

getthebusiness

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Street View helps buyers

LEADING estate agent Romans has stayed ahead of the game by incorporating Google's new Street View service into its website.

Homebuyers now have access to street level images of 96 per cent of roads in the UK every time they log on to romans.co.uk.

Marketing and communications director Peter Loverdos explained: "We built Street View into our website as soon as it was available in our coverage area, to offer our customers

a better overall experience.

"We've always advised that before buying a home people should walk around the neighbourhood at different times of the day - but now our customers can also explore via our website, helping them make the best decisions when buying a property. We're very focused on our objective of offering customers the best experience and for this reason we only implement the best ideas that add real value, such as Street View."

Ceridian increase Green Park presence

HR and payroll specialist Ceridian is to more than double its space at Green Park.

The Minneapolis-based company has signed a new lease to stay at the park and is to grow from its current 6,000

sq ft at 100 Longwater Avenue to 13,000 sq ft.

Roy Carson, from Green Park owner PRUPIM, said: "We are delighted Ceridian will be staying and transferring more operations to Green Park."

BUSINESS PROFILE

KEEP TRADE
LOCAL

From Samurai swords to Prince's pedal cars

Mike Ryan's firm specialises in delivering awkward, fragile and expensive items all over the world. **PAUL ROBINS** got the lowdown

The business: Pack & Send, 91 to 93 Kings Road, Reading, (0118) 958 4498, www.packsend.co.uk/reading.

The boss: Mike Ryan.

What is your business about? "We provide highly flexible packaging and delivery solutions for the UK and worldwide for what are often quite challenging items. We specialise in the packing and sending of things that are fragile, awkward and valuable and have sent everything from a large scale Meccano model of a Ferris Wheel to Australia to a genuine Samurai sword to the US. There isn't anybody else that can provide such a broad range of packing and shipping options and provide the added comfort for those higher value items by providing our own marine transit cover."

How did you start? "The business is Australian in origin and we were asked to look at bringing it to the UK in 2007. We spent the best part of that year doing our due diligence. After two circumnavigations of the world we came to the conclusion that the business is unique and the first store opened in Reading in January 2009."

Was it easy to get started? "It took longer than we thought but I think given the economic climate we've been in for the past two years things have gone very well. Having spent my entire working life in substantial businesses it was quite incredible to witness the layers of mind numbing bureaucracy that blights small businesses - it's no wonder we don't have a more entrepreneurial culture."

Have you been affected by rising fuel prices? "No - as yet we've been able to absorb the fluctuation in fuel prices, and in fact a weaker sterling has helped a bit with our international customers as it's made the UK a more attractive place to purchase things and have them packed and sent to their own country."



DONE DEAL: Mike Ryan, fourth from left, and his team of Lex Kujawa, Phil Rivers, Suzanne Eaton and Graeme Rhodes can deliver anything, even giant Ferris Wheels



Who are your customers? "They range from private individuals to small and large businesses. We deal with art collectors, auction houses, musicians, eBay sellers, IT and electronics companies, law firms, people who have a need to send personal possessions abroad - it's a very diverse range."

What sets you apart from the rest? "Our flexibility and no limits attitude to customer service are the key to us creating raving fans as customers, and we're very proud of the high level of repeat and referral business we get as a result. Where an item is fragile, awkward, or valuable and needs to be professionally packed and is of real value to the customer, we are the ideal solution."

What have been your most unusual packaging jobs? "We've had hundreds of unusual things that we've been set the challenge of packing and sending, from an antique scale model London Routemaster Trolleybus which was only one of five left in the world, to Prince William's pedal cars which were going to auction in Switzerland."

"We've packed and shipped motorbikes, car engines, drum kits, Gary Kemp's Gibson guitar, 1,500-year-old Tang Dynasty statues - the list is endless."

"But I think the most challenging task we took on was a wealthy Australian lady who wanted to serve her dinner party guests Mars Ice Cream bars and wanted us to pack and ship 60 to her in Sydney. They had to be there in 24 hours, and of course had to arrive still frozen."

What's the secret of your success? "There are a few simple things I believe in passionately. Firstly, always keep your eyes on the horizon and don't let yourself get distracted by the turbulence of the week to week ups and downs. Secondly, treat your staff well, recognise their achievements and create a positive environment in which they can work."

"And finally never forget that it's your customers that keep you in business and if you can deliver world class service to them they'll end up being your biggest asset."

What are your plans for the future? "Our most immediate plans are to open our third store in Birmingham which we are well on the way to doing."

"After that we've got plans to open anywhere between 150 and 200 stores across the UK."

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