PARCELLY: SEBASTIAN STEINHAUSER

The tech start-up's founder discusses developing his app through market feedback and how his business plans to help independent retailers - **by Natasha Mc Gowan**

Parcelly: Sebastian Steinhauser
Name: Sebastian Steinhauser
Company name: Parcelly
Location: London
Date launched: 18/12/2014
Website: www.parcelly.com

Tell us what your business does:

Parcelly's aim is to make it easier for people to receive their online purchases by allowing them to send their parcels to shops of their choice, where they can pick the items up when it is best for them.

The app informs users when the parcel is delivered and ready to be picked up, and it's accessible for consumers via iOS devices (Android to follow shortly). We're currently partnering with a growing number of independent local and nationwide businesses (convenience stores, newsagents, dry cleaners, gyms, etc.) enabling them to get an additional income as well as footfall for their business.

Alongside supporting the local high street and retailers, we also donate 5% of our profits to Atmosfair in order to reduce the carbon footprint of every delivery.

Where did the idea for your business come from?

Since I moved to the UK, I have experienced the challenges of receiving personal parcel deliveries. Beside the problems with failed deliveries to my home addresses, I also noticed the operational risks and costs that occurred when employees sent parcel deliveries to corporate post rooms. Although there were a number of companies offering fulfillment solutions, there was no system offering the flexibility and efficiency that was need.

The a couple of years ago I bought a present for my girlfriend, a reminder of a recent trip, but she was at work when the postman tried to deliver the parcel and it ended up being a huge hassle to get a hold of it, I realised that my idea was desperately needed.

How did you know there was a market for it?

The idea for the business came from a problem that I had encountered and that I know many other people have too. I did a lot of research, and also saw more and more big retailers embrace the click & collect model, whereby people can shop online and pick-up their purchases at the relevant brick and mortar shop.

What were you doing before starting up?

I worked in sales in the banking sector for a number of few years before leaving to launch the business.

Have you always wanted to run your own business?

I have been thinking about launching my own start-up for some time, even before I got the idea of Parcelly and once I had the right business in mind I went for it.

How did you raise the money?

So far, we have privately funded the business but we are currently preparing our first fundraising round to expand further.

Describe your business model and how you make money:

The app itself is free to down then charge a small fee for every transaction, with prices starting at £1.99 per parcel or £7.99 per month.

For fans who receive parcels on a rather irregular basis, we will introduce a new price plan at the end of April called 'VIP Monthly'.

What challenges have you faced and how have you overcome them?

Our business model has to cope with the chicken-and-egg problem as our system only provides flexibility when we have enough parcel collection points in place, but local shop and business owners need to trust a new brand and start-up business to join such a network.

We are very lucky to have found more than 75 highly supportive business partners who help us to run our network despite the low number of customers and subsequently parcel deliveries we had to start with. However as our consumer awareness rises and our business grows, this problem diminishes.

What was your first big breakthrough?

The first breakthrough was finishing the development and launch of the app on iTunes and we are currently working on the Android app. In the past few months we went to a few national retail and delivery events, and the feedback from other attendees was very positive.

Getting noticed in this fast changing and extremely competitive market has been a real driver for our entire team.

Where do you want to be in five years' time?

First of all we want to develop an Android and a Windows app, and keep improving our service by making it easier to use and by following our customers' feedback. We also want to partner with more retailers in order to combine their delivery service with Parcelly.

Finally, we are hoping to introduce our product into other countries around the world.

Web link: http://startups.co.uk/parcelly-sebastian-steinhauser/