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Issue 055 October 2015 [www.themover.co.uk](http://www.themover.co.uk)

# TheMover



## THE CARTUS INTERVIEW

Could your company work with  
the world's biggest RMC? Page 26

Photo: Carol Gibson

# Channel Islands Trade Rates

Effects received at our Portsmouth receiving facility

## Guernsey & Jersey

0 - 500cuft	£1.70 per cuft
501-1000 cuft	£1.50 per cuft
1001 - 1500 cuft	£1.30 per cuft

Alderney, Sark, Herm rates on request.



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## H.M Customs Documentation - Channel Islands

- All goods received at our Portsmouth Channel Islands Receiving Facility must be already wrapped with an inventory and accompanied by full delivery details
- When shipping goods to The Channel Islands, Customs require three copies of your company's invoice stating country of origin & value - for new effects only
- If goods are from a foreign destination, we need to be advised if the effects are in free circulation or under transshipment
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- The only genuine 'self resourced' daily service to The Channel Islands
- Full origin services available on both Islands to FIDI FAIM standard



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## Affiliations



# TheMover

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Photo: Carol Gibson

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## LEADER

## Sell hard at IAM: you know it makes sense

.....  
**Steve Jordan, Editor**



**T**his month I will be bumping into many of you at the IAM and PAIMA conferences in San Diego. Thanks to all those who have expressed an interest in advertising with us; I look forward to helping you promote your businesses when we meet. As you know the companies that advertise with us are our only means of support, so the more we get, the better we can make the magazine.

This month the editorial is dominated by our exclusive interview with Pat DeDonato, the Senior Vice President of Supply Chain Management for Cartus. Cartus is the world's largest relocation management company and, as such, is probably the biggest customer for many of you. It's not often that we get the opportunity of interviewing such an influencer in the market and I am sure you will be interested to read Pat's take on the changing relocation industry; how suppliers are managed; the importance of moving as part of the relocation offering; the big 'C' – compliance – that preoccupies all in the industry; and how you can become a Cartus supplier. My thanks to Pat and her team for being so frank and helpful.

I would also like to thank Terry, Brian and Chuck at IAM for inviting me once again to the world's largest moving convention. Last year I wrote an honest, generally complementary, report on the Orlando convention. But it's the fact that organisations such as IAM invite me back despite my occasional criticisms that makes the communication so strong. You know, that if I say something is good, I really believe it is; because if I think it's rubbish, I will say so.

There have been many who criticise the IAM convention for its size and the fact that it's a boiling bear pit of unashamed and unadorned sales activity. For me, that's a good thing. There are plenty of opportunities in the moving calendar for those who are so inclined to engage in the vitally important process of building relationships and long-lasting friendships. IAM does that too but it also gives people the opportunity to be upfront about their companies and the benefits they can provide, and sell them unashamedly. That's probably why it's so popular.

So if you do attend IAM: embrace it, drink it in. Wear your sales hat with pride and, if you can, come away just a little more prosperous. I look forward to seeing you all there. Now, who wants to advertise next month?

**Steve Jordan**



● S Jones Containers' latest client, APL.

## S Jones Containers wins APL depot services contract

Major shipping line APL has awarded S Jones Containers Ltd an ongoing contract for container handling, inspection, repair and storage at its base in Aldridge, West Midlands.

**T**he contract adds APL to the company's impressive client list, which includes Hanjin, MSC, Marfret, OOCL, Stinnes Linien, Tarros and SLOMAN Neptun.

Andy Cargill, Depot Manager at S Jones Containers Ltd said, "This is a very important new client for us. Not only have we won a valuable customer in a fiercely competitive marketplace, we have done so at a time when the shipping industry is growing again."

"Generally, shipping lines have struggled a great deal in recent years and have represented a smaller percentage of our work than they have done historically, so it's been very satisfying to see an upturn in the amount of work we receive from our shipping line customers. Having another of the world's top ten shipping lines join us is really the icing on the cake."

Tony Pollock, APL's Head of

Operations UK & Ireland said, "We are looking forward to another long and mutually beneficial relationship and are extremely pleased with the service and customer focus we have received from S Jones."

**"Having another of the world's top ten shipping lines join us is really the icing on the cake."**

Andy Cargill

.....  
 In 2014, S Jones Containers Ltd, a fourth generation, family-owned business, celebrated its centenary after a record year of container sales, hire, conversions contracts and storage of shipping containers.

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## NEWS: UK

## HOME SALES FALL, BUT PRICES UP

According to figures published by the Land Registry the number of homes sold in England and Wales has fallen significantly while prices in some areas have increased by around 13% due to a shortage of supply.

The figures show that in May this year there were 65,619 homes sold, a drop of 15% on the same period in 2014.

Some property experts see the trend as a welcome return to normality and a cooling of the market.

Guy Meacock, head of the London office of buying agency Prime Purchase said, "Normality has returned to the market, with the panic that has driven it in the past no longer present. It is more level and sensible, which is good news for buyers."

In August the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors reported the number of homes available for sale was at a record low and that demand was outstripping supply causing upward pressure on prices.

The Land Registry also published figures in August, which showed prices rising steeply in the East of England and on the outskirts of London.



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● More first-time buyers completed property transactions in July than since August 2007.

## First-time buyer sales highest since 2007

Monthly first-time buyer sales have hit a post-recession record, according to figures obtained by estate agents Your Move and Reeds Rains.

July saw 29,700 first-time buyers complete property transactions, the highest since August 2007, before the financial crisis struck, when it stood at 35,300. The July figure also represents a 28% rise on April 2015's number (23,200) – amounting to a 6,500 increase over the last three months – as well as a 4.9% month-on-month uplift on June's figure of 28,300.

The news comes despite the rising cost of buying a home. The average first-time buyer deposit in July totalled £27,975, marking a 10% increase on July 2014's figure of £25,429. In cash terms, this equates to a rise of £2,546. The cost of a deposit as a proportion of a first-time buyer's average income reached 71.6% in July, surging 3.1 percentage points in one month alone and rising 5.4 percentage points from 66.2% a year ago.

Equally, the average first-time buyer Loan to Value ratio (LTV), which represents the proportional size of an individual's loan compared to the value of the property they are buying, is steadily dropping. This means first-time buyers are having to pay more up-front, in the form of larger deposits. July's rate, 82.7%, represents a 0.5 percentage point decrease on LTVs in June and a 0.2 point decrease on a year ago, as the size of the average deposit rises.

**"First-time buyers are experiencing a summer of white-hot activity, unimpeded by rising deposit costs."**

Adrian Gill

A similar picture emerges in the latest Mortgage Monitor from e.surv. The data revealed a decline in the number of small-deposit loans given approval in July, dropping 5.9% compared to June and 7.1% compared to July 2014.

Adrian Gill, Director of Your Move and Reeds Rains said, "First-time buyers are experiencing a summer of white-hot activity, unimpeded by rising deposit costs. The post-General Election bounce has given way to a more stable optimism, as first-time buyers realise that the property market – at least their end of it – is at no immediate risk of being tampered with by the government. Rather, incentives attractive to first-time buyers – such as the Help to Buy scheme – are running along steadily, while further low-cost housing development is being encouraged to entice more people onto the ladder."

## Furry clandestine found in Pickfords' container

These days we all have to be careful about stowaways hitching a lift to the UK in the back of our trucks. But when a furry traveller was found hiding in a Pickfords container the staff were only too pleased to find her a home.

The feline, believed to have been a street cat, had found her way into the shipping container in Limassol, Cyprus, and spent a month on the water on route to the UK. The container was unloaded and trucked to Pickfords' international warehouse in Kempston, Bedfordshire where the warehouse team discovered the tabby.

The cat was not in the best of health when the container was opened, so Pickfords gave her food and water to keep her going. The team called the local Bedford Trading Standards organisation who sent a team to collect the cat and take her into quarantine. Once given the all-clear, she was taken to the Cats Protection Birmingham Adoption Centre where she attracted a lot of interest. Unfortunately, being rather shy after her ordeal, several weeks went by before she was adopted.

Eventually, an elderly couple visited the Centre, saw the stowaway and fell in love with her. The couple were confident they would be able to coax the nervous cat out of her shell and adopted her. Miss Pickford, as the couple appropriately named her, is now enjoying the comforts of her new Birmingham home and is slowly regaining her confidence, thanks to the kindness and encouragement of her new owners.

A happy ending to a long and frightening journey.



● Miss Pickford in quarantine.



● Robinsons' vehicles bearing the new logo.

## Robinsons Relocation: 120 years old and getting even stronger

Robinsons Relocation is celebrating its 120th year in the industry by moving away from its well-known blue and yellow corporate colours and embracing a newly refreshed and sleeker grey and orange logo.

“Our rebranding exercise is proudly highlighting what four generations of Robinsons have been passionate about,” explained Anthony Robinson, Managing Director. “Our brand has naturally evolved over the years, but our core values remain untouched. We are proud of our family heritage and thrive to apply the same dedication Alfred Robinson had when he created the company in 1895. ‘Moving your way’ is simply what we do: we are committed to understanding our clients’ challenges and supporting them throughout the changes in their lives.”

Robinsons is also launching its new website. “Our industry can’t ignore the digital world,” said Anthony. “Our clients require direct and permanent access to information, so we feel it is our duty to facilitate this. Our website is a direct reflection of our business hence we wanted our professionalism and efficiency to emerge through the user experience.”

Robinsons Relocation may be investing in its brand but it’s also investing in its senior management with the arrival of Mark Lucas from Elliot Mobility in South Africa. “After

living in South Africa for the past 32 years, and working for Elliot Mobility for 16 of them, my wife and I decided to relocate back home to the UK,” Mark said. “My children had never lived in the UK and we felt that it was the most appropriate time in our lives to make this move.” Mark is ecstatic to have joined the Robinsons family at Robinsons Relocation. “It is another family owned and managed relocations and moving company. Anthony, Philippa and the team at Robinsons have welcomed me with open arms.”



● Mark Lucas joins Robinsons from Elliot Mobility.

## Community award for Pound Gates

Ipswich-based insurance broker Pound Gates has won the 2015 *East Anglian Daily Times* Business Award for Community Involvement.

The award was made in recognition of the company’s support for local charities and the enthusiastic involvement of its staff.

The judges said they were impressed by the way Pound Gates had developed its involvement in the local community and by the inspirational leadership of its senior management.

“We are really pleased that our ‘Doing Good’ ethos as we call it has

been recognised in this way,” said Pound Gates’ Director Rob Thacker. “The award reinforces our approach to balance our desire for business success with the needs of the wider community. It acknowledges the efforts of all our team and the wide variety of causes we have supported during the last 12 months.”

Pound Gates was founded in 1988 and specialises in insurance products for a number of sectors including the removals and storage industry.



● Rob Thacker and Del Sharman, Directors of Pound Gates, accepting the award from Emma Hibbert from Adnams PLC, the awards sponsors.

## Dogs go to John Mason

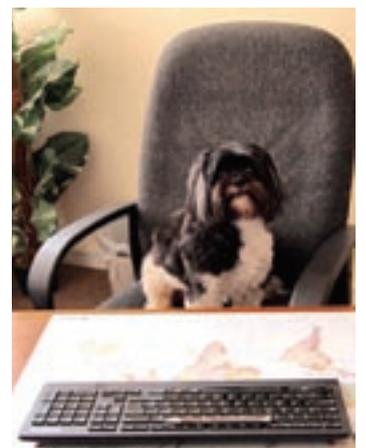
John Mason International took part in ‘Bring Your Dog to Work Day’ to fundraise for a local Dogs Trust charity. A total of seven dogs came to work for the day and were all generally very well behaved.

Each member of staff donated £10 to charity to bring their dog into the office.

Bring Your Dog to Work Day is an annual nationwide event in the UK organised by the dog grooming company HOWND. In the US it is known as Take Your Dog to Work Day and even Barack Obama took part this year taking his dog Bo into the Oval Office.

Reported benefits of dogs in the workplace include improved morale, increased productivity and stress reduction. Many

companies such as Google and Amazon welcome dogs to the workplace all year round.



● John Mason International’s COO, Noel Briscoe’s dog Jasper making himself at home in the office.

**INSIGHT:** COMPLIANCE RISKS

● Companies face increasing risk of cyber attack.

## The role of insurance in mitigating compliance risks

By Paul Norris, Broking Manager, Reason Global Insurance

Every company in the world that provides business-to-business services is now having to consider risk and compliance management as part of its business offering. Data security is an important part of compliance and the international moving business is particularly vulnerable to breaches as personal information (such as copy passports, National Insurance numbers, etc.) is exchanged as a necessary part of the process. If the worst happens, does your company insurance provide any protection to you, your customers or their assignees? If not, it should.

The general term 'compliance' includes the requirement for companies to operate within regional regulations such as the UK Bribery Act of 2010 and the US Foreign Corrupt Practices Act; to comply with all contractual obligations; and to behave in a way that develops trust between the company and its customers. What's more, it also

requires companies to take responsibility for the whole supply chain. It's a tough challenge, many say an impossible one, and even the most vigilant company lives in fear of a breach that can prove devastating for themselves and their customers.

Data security too is an important part of compliance with companies being required to ensure that all personal information, held on behalf of clients, is kept safe. However with the level of cyber attacks increasing, the chances of any company being hit are significant. If a breach occurs the costs, direct and indirect, can be crippling. New EU regulations in 2016 will require businesses to comply with more onerous rules around notification to the Information Commissioner's Office, explicit consent to hold and process data, and the right to be forgotten. Breaches could result in significant fines of up to 2% of their turnover.

A report from the UK government and Marsh (*UK Cyber Security: The*

*Role of Insurance in Managing and Mitigating the Risk* (March 2015)), for example, estimates that 81% of large UK companies and 60% of small businesses suffered a cyber-security breach in 2014. Official figures also estimate the cost of theft of customer data at £1bn. A survey by Price Waterhouse Cooper carried out in 2012 found that 72% of small businesses reported staff misuse of e-mail or the Internet and the unauthorised access of files resulting in a Data Protection Act breach, misuse or leakage of confidential information.

This is not just a local problem for the moving company concerned. A high proportion of international relocations are performed on behalf of employees of multi-national companies and are controlled through relocation management companies (RMC). These large customers rely absolutely on their reputations and any small slip will be exploited by a controversy-hungry media. Similarly the RMCs

need to demonstrate to their clients that they deal with compliance transgressors harshly. A data protection breach would easily be enough to lose a moving company their contract with a major corporation who will take a 'zero tolerance' approach.

Insurance cover cannot prevent a breach but it could just keep a mover in business should a breach occur. It might even give a corporate client some comfort that the mover takes the whole compliance issue seriously and, therefore, become a powerful part of the sales proposition.

It's fair to say, however, that cyber-risks insurance is an emerging market. With this in mind many policies do not include it. So it makes sense for movers to work with their brokers to develop cover that is appropriate for their individual businesses. This could include, for example, cover for system damage, business interruption, theft of money, cyber extortion, reputational damage, etc. and also claims by third parties, possibly the client or the RMC, following a security breach. These could include the cost of meeting claims for the loss of confidential data under the Data Protection Act and regulatory investigations caused by hacking, etc.

If a breach occurs the response from the insurance company will be to provide a range of services to protect the business and minimise the detrimental effects. These can include: the employment of public relations, crisis management, forensic and speciality services; financial compensation; the cost of replacing equipment and recovering information; business interruption costs; fines imposed by government or the public authority regulator; costs of notifying the data protection authorities of the breach; and the payment of extortion fees with associated negotiation, handling, contracting and delivery of monies.

If a corporate client has a 'zero tolerance' policy, any data breach is likely to result in a serious penalty or loss of the contract for the mover. That in itself is bad enough but there's no need for it to bring the company down too. Appropriate insurance can help a business survive what will undoubtedly be a very rocky time, allow it to ride the storm, and help protect customers too.

Reason Global Insurance is Lloyd's of London's only specialist insurance broker solely dedicated to moving, self storage and relocation.



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## NEWS: UK

## Best Rate Removals joins AIM

West London-based Best Rate Removals & Storage has become the latest member of the Alliance of Independent Movers. The company has a staff of 14 and specialises in home and commercial moves, mainly in the London area.



● Best Rate Removals & Storage.

**B**est Rate began trading in 2011 and moved to its present location in Perivale earlier this year. The company is now able to offer storage facilities, a service which Director Svetoslav Georgiev is keen to develop.

"We are a relatively new company so being a member of AIM is very useful if we need help or advice on anything relating to the business," said Svetoslav. "The guys are very experienced and they're always there if we need them. I also think it reassures customers to know we are part of a trade organisation and

have to meet high standards."

AIM founder Scott Rust said, "Best Rate Removals is a growing company and I'm delighted to welcome them as AIM members. I'm looking forward to working with Svetoslav and his team in the future."

The Alliance of Independent Movers was created to assist removers of all sizes, to grow and expand their businesses while offering their customers a high level of service. For the mover with limited resources, or even larger more established businesses, AIM can offer a wide range of benefits.

● [www.bestrateremovals.co.uk](http://www.bestrateremovals.co.uk).

## Is this an industry first?

**O**n August 7 Britannia Lanes of Cornwall received a booking for a small international move. The job itself was not exceptional, but the method in which it was converted may well be.

Mark Lane called *The Mover* as he realised that this might be the first instance in the UK of a customer booking an international move online, paying the charges and organising the insurance without ever making any direct contact with the company.

It has often been considered too difficult to set up an algorithm that can cover all the variables involved in an international move. It seems, however, that Britannia Lanes has cracked the problem.

Is this a first for the industry? Or do you know otherwise?



## FLTA launches best practice safety checklist

The UK's Fork Lift Truck Association, in partnership with Mentor Training, has launched a checklist to help managers and supervisors overseeing lift truck operations to formalise and document safety procedures.

**M**anaging Forklift Operations: *Manager's Checklist and Best Practice Guidance Notes*, was formally launched at the National Fork Lift Truck Safety Conference in Loughborough on 23 September.

Although practical resources allowing operators to record daily checks are widespread within the industry, this is believed to be the first resource specifically developed to take managers and supervisors through the essential checks necessary to maintain safe fork lift operations.

Mentor Managing Director Stuart Taylor said, "In creating this new resource, we looked for ways in which we could support the efforts

of managers and supervisors in reducing risk and keeping operations safe. They play a vital role on site – directing activity and, ultimately, they hold responsibility when operations go wrong. The safety checklists give managers and supervisors a structure for their checks, starting with operators and equipment and finishing with risk assessments and policies."

As well as a checklist, the pocket-sized booklet provides a range of information that managers might need during the space of a shift, such as important contacts, sources of further information and best practice guidance.

*Managing Forklift Operations:*



● The pocket-sized FLTA Manager's Checklist and Best Practice Guidance Notes.

*Manager's Checklist and Best Practice Guidance* is priced at £3.95 and is available exclusively from Mentor Training and the FLTA.

## John Mason International hold a Marie Curie Tea Party

**T**he John Mason fundraising team recently held a Tea Party at the office to raise funds for the UK charity Marie Curie.

Vintage tea cups and saucers were used to serve tea, coffee, sandwiches and cakes to the staff at John Mason International's head office. Staff were also asked

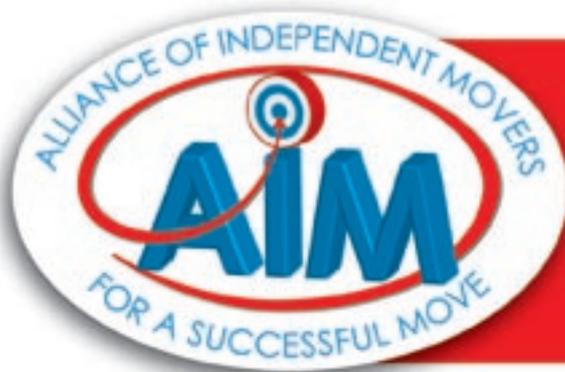
to wear something yellow for the day. A total of £200 was raised for the lunchtime offering.

Marie Curie is one of the charities that the company has decided to support this year. Marie Curie works to support and provide care for people with terminal illnesses and their families.



● International Move Manager, Amanda Hilton, at the tea party.

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## BUSINESS: CUSTOMER RELATIONS



● Above: Simon Beck (left) and Pete Ainsworth, Bradshaw's removal men of the month; below: Mark Pennington and Martin Niedziela.

Shelley Slater, Web & Marketing Manager, John Bradshaw & Son in Manchester takes a trip on the road to find out how the crew puts customers at ease to help them through a stressful day.

# Making the right impression

Removal men around the world encounter the same core issue – how to build a relationship with the customer and smooth the process of moving house for everyone involved. I've discovered it takes a mixture of skill, diplomacy and the right kind of personality to master the art of client confidence.

I wanted to learn more about the relationship between removal men and customers, so I took the opportunity to shadow some of the removal men at Britannia Bradshaw International Removals & Storage in Manchester on a few jobs.

From the moment the removal lorry pulls up outside the customer's home, the relationship with the customer begins. A knock at the customer's door, a big smile and an introduction is the normal way a removal man's day begins.

As we approached the customer's house during one of the jobs I attended, Pete Ainsworth, a porter with Britannia Bradshaw told me: "The most important thing is to put the customer at ease." As soon as the truck was parked, he was at the customer's door, his characteristic smile shining for the customer – who was visibly nervous. He asked her

about her move, engaged in a bit of chit chat and immediately found out one of her big concerns for the day was her nervous dog. Pete's attention became focussed on ensuring the dog was comfortable

**A knock at the customer's door, a big smile and an introduction is the normal way a removal man's day begins.**

with each of us, and distracted from what was going on all around. You could see the customer visibly relax as we interacted with the dog and Pete asked her questions about her move and where she was going.

The customer offered a cup of tea, which was a perfect opportunity to get to know her and how she was feeling about the move and what her needs were for the day. She was then much more comfortable when she showed Pete and the driver that day, Martin Niedziela, around





● Pete Ainsworth and Martin Niedziela (carrying sofa).

the house to explain what was to be packed for her overseas move and what was not being packed. I observed how Pete and Martin's welcoming, approachable and calming attitudes helped her to visibly relax as they spoke – she knew from their friendly yet professional demeanour that her belongings were in good hands.

As the day progressed, I noticed both Pete and Martin would check with the customer and make sure she was doing well – along with taking a few moments to play with the dog, helping to ease everyone's anxiety about the day. Pete was based mainly in the same room the customer and her dog were based in, and spoke with her a lot about her new home, why she was moving there, and generally helping to bring out her excitement about her overseas move and the new life waiting for her.

A few weeks later, I then accompanied Martin and another porter, Mark Pennington, to a relatively straightforward local move. This time, the customers were most anxious about moving their fish – something that initially eclipsed everything else for them. As with Pete on the overseas packing job I observed, Mark was out of the truck the moment we pulled up outside the house and was talking to the customer with his typical smile and humour. He quickly discovered the fish were the customers' biggest concern, and immediately addressed how they'd be moved and reassured the customers that he'd moved others with similar concerns before and they would do everything to ensure it all went smoothly.

The customers were stressing about their fish as the logistics of carrying out the move were being planned, and Mark engaged them several times, joking with them (including calling the over 6'5" tall Martin "Tiny", just to elicit a laugh), breaking the ice and relaxing them further. You could see they

understood the removal men were professional, yet personable, and their concerns about the fish were a top priority for the men, too. This seemed to be the key to ensuring the customers' satisfaction with their move.

I noted how Mark's friendly banter with customers as well as with his co-workers helped the client be much more relaxed, at ease and trusting in the removal process for their home and fish, and asked him what the secret to his success was. He simply said "It's nice to be nice", smiled and moved some more boxes into the customers' new home, with a small comment to the homeowner as he passed, which again brought out smiles and laughter from the client.

On the drive back to the yard, I asked Mark about his rapport with customers, as he truly made it look effortless to gain their trust and confidence and establish a bond with them. He told me he's been a

**As the day progressed, I noticed both Pete and Martin would check with the customer and make sure she was doing well.**

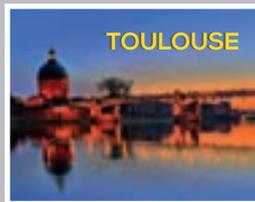
removal man most of his life, and he's learned that the first five minutes with the customer are crucial to gaining their trust. He was also very humble about his ability to win the client's confidence and smooth the way for a good removal. Combine that with his natural friendly attitude, good sense of humour, and his experience in performing removals, and I think I've found the winning combination to ensuring a good rapport and trust with the customer for moving day.



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# European Roundup

## Drivers fear greater border controls

Truck drivers say that they fear greater border controls as a result of the migrant crisis. The EU is struggling to deal with a large influx of migrants and the Member States are failing to join forces in order to agree on a common and workable solution. German Chancellor Angela Merkel said "If Europe fails to agree to a fair distribution of refugees, the passport-free Schengen zone encompassing 26 European States would be called into question".

The re-introduction of border controls across Europe would lead to serious consequences resulting not only in fuelling inflation, but it will also become very costly for everyone. Goods will become more expensive and the bill will be passed on to the consumer.

Information courtesy of FEDEMAC.



● The EU is struggling to deal with the influx of migrants.

## EU urges further VAT collection reform

The latest figures released by the European Commission show that there has been little improvement in VAT revenue collection across

EU Member States.

The difference between the amount of VAT expected and that paid has reached €168 billion, the equivalent of 15.2% loss in revenue. The gap is caused by a combination of fraud, evasion, tax avoidance,

bankruptcies, financial insolvencies and miscalculation. The problem is lowest in Finland, the Netherlands and Sweden and worst in Romania.

Pierre Moscovici, Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs, Taxation and Customs said: "I urge Member States to take the steps needed to fight tax evasion and tax fraud at all levels. This remains a burning issue and is at the top of this Commission's agenda."

## No Ecotax in France

The French government does not intend to bring back a regional environmental tax. A spokesperson for the Prime Minister's office stated that: "The government has no plans at all to open this possibility."

Carriers are firmly opposed to any revival of the Ecotax. Furthermore it is against community law to impose any taxes solely on foreign trucks as it will be discriminatory.

## A new home for OMNI

OMNI moved into new office accommodation on 15 August. The new office is just a short distance from the old address but the serviced office from Regus provides much more flexible accommodation that better suits the organisation's current needs.

The move was completed by DT Moving over the weekend to minimise disruption to the

working of the office. Ian Waters, General Manager of OMNI, was very pleased with the way the move was handled. "The boys did an excellent job," he said.

The new OMNI address is: 3000 Cathedral Hill, Guildford, Surrey, GU2 7YB. The phone number remains unchanged: +44 (0) 208 0995395 as do all e-mail addresses.



● Ian Waters with the DT Moving crew on moving day.

## EUROMOVERS International

Worldwide Movers Alliance

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● New regulations are a headache for families with children relocating to South Africa.

## South Africa's anti-trafficking regulations causing headaches for global mobility

New regulations for parents and guardians taking children into South Africa are causing a headache not only for tourists but also for HR departments and those on business assignments, according to global mobility expert Crown World Mobility.

**T**he controversial regulations, designed to combat child trafficking, require adults to produce a birth certificate for any children travelling with them – and possibly a letter of authority from any absent parents – before being allowed to enter the country.

The South African government has recently appointed a special committee to look in to the new Regulations, amid widespread criticism. However the issue of child trafficking is clearly hugely important and the Minister of Tourism, Derek Hanekom and Minister of Home Affairs, Malusi Gigaba have openly disagreed over what the most appropriate solution should be.

Ben Sookia, EMEA Immigration Manager at Crown World Mobility said: "The regulations were brought in for laudable reasons but have proved a major headache for those on global mobility programmes as well as for tourists. They also cause delays at airports all over the world for people travelling to South Africa. We anticipate there is a possibility that the regulations will be amended in the coming months. But, until we obtain confirmation in writing from the Department of Home Affairs in South Africa, our advice is that all foreign nationals – and any person travelling to or from South Africa – should comply fully with the regulations. It is important that the HR departments inform employees of the new regulations and make sure that any person travelling to

**"The regulations were brought in for laudable reasons but have proved a major headache ..."**

Ben Sookia

South Africa with children obtains all the relevant documents before travelling."

The Regulations could prove particularly complicated for families of assignees wishing to visit. If both parents are not travelling together then a letter of consent from the absent parent may be required. Single parents may need to bring a court order which confirms they are the legal guardian. Friends of the family bringing children to visit who are not their own face a long list of requirements – including an affidavit from the parents, copies of the parents' passports, contact details of the parents and the child's 'unabridged' birth certificate, defined as one that contains the details of both the child's parents, including their marital status and whether they are the biological parents

"For a lot of people this could prove very complicated," said Ben Sookia. "So it is important HR departments make families aware of the details as early as possible if a visit is being planned."

## The European Connection

Tony Richman



### The European Commission and maternity: new legislation or new objectives?

**I**n August, the European Commission published a roadmap setting out policy options to address the challenges of work-life balance faced by working families. This initiative focuses on parenthood rather than gender equality, aiming to facilitate a balance between home and professional responsibilities. Essentially, the Commission is reframing a policy to revise the Maternity Leave Directive that it failed to build consensus around. The Commissioner is now shifting attention from women to parents and from child bearing to productivity.

The aim is to address the low participation of women in the labour market by modernising and adapting current EU legal and policy framework to today's labour market; to help parents with children or those with dependent relatives better balance caring and professional responsibilities; and to increase women's economic independence.

Proposed initiatives include: extending flexible working arrangements to both parents and women and men with caring responsibilities and strengthening the enforcement of those rights; inviting the social partners to assess their agreements on parental leave, fixed-term work and part-time work; better enforcement of and new incentives for take-up of parental leave by fathers; improvements to the Maternity Leave Directive; and the introduction of carers' leave.

But perhaps this is not the best timing for a new initiative focussing on the labour market argument?

The German Minister of Finance has recently asked for a repatriation of power from the Commission, particularly on market regulation and some

countries, such as the UK, already have proposals around 'closing the gender pay gap'.

Such matters may well leave the European Commissioner trying to walk a very thin line, as her plan will not really be about equality, but about 'flexibility' at work, about productivity gains, about getting the number-crunchers rather than 'social change' activists excited.

By taking out the 'motherhood penalty' for female labour market participation, the idea is to expand the labour force participation of women amidst and ever aging work force and, thereby increase contributions, tax revenue, and productivity.

Womens' rights are now seen to be set on the margins of the discussion. The emphasis would be on child care, easing the return of mothers into the workforce, preventing unfair dismissals, allowing working hours and work place flexibility, making work easier to do. Making it easy, not quite empowering, is the idea!

Moving from rights-based to economic discourse will no doubt be interesting. The Commissioner will be arguing that it is better to add women into the labour market than to bail out countries; better to bring a lower common pension denominator than slash mens' pensions; better to speak of 'flex-security' than part-time work and working poor. In essence the political argument in Brussels is that the issue of maternity leave as a woman's right has been given up in the form of a 'not good enough' Directive, to pursue a 'what's good for business, is good' Directive.

The Commissioner may get her Directive through, but will that do something for women?

## INTERVIEW: SUDEEP SHAH



● Left: Sudeep with Bruno Gomez of the UN World Food Programme; below left: Sudeep's son Sudev, collecting from the airport at 2 am; below: Sudeep with Joseph Abdo of Care Canada.



# NEPAL: AFTER THE SHOCK

Steve Jordan interviewed Sudeep Shah from Orient International Relocations about the day the earthquake hit.

It was about mid-day that the earthquake hit Nepal. Saturday, 25 April, a day of rest. Sudeep Shah from Orient International Relocations was planning a relaxing day with his wife and daughter in Kathmandu: a visit to the temple followed by lunch somewhere nice.

The earthquake registered 7.8 on the Richter scale. Its epicentre was just 80km north-west of Kathmandu and its hypocentre just 15km deep, shallow by comparison to some and very destructive. Kathmandu moved 10ft to the south in 30 seconds. 10,000 people died; 23,000 were injured; hundreds of thousands were left homeless. It was the worst natural disaster in the country for over 80 years.

"Suddenly the house started shaking like a matchbox," said Sudeep. "The windows were rattling, the doors were banging, people were screaming. A 200kg refrigerator moved five feet across the floor. I can't describe the feeling. We were terrified. We thought it was the last moments of our lives."

Sudeep had experienced

earthquakes before but nothing like this one. "This was just like a bomb exploding," he said. "It went on for about 45 seconds, but time seemed to stop." Then came the aftershocks, some almost as strong as the main

**"About 1km from my house was a 300ft-high victory monument. It fell on the city killing 250 people."**

Sudeep Shah

quake, that kept everyone outside the buildings for safety. "They just kept on coming." Asked for how long they had continued Sudeep said that the last one had been only two days earlier: 8 July, over two months after the initial shock. And they continue.

"People were running on the streets trying to find out if everyone was OK and sometimes finding that someone had died," said Sudeep. "About 1km from my house was a 300ft-high victory monument. It fell on the city killing 250 people."

Miraculously Sudeep and his family were physically unharmed and his house undamaged. His company too escaped without serious damage although everything had been thrown around the offices.

For a day the situation was very confused. Then Sudeep received a call from Care International (an international non-government organisation) saying that supplies were coming into the airport and that his help was needed. "There was only the Nepalese army at the airport; no customs people. We could only identify the flights by their call signs."

But the aid came in from all over the world and Sudeep, his son Sudev and their crews worked tirelessly to distribute it to the people who

needed it most. Normal business was on hold. There was no Internet or power for a week. Sudeep's only connection to the world was his Blackberry which miraculously was functional and was charged by the car charger. All his trucks were switched to relief work. "We felt it was our duty to save our nation first," he said. At the time of writing Orient International had already distributed 3,800 tonnes of building materials and essential supplies. The work continues.

Inside the old city of Kathmandu there are still hundreds of people living in tents and everything is badly damaged. In the outlying villages the problem is worse. It's the most mountainous region on earth. Relief work is slow. Now it's started raining, roads are slippery, even tractors can't get through, and the helicopters, provided by foreign governments at the height of the crisis, have returned to their bases.

But for Sudeep and his men the work continues and he is very grateful for all the help that his country received from outside. "I must thank all of the volunteers and the governments who have come to Nepal to help," he said. "They give their time and effort and put their lives in danger. They are still working here. I met many wonderful people from different countries. One, a Care volunteer from Lebanon, Joseph Abdo, worked 18 hours a day, he didn't sleep. This is what motivates us. People trying to help without any monetary interest. We are really thankful to them."

Asked what others can do to help now, Sudeep said that he believes that the bad time is over. "But we still need help to support the victims in the villages," he said. "I ask that people continue to donate to the aid agencies such as Care, the Red Cross and Action Aid, because they will make sure the help gets to where it's needed." Beyond that Sudeep said that they needed nothing more than our good wishes.

Rebuilding Nepal will be a long process. It's a beautiful but poor country that has been ruined by bad politics. But Sudeep has an important message for everyone that the disaster has brought into clear focus for him. "Despite all the terrible things that are happening in the world, natural or otherwise, I want you to know that humanity still prevails over trouble."

May it always remain so. And on behalf of the rest of the global moving industry Sudeep, be assured, you have our good wishes.

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NEWS: INTERNATIONAL

## Movers at the EMEA EMMAs

The moving industry is well represented on the shortlist for the EMEA EMMAs (Expatriate Management and Mobility Awards) from the Forum for Expatriate Management in 2015.

The EMMAs celebrate excellence and innovation in global mobility. An independent judging panel assess nominees against a strict set of criteria, including client communication, innovation, knowledge, skills and expertise in their nominated category.

Categories in which the moving industry is shortlisted are:

Best survey or research study

AlReS

Sterling Relocation

Most innovative use of technology

Sterling Relocation

International Moving company of the year

Bishops

Bournes

Harrow Green

Icon Moving Services

Pickfords

Immigration provider of the year

Sterling Relocation

Destination services provider of the year

EMS (Employee Mobility Solutions)

Santa Fe

Icon Moving Services

Relocation management company of the year

AlReS

EMS (Employee Mobility Solutions)

Graebel

Santa Fe

Sterling

The winners will be announced at a gala dinner and ceremony at The EMEA Global Mobility Summit at the Lancaster London Hotel on 6 November.



● DFDS Seaways.

## Agreement reached on the Dover-Calais route

DFDS has announced that an agreement between the staff representatives of SCOP-SeaFrance, Eurotunnel and DFDS, concerning the release of the Channel ferries *Rodin* and *Berlioz*, was reached with the assistance of the French transport minister on Monday August 31.

As part of the agreement, DFDS is committing to the employment of 202 former SCOP-SeaFrance employees in its French organisation.

Depending on when Eurotunnel is able to deliver the ships to DFDS Seaways, the *Berlioz* and *Rodin* are expected to be deployed during Q4 2015 on Dover-Calais together with

Calais Seaways. This means that DFDS Seaways will operate three ferries on this route instead of two ferries, which are in service today. Malo Seaways, which currently sails alongside Calais Seaways, will be deployed elsewhere in DFDS' network.

DFDS will therefore operate a total of six ferries out of Dover to Calais and Dunkirk respectively, with three ferries on each route. The additional frequency and capacity of the future operational set-up will enhance DFDS' offering to both freight customers and passengers.

Carsten Jensen, Senior Vice President at DFDS Seaways said: "This ends a long period of uncertainty for both our employees and our customers on the Channel as this agreement gives us the platform needed to create a sustainable ferry service. It also means that we have an equal number of French and UK flagged ships making the service a truly Anglo-French partnership, which we believe is in everyone's best interests."

## Paramount partners with OIC to help children

In March 2015, Paramount Transportation Systems in North Carolina teamed up with the Orthopaedic Institute for Children (OIC), a world leader in orthopaedic care, education and research. Through the OIC's Corporate Giving Program, paramount will donate \$5 for every move it completes anywhere in the world. The program is expected to raise more than \$100,000 for OIC's new pediatric orthopaedic surgery centre, scheduled to open in Los Angeles next year.

Dr Anthony A Scaduto, President and CEO of OIC commented: "Because of corporate partners like you we are able to provide the highest level of orthopaedic

care to kids who need it."

To put this into perspective, Rob Cormier from Paramount sent *The Mover* a story about a 15-year-old girl called Bibiana from Tanzania. Bibiana and her sister suffer from albinism. In her society the blood and bones of albinos are highly sought after by witch doctors. When she was ten, and under the care of her uncle, intruders broke into her home and amputated her leg and two fingers. Her uncle was complicit in the attack. OIC has now teamed up with African Millennium Foundation, Hanger Prosthetics and Ronald McDonald House to look after her.

Whatever their religious beliefs or local traditions, however



● Bibiana with her guardian and Dr Scaduto during one of her physical therapy sessions at the Orthopaedic Institute for Children. She continues to make good progress.

impoverished her family, nothing can justify this. Are there no limits to human wickedness?

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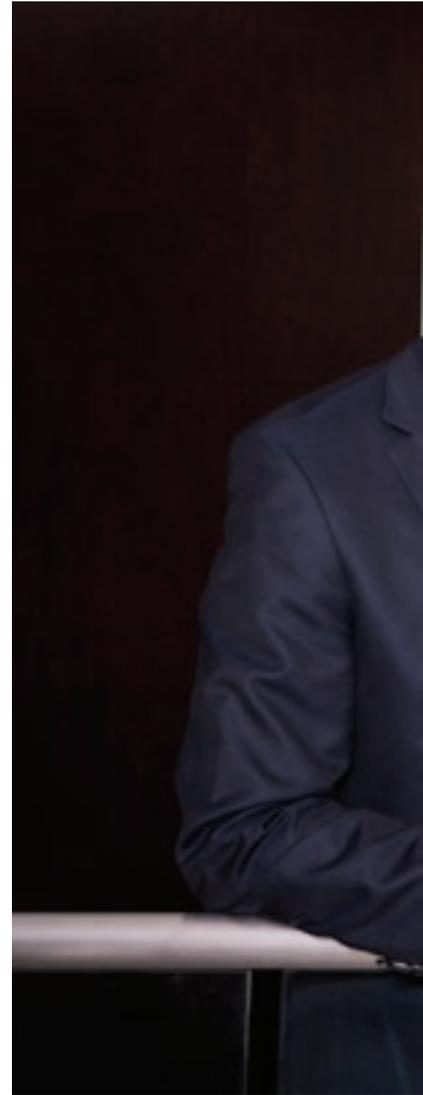
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PROFILE: ARMSTRONG MOVING

# THE ARMSTRONG PRINCIPLE

It's been over 30 years since Dale Armstrong bought a moving company in Toronto, changed its name to Armstrong Moving, and started building it into one of the country's most successful moving organisations. Steve Jordan spoke to him to find out how.



**T**he moving company that Dale bought was virtually worthless, had a poor reputation and one broken-down truck. But Dale realised that he had a talent that could be applied to any business: the ability to get good people around him. With hard work and dedication the business expanded first to do local moves in the city, then long haul within Canada, long distance moves in the USA, international moves, fine art and commercial warehousing.

Asked what has been the key to his success, Dale makes it sound deceptively simple: "We consistently apply the proven business principles of continuous investment in the latest technology, staff training and process improvement," he said. "All our management and employees embrace the culture of 'better today than yesterday'."

Dale is the CEO of the company. His fellow owners are Rod Speers, President and Derek Duffy, Vice President. "There are some things that we do really well," explained

Derek. "We embrace these things passionately."

One of those key things is people development. "We know that if we can make our people a little better today than they were yesterday, we are going to keep growing," said Derek. "The business benefits of low staff turnover, job satisfaction

"We know that if we can make our people a little better today than they were yesterday, we are going to keep growing ..."

**Derek Duffy**

and higher profits will follow."

One of the ways in which Armstrong is true to its principles is the Armstrong College that is dedicated to ensuring that every

employee is at the top of their game. Derek explained that the idea was not necessarily to focus on technical subjects such as learning about documentation or packing skills, it is more about self development.

"We recently had a naturopathic doctor come to talk to us about how we can all strengthen our immune systems," he said. "By having healthier employees we help them to embrace their lives both at home and at work. This type of lifestyle advice is woven into the curriculum of the Armstrong College."

The College has been operating now for over ten years. During that time guest speakers have included experts on: insurance, public speaking, physical fitness, how to write e-mails properly, and even ergonomics to help those who sit at their desks all day to do so efficiently and safely. Last year the College organised a packing competition that was open to everyone except the packers. One of the road crew gave a brief tutorial then all the

office staff had a go at packing a china barrel. When they had finished, the barrels were cut open to see how everyone's work compared with the professional job.

"We were all surprised how well everyone did," said Derek. "Because they are very detailed people they went about their task meticulously. It would have taken them a month to pack a house but it did give them a good appreciation of what the packers do."

Attendance at the College is compulsory for everyone, including the business owners. "It's mandatory," said Derek, "But they don't need any encouragement. Most people are very happy to take part." At the end of each session, which may include plenary meetings and workshops, the participants complete a short survey to rate the course and to provide feedback on what other topics they would like covered in the future. This level of engagement has allowed Armstrong to shape and grow the educational programme over the years.

## PROFILE: ARMSTRONG MOVING



● Left: Armstrong Moving's Toronto offices; above, left to right: Derek Duffy, Dale Armstrong and Rod Speers.

The day after every session the staff take part in a test to assess what they have gained from the previous day's course. They are grouped into teams to inject a little competition with the winning team being awarded a prize. "It's very engaging with everyone encouraging each other," said Derek. The company even publishes a "Top 10" list of who's doing best. Armstrong also invites customers to speak at the College to provide an insight into the complexities of their business.

The benefits of this type of education are not always easy to quantify. It's more a question of faith: you know it works so just do it without necessarily assessing every twist and turn. "We don't have statistics on the success of the programme but there is a massive amount of research that says that the companies that invest in training for employees do better," explained Dale. "We know that it helps us to attract and retain employees. It's a major differentiating factor when working at our company."

The Armstrong College has become a vital part of the company's development that sets it apart from much of its competition. But there are other aspects of the company that have also contributed to its success. It is, for example, a culturally diverse company. That is partly because Canada, as a country built

"We have people who are fluent in 15 languages and we are very good at making sure we use that cultural diversity for the benefit of our customers."

**Dale Armstrong**

on migration, is culturally very mixed anyway, but it's also because Armstrong has made sure its staff represent as many sections of global

society as possible.

"Over 50% of our people were born outside Canada," said Dale. "We have people who are fluent in 15 languages and we are very good at making sure we use that cultural diversity for the benefit of our customers. Being able to work in their mother tongue can be a great comfort to people when they are dealing with unfamiliar subjects such as visas or customs clearance." The importance of this type of diversity was highlighted at one of the staff feedback sessions following a College course.

Another area singled out for attention was the differing needs and skills of generations. The company's workforce includes baby boomers, Generation X and Generation Y employees, who all have different skills, outlooks and ambitions. "These generational differences are fascinating and looking closely at them makes sure that we touch all the important things for each group," said Derek.

The Armstrong principle of making

everyone today a little better than yesterday does sound simple, but it's not. To pull it off requires constant attention and dedication to the cause. Two of the company's latest initiatives, for example, are the Move for Hunger campaign for which Armstrong has become one of the top ten contributors; and Tree Canada that provides reforestation for areas of the country following natural disasters such as flooding or damage from human activity such as mining. "This type of Corporate Social Responsibility activity is very important to us and our customers," explained Dale.

So yes, to build a successful moving company you have to be able to do the moves well. But there is a lot more to it than that. It has become a cliché that a company's staff are its greatest asset, but it is true and the way in which a company motivates, rewards and educates its people is critical to its development. For Armstrong Moving, this principle has served it well in the past and will continue to do so in the future.

**INSIGHT:** MEASURING *THE MOVER*

● The Mover's Editor, Steve Jordan.

## Measuring *The Mover*

Steve Jordan takes a look at the global reach of *The Mover* and how readers prefer to keep up to date with the industry and its people.

**W**hen *The Mover* magazine started life in April 2011 we billed it as the world's first and only independent publication specifically for the global moving industry. It caught on quickly, and is now read widely by the people who make up this extraordinary industry of ours. But just how far does it go? Who reads it? Why should anyone care?

When it started, *The Mover* was published in hard copy and mailed to every major moving company in the UK. The magazine's website [www.themover.co.uk](http://www.themover.co.uk) was, of course, available for anyone to view and carried all the news from each issue, plus latest news items that were too time sensitive for a printed publication, and a pdf copy of the latest and all back issues. Today that has not changed, however, the number of online readers has expanded steadily and continues to

do so.

If you look at the raw statistics and compare them with the stratospheric figures claimed by some YouTube posts, you will get the wrong impression. Even globally the moving industry is niche and relatively small. However, what is undoubtedly true is that there are more people reading *The Mover* online every month than attend every moving convention around the world put together in a whole year: that's a lot of movers.

Some of those readers are responding to our monthly newsletter which we send by e-mail to around 6,300 movers worldwide every month to accompany the release of each new issue of the magazine. The newsletter carries a note from me as editor, with my recommended stories for a global audience. Statistically around 23% of those recipients open the e-mail every month (not always the same people of course) which is

much higher than the industry average for media sent in this way, and an above average number of those actually click through to read more stories from the website.

Understandably perhaps, just over half the online readers are in the UK (despite the magazine being sent in hard copy to all major movers there anyway), however that still leaves over 40% being read in the rest of the world. The USA is second on the list with almost 8% of the total, rather surprisingly followed by the Netherlands with a similar figure. There are also an impressive number of readers from far and wide including Australia, India, Japan, Singapore and New Zealand all appearing in the top 15 locations. In August there was even one reader in Syria, one in Yemen and two in Afghanistan where you might have thought they had other things on their minds.

For me the novelty of bumping into someone I don't know, thousands of miles from home, who is an avid reader, has never quite worn off. I attended IAM last year in Orlando and nearly everyone I met knew of the magazine and some said they were fans. It was great to hear. Being a little cynical I thought 'well they would say that wouldn't they', but then they promptly started talking about some of the stories. I thought, Wow! They really have read it.

I'm told 63% of online readers choose to access *The Mover* through their desktop machines. This is, presumably, for lunch time entertainment. 26% use mobiles and a further 11% prefer a tablet. Outlook is by far the favourite e-mail client and, remarkably, 91% of mobile users choose an iPhone with only 1% choosing BlackBerry and 2% using an Android device.

The global reach of the magazine has been greatly enhanced by our coverage of overseas events. With the help of my brother David (Deputy Editor) we have attended and reported on almost every moving convention in the world for the last two years. It has involved us in a lot of travelling but we feel it's important to include as much international news every month as we can, and we greatly value contributions from around the world. We are also building up quite a few air miles between us!

I believe the success of the magazine is not just a result of its international bias. Its independence means we can include stories about anything we feel is interesting. We don't have an agenda, we just want to inform and entertain our readers. This means we can say what we like and be honest. We don't go in for 'corporate speak' or hyperbole. We are very straightforward. We never try to upset anyone either, we just tell the truth. If people don't like it, that's their problem.

You can use *The Mover* to promote your company to the international trade. Advertising allows you to shout your name and service as loud as you like, but sometimes a more subtle editorial can be just as effective. Our editorial must be informative or entertaining and preferably both. If it happens to promote an organisation too, that's fine with me.

If you'd like to know more about *The Mover* and how it can help you get your message out to the world give me a call on +44 (0) 1980 695500, or drop an e-mail to [steve@themover.co.uk](mailto:steve@themover.co.uk).

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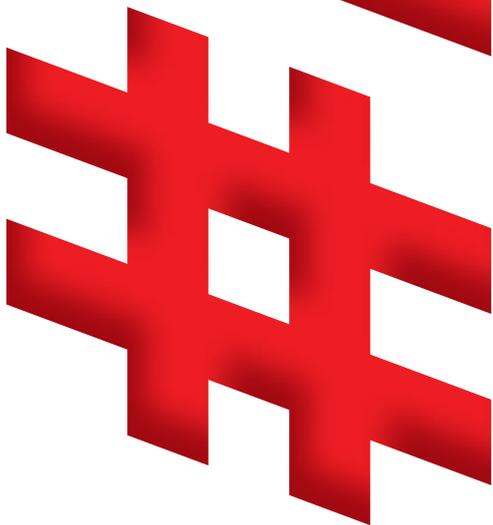
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# Working with Cartus

Pat DeDonato is the Senior Vice President of Supply Chain Management for Cartus. As such, she is customer to a large proportion of the moving and relocation industry worldwide. Steve Jordan talked to her to find out how Cartus manages its supplier relationships.



Photo: Carol Gibson

**C**artus is the largest relocation management company in the world. It started business in 1955 in Connecticut, USA, so this year is celebrating its 60th anniversary. The company works with almost half of the Fortune 100 companies, employs 3,000 people in 18 offices worldwide, and last year helped 171,000 people relocate to or from 150 countries. The company provides a livelihood for many of the world's corporate movers and destination services providers.

Pat DeDonato is responsible for the management of the Cartus supplier network. She's worked for the company

for 28 years and has seen the business flourish and adapt to meet the changing needs of its most exacting clients. Although Cartus works with the giants of industry, its worldwide client base includes companies of all sizes and in all business sectors, all with specific and varied needs.

So, how can a company that must have tight process control to manage its high volume and vast supplier base, provide a bespoke service to rival that of much smaller, fleet-of-foot relocation companies? "We have our standard processes across the company, but we are very flexible with what services we can offer and are constantly evolving to improve our service

● Above: Pat DeDonato has been with Cartus for 28 years.

offerings," explained Pat. "We can, and do, custom design our processes to suit each client's needs. We have a dedicated team who work closely with clients regardless of whether they are small, medium or large."

#### Managing the network

Cartus manages its supplier network very carefully using a matrix system that balances cost and service standards, and through a continual process of site visits, audits, and compliance assessments, ensures that suppliers achieve the company's exacting standards. The matrix is very precise and leaves nothing

## COVER STORY: PAT DeDONATO INTERVIEW



**“We have to make sure we have enough suppliers to cover our capacity but also the right suppliers going into our customers’ homes.”**

Pat DeDonato

open to interpretation; therefore, it’s a necessarily objective process.

As a service- and cost-driven business, supplier relationships are critical to their success but of secondary importance. “We select members for their expertise and

reliability,” Pat explained. “We monitor our suppliers on an ongoing basis and make sure we align our customers with companies that are experts in their field and understand their unique needs. Service is the ticket to the game; suppliers operate as an extension of Cartus, so it’s very important who we place our customers with.”

Each supplier’s performance is repeatedly entered into the matrix, with customer feedback being of prime importance. And whether Cartus retains them as a member of their supply chain depends not only on customer feedback but also on numerous other factors, such as innovative practices, meeting or exceeding service metrics that are measured quarterly, offering competitive pricing, and more.

For international household goods, those suppliers that have proved themselves capable of providing the required quality or service and ability to accede to Cartus’ compliance requirements take part in a transparent e-procurement system. This allows each company to bid on moves for a specific route. “As long as the service standard is met, we will choose the best price for the route,” explained Pat. “It creates an element of competition on every move. If a company’s service is good but they are not getting moves, it may be because the costs are too high.”

Cartus also manages the price and service balance by controlling the volume given to each supplier. On international moves, this allows a company to negotiate with shipping lines for the best price for a given volume; however, service is still key. “We can negotiate the best rate depending on the volume we give the suppliers. But without the ability to offer the appropriate level of service, they won’t be offered the move,” she explained.

#### Getting a foot in the door

Keeping high standards for their suppliers helps maintain Cartus’ reputation. “Over the years, we have built up our networks based on service, cost, and compliance,” said Pat. However, she added, if a customer is relocating to an area that is not served by the network, or if the existing suppliers are not performing well, the company will engage in a full procurement exercise to see what suppliers it would like to invite into the network. The company will check out potential suppliers in the area and start a conversation with them.

#### Importance of moving

As with all relocation companies, the moving industry plays a crucial part in Cartus’ operation. “Moving companies are at the frontline of many of our engagements; they not only represent themselves but they also represent Cartus,” said Pat. “We have to make sure we have enough suppliers to cover our capacity

but also the right suppliers going into our customers’ homes. The importance of the moving industry can’t be overestimated.”

#### Working with compliance

Compliance is a huge issue that faces not only Cartus, but also the industry as a whole. Complying with local laws in each country as well as the US and UK regulations on bribery and corruption can be a minefield. Companies that work with Cartus not only need to meet the company’s compliance standards but must ensure that their entire supply chain does, too. This includes the treatment of personal information, prohibitions on bribery and corruption, health, safety, security, and the environment. “We’ve invested very heavily in a risk management system called ‘Compliance 360’ that enhances our ability to collect and report on supplier compliance,” explained Pat. “It produces a whole view of each supplier’s compliance level, houses all the relevant information and can track and run reports on individual suppliers as a clear demonstration of global compliance.”

It is essential that all suppliers acknowledge their contractual obligations. However, the system isn’t entirely self-regulatory. Every six months, Cartus runs international watch list checks on its suppliers. Every year, suppliers must take an online certification module to make sure they are trained properly with respect to customer service, business ethics, US foreign corrupt practices, the UK Bribery Act, and other legislation. “We make sure that we remind suppliers of this often, and when we are onsite with them we do a double check to confirm the self-certification,” said Pat. “Our reach is very wide, and our commitment to compliance is at the top of our priority list.”

Pat isn’t opposed to using a third-party compliance certification service but currently, she feels that the internal system is sufficiently thorough. However, if Cartus became even stricter with its regulations in the future, third-party monitoring wouldn’t be ruled out.

#### Zero tolerance

As with any company and process, things can go wrong and mistakes are sometimes unavoidable. Pat was extremely clear on the process for dealing with these mistakes. “It depends on what goes wrong and where. If it’s a compliance issue, it goes straight into the 360 system.” This triggers an evaluation to see whether any law has been broken or if a simple conversation is all that’s necessary. If it is a service defect, their ‘Service Watch Programme’ aims to help the supplier regain the position in the network and help them improve. If it’s more serious, it could be the end of the relationship. “We can work with each »

**COVER STORY:** PAT DeDONATO INTERVIEW



other to provide a solution or we end the relationship, depending on the issue," explained Pat.

Of course there are many countries where corruption is endemic, and it seems that nothing can be done without making facilitation payments. However, Cartus has a zero tolerance on this practice. "It's not acceptable for us," explained Pat. "Legislation prohibits it and even though Cartus is a US company, it does business all over the world so we are committed to meeting the laws of all the countries we operate in." Pat explained that if this means a shipment of goods is delayed, they just have to accept it as an unfortunate fact of life in that location, and they always explain the situation to the customer. "Communication is key," she said, adding "one hundred percent of the time, people understand we have to abide by laws."

Pat did say, also, that disclosure was much preferable to discovery. "If a supplier is struggling for any reason, we need to know about it as soon as possible so we can work with them to arrive at a solution or, rarely, make a decision to end the relationship." She added that it was imperative that any problems be disclosed by the vendor—not discovered by Cartus or, worse still, by the customer or client.

**The changing relocation industry**  
Cartus has been in the relocation



Photo: Carol Gibson

**"If a supplier is struggling for any reason, we need to know about it as soon as possible so we can work with them to arrive at a solution ..."**

Pat DeDonato

industry for 60 years. Over that time, the changes it has seen have been many. Developments in technology have changed the face of relocation forever. But Pat isn't fazed by developments in technology; she embraces the possibilities of them

building their business. "It will help us improve our services," she said, making special mention of the Cartus mobile phone app and the annual 'Best Innovation' awards given to suppliers at the annual Cartus Global Network Conference in recognition and celebration of their development and implementation of new products that enhance the business.

But will technology ever take over completely, making relocation professionals redundant? Pat thinks not. "There are so many moving pieces to a customer's transfer that need to be coordinated in a single place," she said. "A lot can be done

through technology to make it easier, but it still needs the human touch to help them through that time of their lives. They need to get on with their new job, and we need to make it easier for them to do that."

Cartus was founded on a simple vision: to ease relocation for its clients and their transferring employees. That vision is still as strong today as it ever was and, in an ever more demanding world, the supply chain for the world's largest relocation company needs to be on its toes. Top service, competitive pricing and an absolute adherence to risk and compliance requirements are fundamental. It is likely to stay that way for the foreseeable future.

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GLOBAL RELOCATIONS

**NEWS: ON THE ROAD**



● The road to the future.

## Plastic roads could be just around the corner

**D**utch construction company VolkerWessels has come up with a revolutionary new concept in road building that could bring an end to potholes and delays due to road maintenance and repairs. PlasticRoad is made from 100% recycled material, is virtually maintenance free, is relatively cheap to construct and is expected

to last three times longer than a conventional tarmac road.

PlasticRoad has many other advantages over conventional roads. Plastic is much more sustainable and opens the door for a number of new innovations such as quieter road surfaces, heated roads and modular construction. Additionally, the PlasticRoad design features a 'hollow' space

that can be used for cables, pipes and rainwater.

The PlasticRoad is still an idea on paper at the moment; the next stage is to build and test it in a laboratory to make sure it's safe in wet and slippery conditions. VolkerWessels is currently looking for partners to collaborate on a pilot – as well as manufacturers in the plastics industry.

## Insurance broker urges movers to regularly check driving licences

**S**pecialist insurance broker Reason Global is reminding moving companies of the need to maintain up to date checks on their drivers' licences following the abolition of the paper counterpart. Failure to report a driving conviction to the company's insurers could result in difficulties in the event of a claim.

Since 9 June employers are required to go online to check their employees' driving record but to do so they must first ask their drivers to obtain an access code from the DVLA website. The code must be used within 21 days of being issued and may be used only once.

The Department for Transport recommends checking licences at least annually but urges operators to risk-assess their driver and vehicle profile and consider more frequent checks if they are deemed to be appropriate. For example, companies with a high percentage of young drivers or people newly arrived from overseas may wish to carry out quarterly checks.

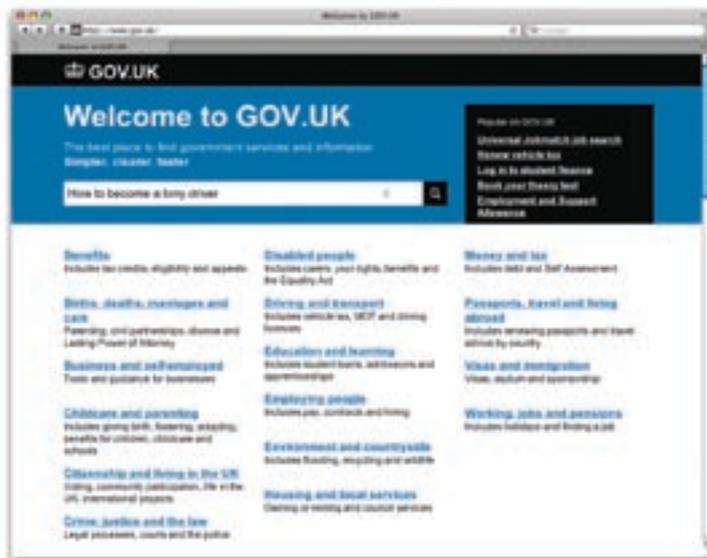
Reason Global Director John Luker said, "Checking drivers' licences is more time consuming than it was in the days of the paper counterpart. As a prudent vehicle operator it is still important to maintain regular checks and where necessary inform the insurance provider if there are changes to a driver's status."

All insurance contracts work on the principal of 'utmost good faith', in other words both parties are legally obliged to reveal any information that may influence the decision to provide cover. While in practice a relatively minor driving offence may not adversely affect the outcome of a claim, a more serious infringement may well do so and it is the responsibility of the insured to keep information insurers have up to date and accurate.

The consequences of a claim being rejected by an insurance company could be catastrophic, so having a robust system in place to regularly check driving licences and keep insurers informed of any changes is vital.

## New information for budding HGV drivers

**T**he Driver Vehicle Standards Agency has rewritten its advice about how to become a lorry driver. The new information explains very clearly the process including the requirements for Driver CPC qualification. Anyone wishing to become a lorry driver should go to [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) and type 'how to become a lorry driver' in the search bar.



● Right: [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).



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**PROFILE:** GEBR. ROGGENDORF

# Rock 'n' roll 'n' moving

Gebr. Roggendorf from Cologne became the top booker through the EUROMOVERS network in 2014. It is a company that is not only one of the founders of the network but remains totally committed to the concept both at home in Germany and internationally. It has built its reputation on a diet of hard work, commitments and a little rock 'n' roll.

**M**anfred Roggendorf and his brother Walter run the company that was founded by their father, Theo, 50 years earlier. "Our father was a freak," said Manfred. "He just loved the moving industry and never stopped talking about it." Sadly he died five years ago.

But he lived to see his company grow to one of the largest and most respected in Germany. Today the company performs domestic, international and commercial moves for its private and corporate clients. Gebr. Roggendorf also has an impressive 6,000m<sup>2</sup> archive storage facility and provides move consulting as a discrete service for large commercial relocations.

It was 20 years ago that Gebr. Roggendorf became one of the founding fathers of EUROMOVERS. It started with a handful of companies who had worked with other groups but felt they did not provide value for money. "The intention was for the exchange of traffic in Europe, to work together, help and learn from each other, and to have a corporate image," said Manfred. And that's exactly the way it turned out. Ten years ago EUROMOVERS International was formed to extend the network further and is still growing. "We still search for new EUROMOVERS members and agents all over the world. This too has been successful."

Today EUROMOVERS has around

400 trucks painted in its distinctive livery in Germany alone. This is a distinct advantage when tackling large corporate moves. "We can easily provide 20 or more vehicles, from different companies but all looking the same, for a large job," said Manfred. "With big customers we wouldn't have a chance without it."

That image often has a marketing benefit with clients, then their employees, remembering the name and contacting EUROMOVERS for subsequent commercial or private household goods moves. Manfred recalls when Sony moved into Potsdamer Platz in Berlin. Gebr. Roggendorf handled the commercial move for 300+ people and has been providing moving services to the company ever since.

EUROMOVERS is also becoming a strong brand around the world. Last year Manfred said that in addition to his chart topping bookings in Germany his company also placed around 150 shipments to the international EUROMOVERS members.

It's easy to see why Gebr. Roggendorf has been successful. The EUROMOVERS network, with more than 60 international and over 30 national qualified members and agents, has undoubtedly helped, but the company was successful anyway. Quality is important and Manfred believes in training his staff properly and paying them well. He



● Top: a Gebr. Roggendorf vehicle on the street with the EUROMOVERS livery; above: Manfred performing with Hongkong Winnetous.

also holds regular staff meetings to encourage everyone to have an opportunity to share in the company's development and makes sure that every opinion voiced is respected and acted upon. There is a dedicated quality management officer who identifies problem areas and takes corrective action. "We use the EUROMOVERS training centres here in Cologne and in Nuremberg," he said. "We want to give everyone who works here the opportunity to do well. Often it's the little things that matter. Good employees are like gold."

One of those nuggets is Stephan Strauss who handles the international work. "Stephan is the son of a diplomat," said Manfred. "He has a talent for languages and really understands the international market."

A look at the Gebr. Roggendorf website also gives a clue into the

company's innovative style. Along with the usual services the site offers a special service for 'older people'. "Older people have the money and want good quality rather than cheap prices," said Manfred. "If you want to employ the best people and pay them properly you have to work for people who can pay the right rate for the job." Gebr. Roggendorf also provides fine art packing and shipping services.

But there is one other passion in Manfred's life: music. For the last 30 years or so he's played regularly in a rock and roll soul band called *Hongkong Winnetous*. Manfred plays rhythm and lead guitar and sings. "Our motto is 'moving, fun and rock and roll'," said Manfred, showing me a YouTube clip of his alter ego on stage. They are pretty good too. Take a look: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=yWd6leAL-6Y](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yWd6leAL-6Y).



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**NEWS: PRODUCTS/PEOPLE**



● Simon Barkworth.

## New MD for Crown Lift Trucks

**S**imon Barkworth has been appointed to the position of managing director UK operations at Crown Lift Trucks. In his new role, Simon will oversee all Crown's retail business activities in the United Kingdom with its branch offices in Basingstoke, Warrington and Bellshill. Simon has been in the materials handling industry for over 20 years. For the past 15 years, he has worked for Crown in a variety of different roles, most recently as sales director of Crown Lift Trucks UK.

## TRIANGULAR POSTER TUBES FROM ANTALIS PACKAGING

**A**ntalis Packaging has become a distributor of triangular postal tubes. The tubes are supplied flat packed making them easy for storage in the warehouse and on the van. They could be useful for moving companies for transporting posters and prints

that can be rolled, preventing damage or crushing in transit.

The tubes have a strong structure consisting of a single piece of self-adhesive rigid corrugated board. They are available in five sizes and interlock when assembled.

● [www.antalispackaging.co.uk](http://www.antalispackaging.co.uk).



● Rebecca Tunstall.

## New marketing manager for packaging company

**R**ebecca Tunstall has become the marketing manager for Antalis Packaging in Coalville, Leicestershire. Antalis is a supplier of a wide range of packing materials including cartons, tape and strapping.



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## Sam Sharp joins Suddath

Suddath Global Logistics has appointed Sam Sharp as its new senior vice president, contract logistics.

**S**am has extensive experience in supply chain management including operations, business process integration and improvements as well as value-added services.

Prior to joining Suddath, he held various positions with his previous employer of 13 years and in his new role, Sam will define how Suddath offers contract logistics in the marketplace and have the responsibility of building services and operational efficiencies.

"We are very pleased to have Sam assume this critical leadership role within Suddath," said Dan DeSoto, President of Suddath Global Logistics. "He is an instrumental part of building on our strategic vision for future growth in this area."

"I am excited to be part of the contract logistics team and to further develop our overall service offerings in a new and expanded way," said Sam. "I love the potential for growth in this area and look forward to building a great team."

Sam graduated from Penn State



**"I am excited to be part of the contract logistics team and to further develop our overall service offerings..."**

Sam Sharp

with a bachelor's degree in supply chain and information systems, is a certified supply chain analyst with the International Supply Chain Education Alliance (ISCEA) and a member of the Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals (CSCMP).

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**PROFILE: LOVE REMOVALS**



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● Left to right: Rich North, Craig Neesam, Lucas Mulkeen, Rik Goldsmith, Ricky Jones, Danny Larby.

## How LOVE Began

It was back in 2005 that Wayne Green, co-owner of LOVE Removals, started a man and van service in Brighton called ASAP Removals.

**T**oday the company has changed its name and trebled in size with Wayne putting customer service at the heart of its success.

In the early days the company's business was mainly serving Brighton's itinerant population of students but soon the work expanded to include bigger moves much further afield. It was one of these larger jobs that brought Wayne into contact with Justina Percy. She was a legal aid solicitor and Wayne and his team helped her with a difficult move when she downsized her property from a four bedroomed detached bungalow to a three bedroom townhouse.

Justina was also looking to leave the legal profession to balance her work and her home life and was looking for a business to invest in. And as Wayne was looking for a business partner the two agreed to go into business and LOVE began at the tail end of 2013.

With Justina on board, Wayne was able to focus on what he does best – removals! He believes there is an art to removals and that customer service is the vital ingredient. When pressed by *The Mover* for examples of excellent service Wayne commented: "We take extreme pride in our work and put love into every move, working with people who are moving house as individuals, rather than just loading and unloading vans." He gave the example of a recent booking from Crawley Borough Council Housing received shortly after LOVE had moved a previous tenant of theirs who had special needs. The housing officer commented: "It's a delicate move and the tenant is already

quite stressed. We are trying to keep disruption to a minimum because of his complicated nature. As you very sensitively moved my last tenant, I would like to book you for this move too."

A key driver in LOVE's growth over the past few years has been through excellent reviews on the Checkatrade website. They've had a score of 10/10 for well over a year now and currently have 173

**"We take extreme pride in our work and put love into every move, working with people who are moving house as individuals..."**

Wayne Green

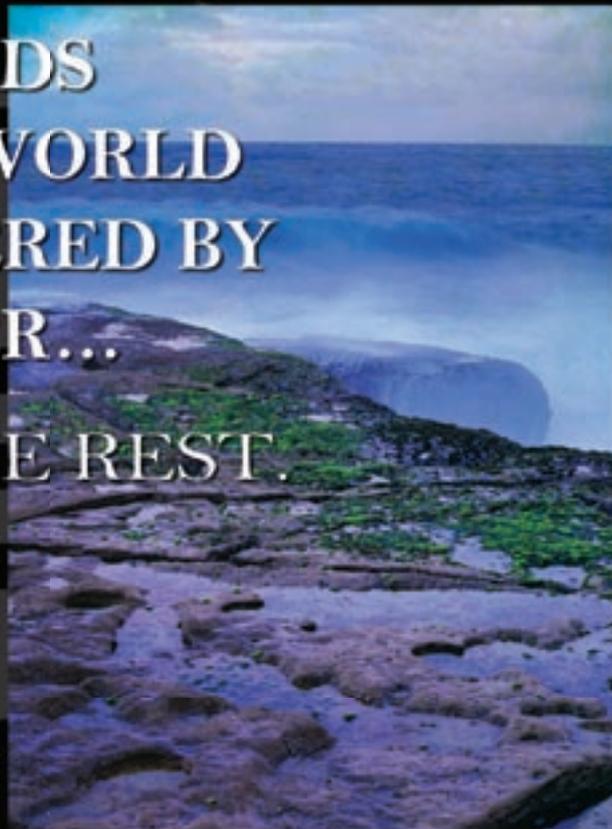
customer reviews. Wayne believes their good score is attributed to the fact that they offer each of their clients an Individual Removals Plan which details all agreed requirements of the move at a fixed price. "Customers appreciate having a plan as it ensures they have peace of mind that all their needs are covered and that there are no hidden costs."

Brighton is a town which is saturated with numerous removal companies. In such a competitive space LOVE says that it has used outstanding customer service as a means to gain a competitive advantage. Long may it continue to do so.

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## NEWS: PEOPLE



● Jorge Ramirez.

## Jorge Ramirez joins Move One Relocations Team

Move One has announced the appointment of Jorge Ramirez to its relocation services team based at its London office.

**J**orge has over 15 years' experience in the industry having previously worked for Cartus, Brookfield and most recently the Santa Fe Group, where he was director of relocation visa & immigration.

"I'm very excited to be working in my own backyard, London, while helping expand and develop solutions in dynamic, new markets," said Jorge. "I look forward to using my skill and background to work with the team on solidifying and growing Move One's position as the market leader in mobility solutions in emerging markets."

Curt Clements, Move One's CEO said, "We are very excited to have Jorge join our team at Move One. Not only will he bring a tighter focus on customer relationship quality, but we feel his position in London will ensure we are in lockstep with our partners' and customers' objectives."

Jorge will also be joining Move One's Technology Development Group which designs and develops mobility technologies and tools to help manage the mobility process and the ever increasing amounts of information related to international assignments.

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## QUARTIX APPOINTS CLAIRE DEVNEY TO EXPAND USA BUSINESS

**Q**uartix Ltd, a supplier of vehicle tracking systems, software and services with operations in the UK, France and the USA, has appointed Claire M Devney as a director of the company, with responsibility for the company's growing business in the USA.

Claire spent nine years with British Airways, during which she held a series of sales, marketing and business planning roles in Washington DC, New York and London. Most recently Claire held the position of airline partners manager, based in London, where she was responsible for building, implementing and managing commercial partnerships with a number of global airline partners.

Originally from Omaha, Claire has a BA in International Relations and Global Business from the University of Southern California, and is completing an MBA at the Judge Business School of the University of Cambridge. Claire started her new role with Quartix in a full-time capacity on 5 October, having already spent time with Quartix staff in both the Chicago and UK



● Claire Devney.

offices. She will initially be based at Quartix's Cambridge office, from where she will be responsible for its operations in Chicago, as well as for all digital marketing, systems and e-commerce activities for the USA which are currently managed in the UK.

"We are delighted to welcome Claire to the company," said Andy Walters, Managing Director of Quartix Ltd. "Her sales, marketing and systems experience in an international environment, coupled with her business education and background, are a perfect fit with the requirements of our US business, which now has over 500 fleet clients."

Quartix was founded in 2001 and was admitted to London's AIM market in November last year. The company now has over 180,000 vehicles fitted with its tracking system.

## Daniel Kuss joins Kokusai Express

**O**n 3 August, 2015 Daniel J Kuss joined Kokusai Express in Japan. In his new role he will be responsible for developing international awareness in the household goods and heavy lift sectors. Kokusai Express was founded in 1990 and now provides a full range of logistics services.

Daniel has been in the moving industry for around 35 years, has been based mainly in Japan and is well known as a regular on the conference circuit. He says that he has attended IAM conventions for the last 34 years. Kokusai Express has been a member of IAM for three years and Daniel is looking forward to representing the company in San Diego.

Part of Daniel's responsibility at Kokusai Express is to manage the company's quality programme to ensure the best possible service for both inbound and outbound customers.



● Daniel J Kuss.

## Global International Relocation appoints business development director

Portugal's Global International Relocation has appointed former Relocations España Director Rossana Veglia as business development manager.

**G**lobal's CEO Jorge da Costa said, "Rossana was formerly marketing and business development director of Relocation España, one of the leading Spanish mobility companies, and enjoys an enviable reputation in the Iberian mobility market. I have no doubt that she will reinforce our strategic approach and will contribute to Global's growth."

Rossana Veglia said, "Joining the Portuguese mobility market leader and embracing the challenge to further boost its international business growth was a unique

opportunity and an honour. Relocation and moving is part of my DNA and I do believe that with my years of experience in the Spanish mobility market, together with my marketing background, I can add value to Global's team."

Rossana holds a degree in social communication, and a masters in marketing. She started her professional career in 2006 as key account manager for Space Corporation, and in 2010 solidified her marketing experience while working for Orbital-BBDO. At the end of 2010 she joined Relocations



● Rossana Veglia.

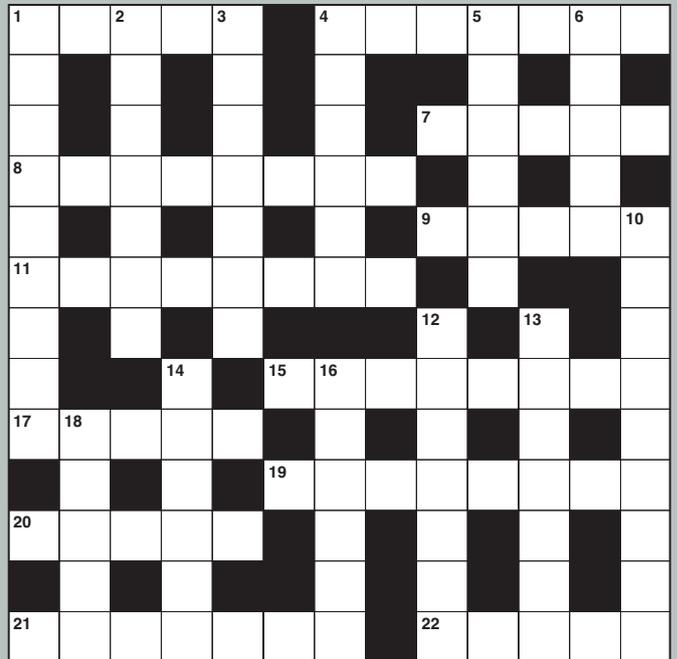
España where her strong intercultural business background and expertise in international corporate marketing, branding and communication, contributed to the company's significant growth.

*“Years of experience in African relocations are not enough to maintain the gold-standard reputation jealously protected by the stakeholders of Worldwide Movers Africa. Innovation is pivotal to thinking and planning for the future of mobility to intra and extra African destinations. Not just for us, but for all who rely on us as a vital part of their moves to and from Africa.”*

Eric Beuthin  
President & CEO of Worldwide Movers Africa



# Puzzles



**ACROSS**

- 1 Main artery (5)
- 4 Additional and supplementary part (7)
- 7 Seabirds (5)
- 8 Grandiosity of language (8)
- 9 Midges (5)
- 11 Immediately after this (8)
- 15 Field game (8)
- 17 Men (5)
- 19 Forceful (8)

20 Corpulent (5)

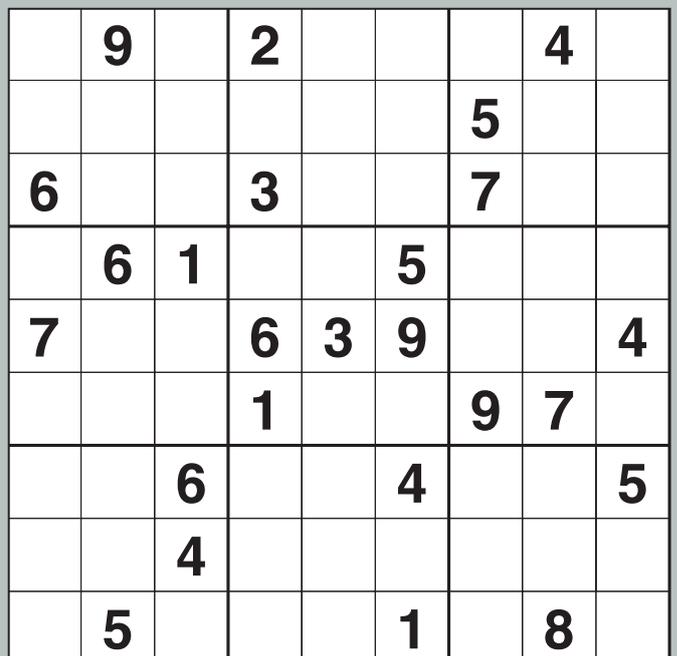
- 21 Rendered senseless (7)
- 22 Thorax (5)

5 Mean (6)

- 6 Geographical plan (5)
- 10 Growing old (9)
- 12 Old-fashioned (7)
- 13 Form of an element (7)
- 14 Wrestling hold (6)
- 16 Nut-like seed that marzipan is made from (6)
- 18 Head monk (5)

**DOWN**

- 1 Theory favouring abolition of governments (9)
- 2 Lively festivities (7)
- 3 Prompting device (7)
- 4 Having an absence of pigment in the skin (6)



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**NEWS: PEOPLE**



● John Mason International's COO Noel Briscoe presents Steve Sheldon with his 25 Years' Service Award.

## Steve Sheldon celebrates 25 years with John Mason

John Mason International's Facilities Director, Steve Sheldon, celebrated 25 years with the company on Friday, 7 August. Steve's family were invited to join a celebratory lunch and presentation which was held at John Mason International's head office. Steve was presented with a 25 Years' Service award and a gift from the company.

Steve Sheldon joined John Mason International in August 1990 as manager of the company's UK Division, bringing with him many years of experience in the removals industry, including working for Scotpac and Bowies International in Manchester. Steve was appointed a director of the company in June 1995.

Steve Sheldon was BAR President, 1998 – 1999.



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## The White & Co Mystery Mover

Sadly nobody managed to identify our famous faces last month. They were Birger Falkner, then from Kungsholms in Sweden and Dick Myers from Colonial Storage in Washington DC. It was a tricky one, but maybe this month's competition is a little easier. Again you have two faces to identify but if you can only manage one you'll still be in with a chance of winning the White and Company Red and Black watch. Answers please to [editor@thewordsworkshop.co.uk](mailto:editor@thewordsworkshop.co.uk).

## Ricardo Ramos-Seyffert takes on Marcom for Arpin

Arpin Group has promoted Ricardo Ramos-Seyffert to vice president of global marketing and communications.

The company said that Ricardo has been instrumental to its marketing success over the past 12 years, particularly during a period of rapid growth and change.

"[Ricardo has] provided essential guidance during the unification of our multiple divisions and companies under a singular Arpin Group brand, supported our expansion into international markets in Europe and Asia, and has contributed to our sales growth worldwide," said Matt Dolan, Chief Operating Officer of Arpin Group. "His promotion and new title reflects his expanding leadership role at the helm of our global marketing department."

Ricardo is responsible for developing Arpin Group's annual marketing plan, corporate branding, strategies, tactics and resources necessary to achieve the goals of each division. He previously worked at Ernst & Young before coming to



● Ricardo Ramos-Seyffert.

Arpin Group in 2003. He started as the sales and marketing manager for the international division and was promoted to director of global marketing in 2005. During that time, he led the development and implementation of marketing plans that contributed to the growth of the commercial division from \$5 million to \$50 million in annual sales.

## New appointments at Graebel

Graebel has announced three new members of its management team: Veronika Kim, Katherine Miller and Francesca Clark.

Veronika Kim has been with Graebel since 2006 and has now become North American regional director for the relocation partner management group. She will now oversee performance management and pricing negotiations with North American suppliers, as well as the training regime for new Graebel coordinators. Previously, Veronika was an international forwarder and most recently was an international operations supervisor at Graebel.

Katherine Miller has assumed the management position for the US real estate service partners group, and will continue to work in the Graebel Relocation centre in Atlanta, Georgia USA. She will work closely with colleagues on the client relationship team, and with clients. Katherine was the senior operations manager for the centre.

Francesca Clark is now the manager of strategic services in the world headquarters. She has been with Graebel for two years and formerly administered the organisation's ISO compliance initiatives and corporate social responsibility (CSR) programme.



● Veronika Kim.



● Katherine Miller.



● Francesca Clark.

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## Tony Allen: And finally ...



# Pet food for thought

Has it ever occurred to you that our place in the ecological chain might simply be to ensure the future of Gerbils (or pets in general)? Certainly not Homo sapiens, we seem to be doing a pretty good job of bringing our brief reign on earth to an end – and isn't it ironic that Homo sapiens is Latin for 'wise person'? Talking of reigns; are the Queen's corgis her pet subjects?

I do apologise for finishing the previous paragraph with two entirely unrelated questions, but you might be aware from previous articles that one of my hobbies is rambling and I suppose I have just proved it! But there is a purpose because I am going to write around the subject of pets – including my daughter's dog Zac, a Border Collie and with whom I spend a lot of time walking. This is also an excellent excuse for me to tell you about an amusing experience which we had recently - more later.

In a previous article I wrote about statistics, well here's another one: apparently around 46% of households offer a home to a pet – so you might therefore conclude that this article is only going to be of interest to 46% of readers. Not true; I haven't got a pet, although I would like one, but it's just too inconvenient as we are not always around and it would therefore be unfair.

The point I would like to make is that although we think we are exceedingly intelligent, pets are really the clever ones. Take the cat for example, we offer it a comfortable home; we feed it; we clean it; we cuddle it; we talk to it; we consider it a close friend. It doesn't have to earn a living; it has no worries; and it no longer has to hunt for food in order to stay alive but only for its pleasure. In addition, there are very few rats or mice present in our homes any more, so there is really no practical reason to have Tiddles in your house (I know there is a double entendre here but so be it!).

Ever had a cat? They are great at telling you how nice you are and how much they appreciate being with you. Problem is that if you happen to bump into them outside of the home environment it is an entirely different matter:

"Hello Tiddles."

"Clear off four-eyes – can't you see I'm busy hunting for my own pleasure!"

Fascinating really but of course there are also pet benefits; an excuse for a walk for example. Which reminds me, I did say I would tell you about an experience that Zac and I had, so here it is.

Owing to an increasing propensity to procreate with not only other dogs, but almost anything from a beanbag to a

bale of hay (which actually was the last straw) Zac was taken to the local vet in order to have two rather sensitive items surgically removed. My daughter told me to be careful whilst out walking because for an amount of time after having this operation testosterone levels actually increase. Interesting!

There we were in the heart of The Ashdown Forest, miles from anywhere with only the sounds of a chattering gang of sparrows and a very distant chainsaw, when I noticed two middle aged ladies coming towards me; one with a Springer Spaniel and the other with a rather cute little Yorkshire Terrier. Anyway, we had hardly begun to exchange pleasantries when Zac decided to upend the cute little Yorkie (perhaps mistaking him for beanbag!), I was mortified, but having had the presence of mind to put him on a lead I was able to drag him away saying: "Look I am very sorry about that, but he has recently had, you know, 'the operation'."

The point I would like to make is that although we think we are exceedingly intelligent, pets are really the clever ones.

"It's OK, I totally understand, don't worry".

"Apparently, for a while it actually puts up their testosterone levels ..."

Then I heard myself saying – and never being one to let good taste get in the way of a joke:

"... In fact, I'm thinking of having it done myself!"

Without missing a beat, the lady turned to her friend and said:

"You know, I think I might get Colin done!"

All three of us then collapsed in fits of laughter. I could still hear them giggling as they walked on into the distance, and until, finally, the only sounds were a chattering gang of sparrows and a very distant chainsaw. I must say that my overriding feeling was one of sympathy for poor old Colin, although whether the distant chainsaw was anything to do with it, I'm not quite sure. Zac of course very soon lost his interest in all things carnal and now lives a life of celibacy – and by the way in case you're interested I still remain intact.

Mind how you go!

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