

The drive for success A London-based ground transportation organisation has moved to Cornwall to start a worldwide revolution in the way we travel.

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Overview

Lamorna Cove in the far west of Cornwall might not seem a likely location for a revolution in transportation, but it's where Warwick King and Kate Gibson have based their business and are hatching plans to change the way we travel.

Gibson, originally from Cornwall, had been running a successful executive car service in central London, offering high-end chauffeur transport to top banks and law firms in the City. She met King, an IT specialist, and together they realised that, despite all the advances in technology, nobody had fully exploited the potential for harnessing technology solutions to the business travel-planning market and helping corporate travellers make more environmentally-friendly travel choices.

So the company jumped from being an executive car service to an environmentally conscious ground-transport facilitator. As King explains: "It means we go to companies, see what they actually use for their ground transport – for commuting, business travel and so on – and work out solutions for them that are both greener and more cost effective."

The couple still operate a successful ground transportation service for business clients throughout Europe and the US, but have been increasingly bringing "minimum environmental impact" into the equation. And one of the company's most revolutionary offerings is a new spin on an old idea – car sharing. As King explains, the advent of internet, the development of social networking sites and the appearance of GPS-enabled mobile phones have all infused the traditional concept with a heady range of 21st-century possibilities.

Technology

The service involves offering a company or organisation a car-sharing social network online or on its internal IT system. Staff can post up information about a commuter or a business trip they're planning, and if it matches with a trip a colleague needs to make, they can get in touch.

"It sounds simple," King says, "but it's really about changing attitudes and empowering people to make decisions themselves. The biggest transport network in this country isn't buses or trains, it's the private car, so if we can help people access that network, we'll solve a lot of the environmental problems."

Using Web 2.0 technologies in this way, says King, is about turning the conventional business model on its head. "It's called crowd-sourcing – using networking sites to quickly build up interest groups, allowing people to use technology to build communities that work for them." And the company is developing the idea further, working on systems that will allow users to request a journey and automatically pass that information on to local taxi firms and bus companies, and so letting businesses locate the customers rather than the other way round.

Clients

Their existing client list cuts an impressive slice through the upper crust of the corporate world: Qualcomm, AIG, the big US legal firms and banks with offices throughout Europe. And it is clients such as these, says King, who are increasingly beginning to buy in to the environmentally friendly aspects of the company's solutions.

Workforce

In line with the new business model, the couple have adopted a new style of organisational structure – they don't have

one. It started when Gibson decided to sell the company's cars to its drivers, making them sub-contractors responsible for the maintenance of their own vehicles, and they pride themselves on having developed the same approach to the rest of the business. "The company is just me and Kate," says King. "We don't employ anyone, but contract everything out – developers, accounts, marketing, all linked to us via technology."

Support

Since they've arrived in Cornwall, Warwick and Kate have been in touch with several of the region's business-support agencies and, says King, have been pleasantly surprised. "The Southwest RDA and Cornwall Pure Business seem to be very focused. They've brought in professional knowledge where they need it, especially in the area of mentoring for small businesses, and that's certainly something we'll be taking advantage of."

The decision to move to Cornwall, says King, has been one of the best the couple have made. "It's made a huge difference. Organising business travel can be hugely stressful – you just have to get it right, all the time. In London, when you finished work you'd walk out into an equally stressed environment. Now, we work as hard but, when we finish, we walk out straight into the woods or the beach. We get the balance between work and relaxation right, which means we're far more productive."

And that's what's behind the couple's recent decision to rename the company Morna, to reflect its new Cornish base. "Cornwall is cool, it's a good brand image to be associated with," says King. "Cornwall used to be the place you had to leave to make your fortune. We want to help show that it's become the place you can go to make it."