

Ready for a courier service that customers can love? Meet Packfleet

As part of our quick fire questions series – or QFQs – we spoke to Tristan Thomas, CEO and cofounder of Packfleet about how they are overhauling the courier experience for merchants, customers and drivers.

Whenever we receive a parcel, it's always a mediocre experience. You're never sure when it'll turn up, and even if you wait around all day, the parcel often ends up being thrown over the fence.

The catalyst for *Packfleet* came when I realised how broken the customer experience with couriers really is. The frustration and apathy we feel for delivery brands has become the norm, and there was a clear gap in the market for a courier service that customers could love.

But it's not just consumers that suffer with couriers – merchants do too, and Packfleet is overhauling the business experience as well. During lockdown, I started a wine delivery service to stave off boredom with my newfound free time after work. As a result, I was exposed to delivery from a seller's point of view, and was surprised at how obtuse and inefficient it was.

I had issues with every major courier service. Either the sign up process was far too long, or parcels were frequently turning up to customers broken – which with wine isn't ideal. I knew there was a better way to do deliveries, and that's when the idea for Packfleet came about. I wanted to make sending parcels as easy as booking an Uber or ordering a Deliveroo.

Tell me about the business – what it is, what it aims to achieve, who you work with, how you reach customers and so on?

At Packfleet, we bring the tech that you'd expect from the likes of Deliveroo and Uber to the world of parcel delivery. We provide live tracking for every package (with an ETA that's actually correct) and offer the option to change everything about the delivery: the time it arrives, the address it arrives at, whether we ring your doorbell or not – all at any point on your parcel's journey. It's all about customer choice, something we don't get a lot of when ordering parcels.

We're also bringing driver standards in line with the rest of the working world. Whilst the majority of the big courier companies franchise out their vans, or pay drivers for every parcel they deliver, we employ drivers like any other member of staff. They get all the benefits of full time work, and don't have to drive recklessly to deliver their parcels – which sadly isn't the industry standard.

We're really pleased to be working with hundreds of brilliant merchants across London, delivering everything from wine to chilli sauce. Word of mouth is the biggest factor in getting new merchants on board, and we're proud that's the case – we see it as a real testament to our service.

How has the business evolved since its launch? When was this?

When I first launched Packfleet back in June 2021, I was operating solely out of my living room. I'd roped my brother-in-law into delivering parcels for me, and I was managing operations from my sofa. Eventually, my partner and I couldn't even get into the living room to watch TV due to the amount of parcels in there – that's when I realised Packfleet was getting serious. When Packfleet moved out of my living room and into Surrey Quays, we were a team of four. Now we've grown to have a team of over 30 people.

How are you funded?

In April, we were really fortunate to close an oversubscribed seed round. In the end, we secured £8M, with Creandum (the same business that backed Spotify)

being the lead investor. We've also received backing from the likes of General Catalyst and Founder Collective.

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What has been your biggest challenge so far and how have you overcome this?

Courier perception is so bad that merchants refuse to believe our offering! They've been burnt before by the legacy courier services, and think we're selling them a myth. Many of the delivery companies promise secure delivery, with friendly drivers and an easy sign up process – very few can actually *deliver* on this. The key is getting them to just try a couple of deliveries with us — once they do that, they switch everything almost immediately.

How does Packfleet answer an unmet need?

We're taking the pain out of deliveries and building a courier business that traders and customers will love.

What's in store for the future?

To be successful, we need to be in a place where any time someone wants to move something physical, anywhere in the world, they open the Packfleet app. Whether that is a business shipping bottles of beer across the continent, or an individual sending house keys across the city because their partner has locked themselves out, we want to be the go-to courier.

We want customers to be able to load up the app, and with two taps of their screen they've got a courier on the way. Of course, we need to perfect this in the UK first, and that's our short term goal. But in 10 years time, there's no reason that we can't have our operations across the entire world, facilitating

both international and local deliveries.

What one piece of advice would you give to other founders or future founders?

Get started now. I talk to so many founders who are spending their time on building out financial models, perfecting decks, and talking to investors — rather than focusing on building something and seeing if people like it. That doesn't mean you need to do everything immediately, but it's so much better to have an MVP in the market and be talking with real customers as soon as possible. It's better for your business, it's better for growth, and it's better for raising money.

Tristan Thomas is CEO and cofounder of *Packfleet*.

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