022, Kenny signed up to the Irish arm of UK-based talent management agency Matchstick Group (see *The Phoenix* 2/9/22). Matchstick describes Kenny as one of Ireland’s “top male fashion and lifestyle

media personalities and influencers”. The agency enthusiastically contends that his “hilarious personality, quick wit and outgoing nature has led him to be booked for ‘big personality’ social jobs by brands such as Virgin Media, Samsung, Visa and Discover Ireland”.

According to the blurb, his eye for high fashion and men’s grooming has “led Rob to land multiple presenting positions over the years amongst many of Ireland’s top media brands, such as *Ireland AM*, Spin 1038, FM104 and RTÉ’s *Today* show”.

Recent brands that Kenny has produced paid content for on his own social media pages include Jose Cuervo tequila.

In 2022 Kenny started online “masterclasses” at €60 a head for those hoping to break into the PR industry. He certainly gave a free masterclass in strategic flattery when he wrote a piece for RTÉ’s website on the “most stylish Irish people to follow online”. Several Matchstick stablemates made the cut including Holly Carpenter, James Kavanagh, Greg O’Shea, Paddy Smyth, Niamh O’Sullivan, Shauna Lindsay and Lauren Bejaoui. The agency was co-founded by Vogue Williams, and Kenny included Vogue’s mum, Sandra, in the list.

Irish designer Audrey Hamilton made the cut, with a special nod to her luxury athleisure brand, Audrey Hamilton Apparel. Goldhawk is sure that the fact Kenny is the brand’s publicist is entirely coincidental – as is the fact that Kenny previously lived with Carpenter and Heffernan, while Kavanagh and Smyth are part of his posse of pals.

The canny Kenny also included various editors such as VIP Publishing fashion editor Zeda, *Image* fashion columnist Marianne Smyth, the *Irish Daily Mail*’s Corina Gaffey and *Sindo* beauty writer Triona McCarthy.

By including key media contacts, agency compatriots and clients in one flattering RTÉ article, Kenny shows that beneath the frothy persona lurks a more calculating business mind.