

# PACK SEND



Phil and Katie Diacon with Michael Paul, Group CEO of Pack & Send

## DELIVERING RESULTS MILITARY SKILLS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

Pathfinder caught up with **Phil and Katie Diacon** who are using their military skills and experience to great effect in their new business as **Pack & Send** franchisees in Bristol...

**Pack & Send was founded in Parramatta, Australia in 1993 by Michael Paul who remains its Managing Director and major shareholder. The vision was to create a one stop shop to pack and deliver anything, anywhere, for anyone.**

In the global logistics market of today where the individual can sometimes get overlooked, Pack & Send take great pride in living up to the claim that 'they know their customers' names', delivering a level of personal and flexible service to customers' packaging and freight forwarding

requirements that they believe is unparalleled in the sector.

### Phil and Katie Diacon - Franchisees

Phil Diacon began his military career at the University of Bath Air Squadron and

## We Send Anything



enjoyed a variety of tours flying Tornados as well as a spell instructing at the fast jet school at RAF Valley before he left the RAF last year. Phil's wife Katie is an engineering officer who spent time on OP Oracle in Afghanistan and as ADC to the officer commanding 22 Group. She is due to leave the RAF later this year.

The introductions out of the way, Pathfinder asked if the Diacons had always intended to follow the self-employment route when they left the military. Phil explained:

"For us it was more about starting with the end in mind - how we wanted to live and how we envisaged having control over our lives. So from that we fairly rapidly crossed out a lot of the traditionally trodden paths, which in my case would perhaps have meant instructing out in Saudi Arabia or

going to the airlines. For us self-employment seemed to be the only way ahead."

However, the franchise format wasn't initially the Diacons' preferred option in order to get their self-employed ambitions off the ground.

"We wanted to do it our way and in dogmatic style we discounted franchising as that was someone else's idea," Phil says. "However, we went through a process that lasted almost two years from deciding we didn't want to be in the RAF any more to arriving at our final conclusion. We realised that we were coming out of an environment that we knew very well and into one that we knew very little about. Once we acknowledged that we needed the support that a franchisor can offer we started looking at franchise options."

### Research Is Crucial

Phil and Katie began to research the franchise market, attended exhibitions and bought the franchise magazines. Also, and very importantly, they spoke to people who had invested in franchised businesses to get an idea of their thoughts and experiences. They were determined, as Phil puts it, to get involved in a business and not simply 'buy a job', and this in itself meant that the list of potential opportunities that they had identified was chopped down considerably, resulting in a shortlist of two.

Phil continued: "The decision to go with Pack & Send was based predominantly on the growth potential - we did not want to invest in a franchised business that was mature and where you had to fit into the gaps that existed rather than being able to take control. In order to achieve the 'end state' that I mentioned earlier, we needed something that had growth potential. Pack & Send provided that as it is new in the UK. We then began our due diligence which took several months. Pack & Send insisted that we speak with existing franchisees, and allowed us to choose the ones we wanted to speak to. They were quite obviously transparent, and clearly confident about what they were providing.

"What Pack & Send provides is very positive support - what you get is a proven model that you can apply yourself to and make work. And, importantly, the Pack & Send team is a strong one and if you're willing to show the same level of commitment and work then they will stand right behind you and give you that support. One of the key elements for us was that we wanted to feel that we could do business with these people - and we can, because they share our own values."

### Military Experience An Advantage

The Diacons have discovered a great parallel between their military careers and their new business life, in that every day is different. Their Pack & Send business involves practical and technical tasks as well as the management and running of an efficient and effective business. Added to

this there is the management of staff as well as ensuring that there is always a steady flow of work coming in.

With the business now fully up and running we wondered if Phil and Katie had a plan in place to take them from where they are now to their stated ultimate ambition. In answer to this question Phil once again draws upon the couple's military backgrounds.

"Having the 'there' in your mind is the most important part. You can have plan A, but in classic military parlance 'no plan survives first contact' so you adapt the plan. The skills that we take for granted in the military are utterly invaluable because we are flexible by nature. Just because you've taken a big knock doesn't mean that the end stage isn't achievable. We've been really surprised by how useful our skills are and how very fundamental aspects of them that we take for granted are extremely valuable. Almost every day we are having that reinforced, and that feels good."

Finally, and in true Pathfinder style, we asked Phil if he had any words of advice for Service Leavers who may be considering following the franchise route to success in civilian life.

"Try to open your mind to the possibility of doing something completely different - it's one thing to say 'I'm going to do something different' but it's another thing entirely to really feel it and be open to it. Also, you need to decide just how much work you are willing to put in and whether you have the necessary family support because it is a complete commitment."

### Is Pack & Send Right For You?

Running and owning a Pack & Send store is not for everyone. The wise selection of prospective franchisees underpins the success of all franchise systems. In order to arrive at a successful 'commercial marriage', Pack & Send goes through a systematic and thoughtful approach to franchisee selection to reduce the likelihood of an 'imperfect match'. Pack & Send are looking for special people to join their team who have a blend of skills and passion bordering on fanaticism to deliver world class customer service.

Investment levels for a Pack & Send franchise vary but, as a guide, the money required to open a store in the UK is in the region of between £85,000 and £130,000 (including working capital) of which franchisees would need to have at least 30% - 50% as liquid funds. A franchisee will therefore need a minimum of £30,000 to £60,000 in liquid funds. The balance can be raised through a bank loan and Pack & Send franchisees enjoy favourable lending terms with the organisation's banking partners.

If you would like to learn more about becoming part of the Pack & Send story in the UK call Mike, Graeme or Tony on **0118 958 4628**, email them at [admin@packsend.co.uk](mailto:admin@packsend.co.uk) or visit the website at [www.packsend.co.uk](http://www.packsend.co.uk)