

# Doing business & doing good



David Russell (left) and David Grad

*Be proud of being a salesperson. Learn the ropes and join a professional organisation*



ISMM Fellow, **DAVID RUSSELL**, has used energy, flair and charisma to create successful businesses and his own charity

**D**avid Russell is a driven man. Not content with 42 years of business success, he is keen to do some good in the world, recently founding his own children's charity, A Child Unheard Foundation (ACU).

Russell believes his desire to achieve in life is a positive reaction to a painful operation and subsequent misery he suffered as a child — hence the charity, which aims to raise awareness of troubled childhoods and which has established a centre for deprived children in Uganda.

But his day job is as managing director of D3 Direct, a Berkshire-based logistics business founded ten years ago when he identified a new niche market — for a specialist fulfillment service for companies selling goods via the Internet.

From the relatively early days of e-commerce, D3 Direct strove to offer a full service to manufacturers, from the design and creation of their websites through to handling the entire fulfillment process, from collection and warehousing to distribution of products. D3 (which

stands for Digital Distribution and Development) took off, as online selling became a huge growth industry.

Russell, now 58, had already built up vast experience in freight-forwarding, having launched and grown his own successful freight business in the 1980s. Today, his skills are complemented at D3 by those of co-founder and sales director David Grad, a 32 year-old ex-City professional who has brought an intuitive feel for the potential of web processes.

The result is a company that uses sophisticated systems to provide speed alongside high levels of security, service and control. For example, D3 was an early-adopter of browser-based systems, allowing easy management of stock and tracking of orders. On the back of such innovations, the company has grown to 25 employees, turning over more than £3m in 2009, with a target of £4.5m this year.

Like many entrepreneurs, Russell is a natural salesman, with a talent for networking and an easy charm that have helped him to build many lasting business relationships. But he is also a committed Christian, motivated to 'putting something back' into society. D3 Direct has long been a champion of cause-related marketing — which Russell pioneered in the 1980s — and he is now pouring enthusiasm into ACU, with ambitious plans to spread its good work around the world. To this end, he has published a book of poetical autobiography and even written a musical. "The message is so powerful it'll go global," he says without a hint of doubt.

Meanwhile Russell continues to provide leadership to D3, while Grad's youthful vision positions the business for further growth. "I'm an elder statesman now," he says. "Hopefully I can pass a bit of experience and wisdom down the line, but David's is the face of the future. Let's face it, e-commerce is a young man's game."

## Russell on selling

**Q Do you think of yourself as a salesperson?**

**A** I'm a businessman who, like any other, has to sell my company's skills and services to the world at large in order to succeed and grow. In that respect everyone involved in the business is 'selling'. Or should be.

**Q How good are UK salespeople?**

**A** In general, salespeople are not regarded highly enough — they bring in the business that pays the wages of all the company's personnel. If the profession is not regarded highly, the best candidates might not be attracted to selling. And this in turn undermines standards.

**Q Should salespeople be better trained and qualified?**

**A** The short answer is 'yes' but until top management devotes more funds and time to improving the calibre of salespeople — providing regular training — many people will still regard selling as the job of 'last resort'.

**Q What advice would you give an aspiring salesperson?**

**A** Be proud of being a salesperson. Learn the ropes and join a professional organisation that represents your specific skills. Get on a training programme, get qualified, join a company that has excellent training facilities and sells a product/service that you are happy with. Go to sales club meetings, read decent sales books, network and never stop learning how to get that extra deal before the day is ended. And never give up.

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