

A people person to build remote business

In conversation with
John Daly

OTONOMEETEE was shortlisted by Think Business as one of the 100 hottest start-ups to watch in 2026, and that has proven to be true.

"It has been both manic and exciting in equal measure," says Brendan Ring, Otonomee's head of people.

"But that is what we all signed up for."

The company continues to evolve, expanding its international presence and increasing the breadth of its service.

"As a certified Fin partner, our team will support implementations, migrations, and help drive adoption of AI-enabled customer support for Fin customers.

"This is an important step as we continue to broaden our offering. I don't expect the second half of the year to be any slower than H1 2026. We will continue to grow our team and our services, and will also bring on several new partners by the end of 2026," he said.

Being shortlisted as one of the 100 hottest start-ups of 2026 is important, given how competitive the Irish scene has become.

"A lot of people have questioned whether you can be successful as a remote-first business. We're not following the traditional outsourcing playbook. We are building something more flexible, more people-centric and, we believe, more sustainable. So this kind of recognition helps shine a light on that."

The company was also listed among Deloitte Tech Fast 50 in 2025, and has been a BCorp since 2023.

Overseeing a 650-member, fully remote workforce across four continents, Mr Ring joined Otonomee at the beginning of 2021 to oversee HR, culture, and its remote team. Previously, he was part of a leadership team that scaled Voxpro to 6,000 staff across the US, Europe, and Asia.

"Voxpro was my first 'real' job back in 2011 and, in many ways, it set a very high benchmark. It was an incredibly ambitious environment, so I've effectively known nothing else. That experience shaped how I think about business, particularly how to support founders through periods of significant growth."

As a remote-first business, Otonomee is not utilising traditional, physical call centres, so the culture and communication have to be far more intentional.

"For us, culture isn't about walls or

location; it's about great people, strong partnerships, and clearly defined values that help guide how we operate every day," Mr Ring said.

Time management across global teams is a key element. Mr Ring added: "Anyone working in a fast-growing scale-up that has grown by 500% in headcount within a couple of years will tell you that time management is absolutely critical, but also something you never fully 'crack.'

"It's a constant work in progress. Scaling a business like ours requires a strong work ethic and, at Otonomee, our teams consistently demonstrate it."

Being intentional about how to manage across geographies, the company avoids the trap of trying to control everything from Cork.

"When your teams are based in the US, Colombia, Romania, and everywhere in between, traditional 9-to-5 thinking quickly becomes irrelevant. Instead, we lean into a synchronous way of working. If every decision required a call, we simply wouldn't move fast enough," he said.

It is a balancing act between staying aligned, moving quickly, and giving teams the autonomy they need to operate across time zones.

"We don't always get it right."

Transparency and communication are the glue that holds everything together.

"A former colleague used to say: 'Bad news is better than no news.' That is my motto. When you don't have people sitting in the same room, you can't afford ambiguity. People need to know exactly what's expected, how they are doing in their role, and what they can do better."

Good communication is not about tools, Mr Ring said, but rather about leadership, trust, and the willingness to share information for the good of everyone.

"People don't need perfection in communication, they just need consistency and transparency, and we work hard on this," he added.

Otonomee maintains an 85% retention rate, a remarkable achievement in any business, but especially in the sector in which it operates.

"Business process outsourcers are traditionally associated with high staff attrition rates, often driven by a lack of flexibility," he said.

"From the beginning, we made a conscious decision to do things differently.

"We've been clear with our team that we want people to stay, and we've backed that up with dedicating a huge amount of time to improving our employee experience."

People can work from the location where they are most productive and perform at their best.

"When you remove something like a two-hour daily commute and combine that with trust, you tend to see much higher engagement in return. Beyond flexibility, retention comes down to the day-to-day experience," he said.

"Are we hiring the right people? Do they feel supported? Do they feel part of something meaningful? And, critically, can they see a future with us? There's no single silver bullet; it's about getting lots of small things right consistently."

Mr Ring agrees that Otonomee's distributed model does help in attracting talent.

"In our business, speed and scaling are essential. Remote-first has allowed us to remove geography as an obstacle to getting the best people, and it's definitely one of our superpowers. We can now access talent in places that would typically be overlooked, and that opens up huge opportunities," he added.

The business has grown rapidly over the past 18 months, extending its footprint across Europe, the US, and Japan.

It launched in Colombia in October 2025, and has recently started hiring in Romania.

Having established a presence in the US in 2024, Otonomee has grown its team on the east coast from Florida to North Carolina. Through it all, Cork remains the company headquarters.

Mr Ring says: "I think it's fair to say that everyone who is from Cork believes Cork is very important. We don't think about geography as a limitation, but Cork is where the story started, and it definitely gives us a strong base and identity."

"While our workforce is distributed, having a strong core is still very important, and Cork will continue to be that for us. Our founders, Aidan and Hilary O'Shea, are proud Cork people, so Cork will always be home."

As to the general outlook for Ireland in these turbulent times, Mr Ring is decidedly upbeat: "I am very confident."

Every country we work out of has its own challenges, and Ireland is no different.

“There’s no denying the world feels a bit more unpredictable at the moment, but Ireland continues to punch above its weight. We’ve built a strong reputation as a location with exceptional talent, married to a culture of innovation, and it is essential that we continue this.”

Name: Brendan Ring

Occupation: Head of people, Otonomee

Background: An outsourcing company established in 2020 specialising in customer service for tech, wearables, and healthcare. It is on track to achieve €30m turnover this year.



Brendan Ring says Otonomee is building a ‘more flexible, more people-centric’, fully remote organisation for its 650 workers.