



Performance DELIVERY

Online retail is driving and highlighting the importance of courier providers, so Fastway Couriers is finding more efficient ways of connecting with its clients across the country to offer a more convenient service.

Images by Scott Ehler

Beginning his career as a trainee accountant, Richard Thame, CEO of Fastway Couriers Australia, didn't take long to realise that accounting was not the industry for him. He moved into more marketing-based roles, learned franchising at McDonald's, branding at Greater Union, and online technology through Thrifty Car Rental and Sabre Pacific. Richard joined Fastway Couriers in 2008 and recognised the unique advantage the company had in being a franchised, low-cost provider in a growing market.

"The GFC knocked the traditional transport industry and the freight industry around, but I felt that franchisees as business-owners were able to be a lot more nimble, able to think on their feet, be a lot more reactive to change, and, as a result, prosper during tough times. While the big freight companies were really struggling during that time, Fastway actually did well, and that was simply because people were sending more parcels than pallets. As a result, people were also starting to look at their freight. We were able to get on the radar for the first time with companies that normally would have dealt

with TNT or StarTrack or Australia Post, and quickly became recognised as a viable low-cost alternative. At the time, Fastway had a great network, but I didn't feel that the brand was as well recognised as it could be."

Richard ran the company's largest regional franchise out of Homebush, which has 200 couriers operating around Sydney. "Compared to a lot of people in these types of roles, I have actually been on the shop floor, I have run one of the depots, I have run one of the franchises myself; so it does give me a unique perspective. As I >



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now sit in this role overseeing the entire business in Australia, I can say that I understand what it's like to be a franchisee, I understand what's it's like to deal with the day-to-day challenges at the coalface; and I think that is a really important experience in this kind of industry, because it is a very hands-on business."

Another great opportunity for Richard and Fastway Couriers came through the growing popularity of online retail. "The one thing the industry still needs is somebody to physically deliver the product, and typically Australia Post had this position as the default provider. People would go to Australia Post because they are well known, a relatively easy service to understand, and you can easily get a price; so we started talking to more and more small businesses. Fastway has always targeted small- to medium-size businesses, and that's because if you target big businesses alone, you win big, but you can lose big as well. We felt there was a terrific synergy between our franchisees that were driving around the suburbs twice a day every day and small business owner-operators.

"We set about rebranding the entire business. We updated the logo, the look and feel, our marketing material, our training material, our sales approach, all of those public-facing facets of the business, and went out there and said, 'We want to be the number one provider to online retailers in Australia'. So part of that exercise was then to go out and identify some of the bigger online retailers and demonstrate to them that we have a compelling proposition. I am pleased to say that today we service some of the largest names in online retail: companies like Ozsale, Naked Wines, Virgin Wines, and Laithwaites. Additionally, we have recently partnered with eBay to develop an integrated Fastway Couriers eBay portal for eBay sellers.

"We identified industry segments where we could provide a difference and do a really good job,



and then went and chased specific customers where we felt there was a great fit between their business and the service that we could provide, and we have done a great job of getting those businesses on board. What we also found is that once you get a couple of big brand names that everybody likes and respects on board, a lot of other people in the industry say, 'If it's good enough for Ozsale, then it's got to be good enough for me; why don't I at least go have a look at what these guys are doing?'"

Fastway Couriers has a unique business model that encourages ownership and responsibility among its franchisees. "We have a field team that are constantly on the road, and they're moving between our 25 regional depots. Those 25 regional depots then service 700 individual courier franchisees, and those franchisees buy the rights to an exclusive territory. They can build up that territory or split that territory and sell it for a capital gain. >

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“The courier franchisees have a very long day; they start early in the morning, they do their deliveries and pick-ups, they are coming back to a central hub and exchanging their freight, and then going out and doing it again in the afternoon. That model is what we call a hub-and-spoke model. The reason that we do that is it provides a significant cost advantage rather than driving all over town; but more importantly, it gives the opportunity for that individual franchisee, who is going into those territories twice a day, five days a week, to get to know his customers and build those relationships.

“Part of the system that we are providing is the sales and marketing guidance to say, ‘Here is how you go about introducing yourself to a customer; here are some of the techniques for getting to know that business; and here is a timetable to make sure that you run more efficiently and your customer understands exactly what

you do’. So the customer knows that this is the way that Fastway works, and if they can work with that system, then they get a serious cost advantage as well. That way, it’s very clear for both the customer and the courier as to what’s expected and how the system works.”

Fastway Couriers has enjoyed a strong history in the B2B sector; however, Richard felt there was great opportunity to expand the company into the retail space and rebrand the organisation. “I think the motivation for rebranding was twofold. One was to create a fresh, new image that really represented and portrayed who we are as a company now. And the second was to signal to the market that this is the company that we want to be. We want to be the number one provider to online retailers. That doesn’t mean we’re going to service every online retailer or service the biggest online retailers. What it means is we’re going to go out and identify the businesses



where we feel we have the best fit and do the best job that we possibly can to support them.

“The other thing we did was that we said, ‘If you are a big company, we don’t need to have all of your business’. We suggest that you take advantage of the technology that’s available to identify the most appropriate courier for your

business needs. The great thing is that it was pretty clunky to do that previously. With the introduction of technology, now you can have an application that sits there that identifies the areas that Fastway services, our price, who the courier is, and you can press a button and have somebody come and pick it up.”

A common issue that many delivery organisations face is getting packages to customers who aren’t home. It’s become evident that calling cards are ineffectual, as most people work during post office trading hours, making it difficult to pick up deliveries. This industry challenge has led to the development of Fastway Couriers’ Parcel Connect. “The whole idea of the Parcel Connect business is that as a consumer of services, or as a buyer of the products online, you can select to have your parcel delivered to a local Parcel Connect location and your Fastway courier can drop the parcel there; or if you are not home and we drop a calling card, we can take it to one of these locations and you can pick it up on the way home.

“We are targeting locations that have great parking, that are safe, well lit, and are open longer hours. We’re saying, ‘Come and partner with us, and our courier can drop off parcels there; they will be securely scanned in and will be kept in a safe location’. At the same time, if you want to send a parcel to somebody, at home you can print a label from our website, drop it into a Parcel Connect location, and have a proper courier service at a much lower cost take and deliver it for you.”

Parcel Connect is an innovation that has been gaining traction over the past few months. “It’s very new; we only recently launched it at our regional franchise conference in March. Following a successful local trial in Cairns, we have 50 locations operating in Sydney, and the feedback has been fantastic.

“We are about to commence the national roll-out, and our



objective over the next year is to have 700 of these locations, one in every courier franchise territory; and our long-term goal is then to have well over 1,000 locations where you can have a parcel delivered, or alternatively you can drop a parcel to. What we are seeing in Europe is that there is a very high return rate, particularly in the online fashion industry, so this kind of service will let you have a parcel delivered to home, to work, or to a Parcel Connect location. If it’s not the right size or you are not happy with the product and you want to return it, you can go online, print a returns label, drop it at a Parcel Connect location, and have it sent back.”

Last year, Richard won *The CEO Magazine’s* Transport and Logistics Executive of the Year award for his role in transforming the business and implementing various crucial initiatives. “The great thing about being in my role is that you do occasionally get recognised for these things; but I attribute it largely to us, as a team, identifying a fantastic opportunity in the market and then being able to take the organisation on the journey to



really seize the moment, the opportunity, demonstrate to our franchisees and our customers that we can provide this great service, and then pave the way for others to jump on board. I think we have been able to recruit some fantastic franchisees; we have been able to get some great customers on board, and we have been able to build on that.”

Richard notes the importance of suppliers to Fastway Couriers’ ongoing development and growth, highlighting three organisations >

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- Richard Thame

that have been crucial to the company’s success. “Fastway Couriers and Blu Print have enjoyed a longstanding relationship that has spanned more than five years. Over this time, Blu Print has provided Fastway with a reliable, on-time, and cost-efficient solution for a range of courier satchels and other general print products. There are plans to work more closely with Blu Print as we develop new services within the Australian market.

“Fastway Couriers has developed a strong relationship with Peak Marketing over the seven years in partnership. Peak Marketing is Fastway’s major uniform and merchandise suppliers, sourcing and providing high-quality products as well as offering reliable warehousing and distribution systems. Their reliable, cost-effective, and efficient service continues to provide support to the Fastway network.

“Also, Fastway Couriers partnered with Mayo Hardware to launch the Pakman Parcel Delivery Box”, Australia’s first high-security parcel box for residential properties. Utilising Fastway’s delivery and technological expertise, and Mayo Hardware’s exceptional product development, this partnership has seen great success in offering consumers the ultimate convenience in home delivery.”

The future is bright for Fastway Couriers, and collaboration will continue to play a vital role in the company’s ongoing growth and success. “We are really a growth-focused company, and that’s because our growth has come from organic growth. I’m a big believer in identifying businesses that are growing, doing things really well, and working with them. So we want to partner with the winners and then go and learn from them as well and make sure that we are really meeting their expectation and growing with them.

“We work with companies like Naked Wines that have started from a very small base. We worked with them to help them be as efficient as we can, and we worked with them to give them a point of difference in the marketplace. Our values are very much aligned with theirs as an organisation.

“We are looking for where there is a great fit between our values, and where there is a synergy between our operating systems—and it’s working with those kinds of customers that will fuel our growth into the future.” •

“We were excited to be working with Fastway Couriers. They understood how the Pakman Parcel Box innovation could change the way packages are delivered. Partnering with Fastway expedited development of the technology required to provide text and email delivery notifications.” - John Thomas, National Marketing Manager – Retail, Mayo Hardware

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