

From Brisbane to Basildon

Australian company Brilliant Prints has recently set up a new factory for its printed canvas business in the UK, with help and support from UK Trade & Investment



Fast facts

Company: Brilliant Prints

Country: Australia

Industry: Creative & Media

Website: www.brilliantprints.co.uk

Liam Tovey had always wanted to go into business for himself, and was on the look-out for a suitable opportunity to pursue. His lightbulb moment happened when his brother came home with a canvas print of a photograph that his mother had taken. Confident that he could produce a better quality product, Liam went ahead and bought a printer on eBay, and set up Brilliant Prints from his parents' home.

Liam developed his own in-house software to automate and streamline much of the process of producing canvas prints. He forged relationships with manufacturers, buying timber and canvas in bulk to keep his prices competitive. Above all, he decided to prioritise customer service over profit. As a result of this philosophy, Brilliant Prints has built up a loyal customer base, comprising mainly professional photographers who come back to the company time and time again.

"Canvas prints have become popular recently as a modern way to present a photograph," says Hannah Tovey, Liam's sister and Managing Director of Brilliant Prints UK. "They have no frame to distract from the picture itself, and

look fresh and clean-cut. Our product is unique in the market, because our canvasses are fully laminated with UV blockers. We are confident enough to give our customers an unconditional 75 year guarantee that it won't fade, even if left out in the sun. The frames we use to mount the canvas are made from hardwood, which doesn't warp or lose its shape. And we also offer a satisfaction guarantee, so if a customer isn't happy with their print for any reason at all, they can return it to us. Because of this service, our customers use us again and again and recommend us to their colleagues and friends."

Building the business

Traditionally, most of Brilliant Prints' business has come through word of mouth and the company website. This has brought in customers from around the world, including Hong Kong, New Zealand, Europe and the Middle East.

In 2009, the company opened its first overseas branch in Singapore, to serve the Asia region. This expansion went well, and Liam was soon considering other potential markets. He began to think seriously about the UK when a

customer reported a gap in the market there for the quality and pricing that Brilliant Prints offered. So, Liam began to research the UK further, talking to photographers in Australia with experience of the UK to gauge demand for his products over there. He also came across UK Trade & Investment (UKTI) on the internet, and sent an email to the UKTI Brisbane office asking what help was available to an Australian company looking to expand into the UK.

"We hadn't really spent much time in the UK before we decided to set up our business there, so UKTI's support has been invaluable," says Hannah.

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"We knew we wanted to be near to London to be close to the major photographic exhibitions, conferences and seminars that take place there. But we need space for our in-house production facilities, and were keen to keep our rental costs down. We thought Basildon would offer the right balance, and UKTI in Brisbane confirmed that this would be a good location for us. They then put us in touch with local investment organisations in the UK, such as Thames Gateway and Invest Essex, who were able to give us specific advice about finding premises, how to recruit staff and what grants were available. We also used UKTI's web-based UK Advisory Network to find a local accountant, who set up our UK registered company. UKTI and its partners generally made the whole process much easier than if we had tried to do all this by ourselves."

Picture perfect

By February 2011, the Brilliant Prints factory in Basildon was up and running. The company's first shipments of canvas from the US and timber from Malaysia

have already arrived, and its first orders for UK customers have been completed.

As the UK business grows over the next few years, Brilliant Prints will bring more of its products over from Australia, including ice mounts and art blocks. In time, the company will also begin to market itself across Europe, using the UK as its regional base.

"We've got off to a good start in the UK," says Hannah. "I attended a photography conference in London in March this year to touch base with potential customers, and as a result, we've already completed our first few orders from our Basildon factory. Until now, our European business has been reactive as customers have approached us through our website. But, now that we have a base up and running in the UK, we are looking forward to actively pursuing new business across Europe. Freight is relatively cheap, so we will manufacture our products in the UK and ship them out. It's early days, but our new venture is already keeping us busy and we're excited about our future in the UK and Europe."

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The UK - Europe's leading investment destination

Every year around 70 Australian businesses of all sizes, decide to expand to the UK or increase their business presence there. It's the leading European destination for Australian businesses, and the second most popular destination overall -but why?

It's more than just our close political, historical and commercial relationships - it's because the UK is a fantastic place to do business. It provides a unique gateway of international connections, is a recognised leader in the fields of creativity and innovation and is the sixth largest economy in the world.

According to the 'Doing Business 2011' report from the World Bank, the UK is the best place to do business in the EU and the G8. It takes just 13 days to set

up a company in the UK, compared to the OECD average of 15 days and the world average of 35 days.

The UK is home to four of the top 10 globally ranked universities, including Cambridge University which is ranked first. It is also the number one location for European headquarters: more overseas companies set up their European headquarters in the UK than anywhere else.

With over 2300 staff in 162 locations worldwide, UKTI is ideally placed to help companies grow their business internationally, offering expert advice, influence and practical assistance in establishing a UK operation.

Setting up your company in the UK

Deciding where to locate your international business is one of the biggest decisions you'll make and can be daunting. UK Trade & Investment helps businesses coming to the UK with every aspect of setting up their new operations.

As the UK Government's inward investment agency, it's our job to know the UK's strengths and where investment opportunities exist.

This means we can help your company to do all the research you need to make an informed decision, and then get up and running as quickly as possible.

UK Trade & Investment can help you to:

- Do your research
- Build key contacts
- Choose your location
- Set up your new office
- Grow your business internationally

For more information visit: www.ukti.gov.uk



UK Trade & Investment is the Government department that helps UK based companies succeed in international markets. We assist overseas companies to bring high quality investment to the UK's dynamic economy. We provide companies with the tools they require to be competitive on the world stage.