

# PAIMA REPORT

Issue 1, 2020



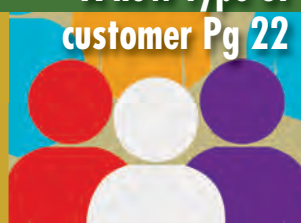
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The Magazine of the Pan American International Movers Association



**D**o you remember a time when we had never heard of COVID-19? Then we could laugh, embrace, and joke with each other in the sound knowledge that all we would pick up were happy memories. Those days will return!



# Snapshots!



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### Dear PAIMA Members,

This is not a good period we are running through. I don't even know what to write about, as I'm sure most of you are tired of hearing about the Coronavirus and all the media pressure about the pandemic spreading.

But, we all have to be extremely careful and conscious about the illness that is killing people all over the world. We must take all steps in order to avoid contamination and contaminating others. It is very serious. Please follow instructions.

We have canceled our Board of Directors meeting on a physical basis. We are meeting virtually to discuss and go through a very large agenda. We have many topics to cover and also plan our convention in San Diego, later this year.

If the convention is going to happen or not is another issue. We will have it planned. But if we need to cancel, then it is canceled. Everything to protect our members. And IAM will be the first one to confirm or cancel.

I wish you all a safe stay at home and try not to go outside. Only when extremely necessary. Let's all pray together for better days and may everybody overcome this in good health and perfect conditions.

All the best,

Lars Peter Lemche  
President — Board of Directors



## Letter from the Editor

**N**ow let's take a look on the bright side. It's summer in the northern hemisphere so for all of us who put up with rubbish weather most of the time, the sun is shining. The environment is having a holiday as everything shuts down, which should please the good people from Extinction Rebellion. We are all locked up at home so we really can spend more time with our families. And there's a new issue of **PAIMA Report** just landed on the doorstep, what's not to like?

You will be delighted to know that there is nothing (almost) within these pages about a virus. I think there is a picture of a Corona bottle somewhere, but you'll have to search for that.

It's not because we are ignoring the pesky pathogen, it's because most of the stories were written before we had heard of it. That's the nature of a three-times-a-year publication. So, relax, you are safe here.

Next time I might not be able to make the same promise so, enjoy reading. When we meet again the world will be different, possibly better, than it was in the past.

Steve Jordan, Editor





## NFB wins new contract in Norway



**N**FB International Relocations in Norway has recently won a huge contract for the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). The four-year contract is estimated to be worth around \$2.5 million a year.

The Norwegian MFA divides its contract into four geographical regions; ASIA/OCEANIA, AFRICA, AMERICAS and EUROPE so the same provider can potentially win all regions. NFB has won the contract for all regions except EUROPE.



NFB International Relocations AS of Norway started trading 1 January, 2009 and has participated in the tender for the MFA since 2010. In 2013 the company won the contract for the AMERICAS.

"With renewed energy and enthusiasm, we look forward to increasing our cooperation with the participating partners around the globe, and would also like to extend our heartfelt thanks for your contribution to our success," said Bjorn Carlsen (above), NFB Managing Director. "We look forward to our cooperation in the years to come."

## Bliss Corporation welcomes two new team members

**I**talian international removal specialist Bliss Corporation has announced the appointment of two members to its team.

Diego Novaro (pictured right) joins as business development manager and will be responsible for consolidating the company's presence in Milan and throughout Northern Italy, as well as developing business farther afield. Meanwhile, Lori Hickey (above left, with CEO Francesco Argirò) joins Bliss to work with the large expat community in Rome. Lori is the co-founder of *Retake Roma* and the *American Exchange of Rome* and was recently awarded the 'Distinguished American in Rome' prize by the American International Club of Rome.







## Aires opens in Phoenix

**A**ires has announced the opening of a new office in Phoenix, Arizona, to accommodate client growth and ensure strategic alignment in the Western region.

"We are very excited to expand into the Phoenix market," said Aires' President, Jeff Wangler. "Our goal is to always go where our clients need us, strategically positioning employees and aligning with our clients' key locations."

The local team will be led by Aires' Regional Operations Manager, Peter Ferreira (pictured left), a key Aires team

member since 2012 who has 20 years of comprehensive relocation experience, having previously served in Aires' regional offices in Dallas, Texas; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and Danbury, Connecticut. Peter will lead a team of mobility industry experts experienced in providing high-quality service delivery.

"Not only does opening an office in Phoenix enable us to support the growth of our Western region, it has also introduced us to a highly-talented market of new employees and candidates," said Joleen Lauffer, Aires' Executive Vice President.

## Boonma makes Christmas happen

**C**hristmas might seem a long way away now, but for Boonma Event Mobility in Bangkok it was a busy time.

The PAIMA member won the logistics contracts from three different top luxury hotel brands - Rosewood Bangkok, Peninsula Bangkok and Waldorf Astoria Bangkok - to import Christmas trees and decorative items from China to Thailand, including customs clearance, storage, delivery, unloading, unpacking and installing.



The shipments all arrived on time at the hotels and were installed overnight by Boonma staff to keep guests (and Santa) happy.

"In December, Bangkok's luxury hotels and shopping centers get dressed up with impressive twinkling festive displays to get you into the holiday mood," said Tiddy S Teerawit, Executive Director of Boonma Group. "This is the third consecutive year that we have won the Christmas projects from those luxury hotel brands."

Photo Left: Making Christmas for the Rosewood Bangkok Hotel.



## Building a business in Myanmar

**A**fter 18 years of working in the moving industry in Myanmar, Raju Aung Naing decided in 2011 to strike out for himself and go it alone.

As usual, starting something new was a lonely place. Raju said that, after serving a three year non-compete period, he worked very hard to get his new company off the ground. "I worked for two years, day and night, day and night," he said. He had two members of staff and worked from rented facilities. Then, as always happens when you work hard, a piece of luck came along in the shape of a forwarding contract in the oil and gas industry.

It was this that gave Raju a break and allowed him to start building the company. Today, Global Moving & Storage Ltd Myanmar is a substantial household goods shipping operation with its own facilities and employing 40 people. Raju is a regular attendee at global conferences and is a member of PAIMA to help him build up his network of international agents.

Photo above: Raju Aung Naing on his stand at IAM (International Association of Movers) in Chicago, 2019.





## Gerson appoints new supply chain & agent partner relationships manager



**G**erson Relocation has announced the promotion of Nikki Browne (above) to supply chain & agent partner relationships manager. She will be responsible for managing agent relationships for international moving and relocation services.

Nikki's role focuses on nurturing relationships with agent partners, managing performance and costs, and ensuring service continuity worldwide.

As part of her role she will also lead a team of relocation managers who carry out the management of household goods moving services for overseas agent partners. Nikki and her team are now the primary point of contact for agent rate requests at Gerson Relocation.

Nikki has worked in the moving and relocation industry for 12 years and joined Gerson in 2012. During this time, she has worked across many of the organization's service units, managing everything from door-to-door household goods moves to full business relocations. She is also experienced with costings and working with agent partners.

Russell Start, AGM Group Managing Director said, "It is terrific to see our employees taking opportunities to develop and grow their careers within our business. Nikki's experience and her team are an incredible resource for our overseas partners."

## New people at Gerson Relocation

**G**erson Relocation in London has appointed three new members of staff: Ricky Hibburt (above) as client service manager; and both Claire Skillett (middle right) and Melanie Winkworth (lower right) to its client services team.

Ricky is responsible for working with Corporate HR and Global Mobility teams to help manage their employee relocation programs and cases. He has a great deal of moving and relocation management experience, having previously worked with clients from a broad range of sectors as well as gaining valuable experience from an employee's perspective, having relocated on many occasions himself. He has previously held senior mobility and management roles at Santa Fe Relocation. Prior to this, he was self-employed as a home search consultant, gaining valuable knowledge of the housing market in and around London and an understanding of key relocation processes.

Ricky said, "I chose to join Gerson Relocation because I wanted to be part of an industry renowned company at the top of their game. I was also attracted to a company that is looking to invest in their staff and has a focus on customer service. I like the level of experience at all levels within Gerson and knowing that this will push and help me grow within a company entering an exciting time in the industry."

Melanie will support Ricky's department in helping to manage international employee relocation programs. "Prior to joining, I'd heard good things about Gerson

Relocation in the market," she said. "I like their focus on building the best possible relocation and moving service available and I look forward to collaborating with clients to further develop our service around their needs."

Claire will support relocating assignees and carry out global move management for corporate clients. She has been in the relocation business for 20 years and is highly experienced in both international moving and client relationship management.

Before joining Gerson Relocation, Claire held global moving roles at BTR International and Pickfords. She also worked in client relationship management and as an account manager at 20th Century Fox, the global entertainment and film business.

Claire said, "I am excited to join Gerson Relocation and look forward to growing and succeeding with a company that focuses on excellent customer service."





## Suddath appoints Scott Perry as president of Moving & Logistics

**R**elocation and logistics specialist Suddath has announced the promotion of Scott Perry (pictured left) to president of Suddath Moving & Logistics. He succeeds Frank Senatore who is retiring after five years on the Suddath team.

In his new role Scott will oversee multiple lines of business at Suddath, including interstate household goods, global logistics, commercial moving and local moving. He will have full responsibility for Suddath's branch network and distribution center operations across the United States.

Scott joined Suddath in 2018 as the head of Global Logistics and led significant growth in the company's contract logistics,

international freight forwarding and furniture, fixtures and equipment (FFE) product lines. He quickly moved into an expanded role as chief operating officer of a newly combined Suddath Moving & Logistics division.

Mike Brannigan, President & CEO, The Suddath Companies said, "Scott has been integral in driving our operational strategy and execution in support of a fully integrated moving and logistics business. Under his guidance, we have elevated our focus on the customer experience, driving quality, safety and innovation, while solidifying our position as an industry leader in providing end-to-end moving and supply chain solutions for our customers."

## Sterling Lexicon appoints Sabrina Comes as country director

**M**obility specialist Sterling Lexicon is boosting its international team by welcoming Sabrina Comes to its office in France. Sabrina will join the team as country director and will be based at Sterling Lexicon's France Office in Paris, which has been operating since 1999.

Rob Lucas, Director of Sterling Lexicon UK and France said, "I'm excited for Sabrina to join our Sterling Lexicon family in Paris. As an organization, we recognize the importance of having a strong presence in France, and we are confident her knowledge and experience will further strengthen our position in this strategic location."

As country director for France, Sabrina will manage and drive sales in the region. She will work to expand Sterling Lexicon's operations in France and lead a dedicated team to achieve maximum results. Sabrina brings with her a wealth of knowledge and experience from across the industry. Before joining Sterling Lexicon, she was sales director for Santa Fe Relocation in France.

Rob Lucas added, "This position requires active communication and participation across a range of colleagues in all regions. Sabrina has the leadership experience and a proven history of success that make her perfect for this role."





# Aires and Bacardi win at EMMAs in London

**G**lobal mobility company Aires and its client Bacardi - the largest privately held spirits company in the world - were awarded Best Vendor Partnership by the Forum for Expatriate Management (FEM) at the EMEA Expatriate Management & Mobility Awards (EMMAs) held in London last November. The award recognizes the collaborative approach developed by Aires and Bacardi.

Andrew Meadowcroft, Aires' Manager of Global Operations & Technology said, "It has been a pleasure supporting the Bacardi Mobility Program. From the outset, we could see how much value Bacardi places on the experience of its people. It has been a joy to offer strategic solutions to Bacardi in a very collaborative environment. Aires' 'culture of yes' has played a key role in enabling us to listen to Bacardi and help drive the strategic goals of a company with a very mobile workforce."

The awards were judged by an independent group of leading mobility professionals from a variety of companies and industries. In selecting Aires and Bacardi, judges noted the strong cultural fit between the two companies.

Bacardi Global Mobility Director, Dennis Michels said, "Bacardi promotes a culture of mobility, where people are encouraged to experience new countries as part of their personal and professional growth. We recognize that this is a big commitment for any family or individual and Aires helps us achieve an easy relocation through their communications, expertise, and attention to making personal connections. The Aires approach of putting people first is a great match for our family-owned business where relationships matter and taking care of each is part of our culture."

Claire Tennant-Scull, Head of Content at FEM added, "EMMAs entries are rigorously judged by a team of fiercely impartial, highly experienced, senior figures in the industry, who are drawn from a range of disciplines across the EMEA region and who give up their own free time to carry out a very thorough and demanding process, so these awards carry tremendous kudos. It's so important to receive recognition among your peers for innovation and hard work and so I think the winners and all those on the shortlist should feel extremely proud."



## France's Groupe BERTON International joins PAIMA

**F**rench moving and relocation company Groupe BERTON International has become a PAIMA member, making it the second company in France to join the network. The company comprises five divisions: Berton International, Berton Movers, Berton Storage, Berton Archiving and Berton Transfer specializing in office moving.

With regional offices in Melun, Longjumeau, Orleans, Blois and Angers, Groupe Berton is able to offer moving and relocation services across mainland France and its European islands. The company was founded by Robert Berton in 1963 in the city of Orleans, 80 miles south of Paris, and remains a family business under the chairmanship of Xavier Berton.

BERTON Group is also a member of the IAM (International Association of Movers) network and is ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 certified.

"Since 1963 our company has developed in different categories to meet the demand of our customers,"

said Xavier Berton, Chairman. "Our activities now offer a range of moving services. Our ambition is to find the best solutions for our customers every day and to surround ourselves with competent, involved and attentive employees."

Photo above: Thanina Ferrat and Xavier Berton, Chairman.

Photo below: Thanina Ferrat, presenting at the Chicago conference.

[www.berton-groupe.com](http://www.berton-groupe.com)







# Zero emissions ships move a step closer

**A maritime innovation project to install the world's first ammonia-powered fuel cell on a vessel has been awarded €10m funding from the European Union (EU).**

The ShipFC project is being run by a consortium of 14 European companies and institutions, co-ordinated by the Norwegian cluster organization NCE Maritime CleanTech.

The innovative project has been awarded backing from the EU's Research and Innovation

program Horizon 2020 under its Fuel Cells and Hydrogen Joint Undertaking (FCH JU).

An offshore vessel, *Viking Energy*, will be retrofitted with a large 2MW ammonia fuel cell allowing it to sail solely on the clean fuel for up to 3,000 hours annually. The project will demonstrate that long-range zero-emission voyages with high power on larger ships is possible.

The goal is also to prove that a large fuel cell can deliver total electric power to shipboard

systems safely and effectively. This is the first time an ammonia-powered fuel cell will be installed on a vessel. A significant part of the project will be the scale-up of a 100-kilowatt fuel cell to two megawatts.

The ship's ammonia system will be supplied by Wärtsilä and begin testing at the Sustainable Energy Norwegian Catapult Centre in late 2023.

Photo above: *Viking Energy*

## PAIMA election year

**2020 is an election year for PAIMA in which all Board positions, including those for president and vice president, need to be decided by the membership.**

Nominations must arrive at the PAIMA office no later than 18 August, 2020. So, if you are interested in becoming part of the team driving the Association, or know someone else who is, now's your chance to be on the official ballot.

All eligible Active Members will be listed on the 'Election Ballot' and the votes (one vote per Active Member) will be cast during our General Assembly in San Diego.

If there are any questions, please contact the PAIMA office for help and clarification.



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# New PAIMA member in Saudi Arabia

**M**ove One Relocations Saudi Arabia Ltd has joined the PAIMA network, the first company in the Saudi Kingdom to do so.

The Riyadh-based company is part of the Move One Group, which has 54 offices in 40 countries and more than 600 employees worldwide. During the last thirty years, Move One has built a reputation for its expertise in providing relocation and logistics services in some of the world's most challenging and turbulent regions.

Move One Director Bojan Simunovic said, "Life in Saudi is gradually changing for expats, but things are still very different here, and it does take a while to adjust. Our people in Riyadh are very well aware of the potential challenges assignees face when they move here and aim to make their transition to Saudi life as smooth as possible."

Having made their home in Saudi most people enjoy the experience and quickly adapt to the culture and way of life. However, strict regulations can sometimes cause difficulties for people more used to a western lifestyle. For example, single parents or unmarried couples may not be granted a visa, and wives of assignees are often not allowed to work during their stay.

Pets are generally accepted, but dogs, though tolerated, are not usually permitted to be walked beyond the gates of the residential compounds where the majority of expats live. Certain items, such as alcohol, drugs, or quantities of religious books or other religious items are not allowed to be brought into the country. The Move One team in Riyadh can advise shippers about these and any other regulations assignees need to be aware of before departure.

In the past, most expats moving to Saudi Arabia worked in the oil and gas industry, but in recent years that to a large extent has changed, with finance, retail, construction and law firms increasingly hiring expat workers.

"We relocate people here from all over the world, but mainly from the United States," said Bojan. "We rely mainly on agents for our international business and by joining PAIMA we're hoping to expand our network of partners, especially in the Americas."

Move One is also a member of FIDI, IAM (International Association of Movers) and LACMA (Latin American and Caribbean International Movers Association).

[www.moveoneinc.com](http://www.moveoneinc.com)





# PAIMA welcomes its new member in Sri Lanka

**T**rans-Global Relocations (Pvt) Ltd (TGR) recently became a member of PAIMA, making it the only relocation company in Sri Lanka to be a part of the network.

The Colombo-based company began operations in 2013 and is owned by family members, Suresh (pictured right), Emashi and Kaylon Marcellus. Managing Director Suresh Marcellus has over 38 years' experience in the international moving industry, having initially trained in Singapore and working in Australia for two major international moving companies, before moving back to his native country.

Today TGR employs full-time staff and has a 3,000 sq ft transit warehouse in Colombo, offering customers 30-days' complimentary storage for out-bound consignments and 14 days for in-bound

shipments. The company specializes mainly in handling door-to-door relocations for corporate, diplomatic and UN missions worldwide.

"We've built the business by using modern methods and offering our customers competitive prices matched by personalized service," said Suresh.

"We are extremely proud to be the only PAIMA member in Sri Lanka and look forward to expanding our network globally with PAIMA members. Word of mouth goes a long way in relocation."

Trans-Global Relocations received the PAIMA new member tonnage star award for 2019.

[www.t-grelo.com](http://www.t-grelo.com)



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# Star International Movers joins PAIMA

**S**tar International Movers, based in Dulles, Virginia, has recently joined the PAIMA network. Now in its 23rd year of trading, Star International was founded by its current owner Jimmy Re (pictured upper and lower right) who grew the business from humble beginnings into a substantial international moving company with clients around the world.

Jimmy began his career in the moving business at the age of 17 working as a crew member for a domestic moving company in Alexandria, Virginia, to earn money for college. Later, while studying, he worked part-time for another moving company where he gained valuable frontline experience packing and loading household goods.

After graduating from college with a business and finance degree, Jimmy picked up his career in the moving industry, this time working for a large international company in northern Virginia, where he gained extensive knowledge about the processes and practicalities of international moving.

Following two years of working for a corporate organization whose main focus, it seemed to him, was on the number of moves booked per year rather than delivering personal service, Jimmy decided the corporate, impersonal approach, was not for him and decided to start his own business.

"I was in my early thirties with a wife and a young son, so I guess it wasn't the best time to take a risk and start a new business," said Jimmy. "We decided to go ahead anyway, because we figured there would always be an excuse not to, and anyway, the worst that could happen was we'd lose our money!" Fortunately, thanks to hard work, resilience and determination, the gamble paid off.

As with many family-run businesses, Jimmy has based his business model on providing personal service. "I still like to think when people move with Star, they are moving with Jimmy Re, and although we're now a much bigger company and I have a great team of

experienced people around me, I'm still very hands-on when it comes to our customers and agents," said Jimmy. "If someone has an issue, or an agent needs a special rate for example, I'll always do my best to help."

From its base in Dulles, Star International provides domestic moving and destination services throughout the US and is a Top 10 agent in the nationwide Arpin Van Line Network. As well as dealing with incoming traffic, Star handles shipments from the US to destinations across the globe for customers, including the military and aid-funded organizations moving goods and personal affects to developing countries in Eastern Europe, Africa and parts of Asia.

Star International Movers is already a member of IAM (International Association of Movers) and LACMA (Latin American and Caribbean International Movers Association) so why did Jimmy decide to join PAIMA?

"We've taken several steps to expand the business during the past year or so, including opening a new, bigger warehouse and we need to get our name out there," said Jimmy. "I'd worked with several movers who are members of PAIMA and they all said it was a really good organization to be a part of. It's a close-knit community where people talk and get to know and trust each other: that's how I built my company and it's how I like to do business. I'm looking forward to meeting more PAIMA members and developing new business relationships in the months and years ahead."

Last year Jimmy's son Javin (pictured middle with father, Jimmy) joined the company and is looking forward to a successful career in the international moving business.

[www.starint.com](http://www.starint.com)





# Sterling Lexicon launches Sterling Xpress

**S**terling Lexicon has upgraded its popular household goods small shipment service with the introduction of Sterling Xpress.

The small shipment service was originally introduced in 2017 to overcome industry challenges, such as diminishing capacity, driver shortages, and decreasing shipment sizes. These obstacles often result in service failures, delayed shipments, increased claims and costs, and frustrated assignees and human resource professionals.

By combining the convenience of full-service moving with the speed and agility of containerized shipping, Sterling Lexicon has reduced claims and costs while enhancing the assignee's experience. Sterling Xpress introduces significant program enhancements, such as faster transit times, guaranteed pick-up and delivery dates, 60 days of free household goods storage, an expanded network of vetted, quality partners, and increased savings.

Mike Brannigan, President of Sterling Lexicon said, "From lack of productivity and unsettled employees to increased temporary housing and



per day costs, slow relocations cost more than just money. Sterling Xpress solves these problems by providing the fastest transit times in the industry, creating less stress on the employee so they can focus on getting settled into their new role instead of on their move."

One successful example of this program in action is how Sterling Xpress saved a large Bay Area financial technology company more than \$1.1 million in household goods and other fees within one year. Prior to partnering with Sterling Lexicon, the company was experiencing two to three-week delivery

windows, making it difficult to plan for the transition from temporary housing to permanent. After using Sterling Xpress, claims decreased to zero and delivery windows were significantly reduced, saving the business up to \$15,000 per move.

"Our customers are raving about the program offering," said Rob Vespa, Senior Vice President of Move Management for Sterling Lexicon. "With Sterling Xpress, businesses and employees don't have to sacrifice great service for cost savings."

## Air Animal recommends Ehrlichia pre-test for Australia and New Zealand

**I**nternational pet transportation company Air Animal in Florida is recommending that all dogs traveling to Australia and New Zealand should have a test for Ehrlichia six months before the intended moving date. Australia has banned dogs that test positive for Ehrlichia canis, a tick-borne disease that is not contagious to people.

"Ehrlichia has surged in animal populations because tick populations surge every seven years," said Dr. Walter M. Woolf, Air Animal founder and USDA-certified veterinarian.

Air Animal now recommends its clients start the six-month pre-move process for both Australia and New Zealand with an Ehrlichia antigen

test. The test is especially important for pets residing in the US for six months before moving on to another country such as Australia or New Zealand. Pets that test positive can then complete the treatments necessary for them to relocate and enter Australia and New Zealand's normal 10-day quarantine.

"If the first test is positive, a 30-day treatment using Imizol (imidocarb), doxycycline and tick prevention usually reduces the antigen to acceptable levels," Dr. Woolf explained.

"A second confirmatory blood test is required within 45 days of pet export. If clients wait to test the antigen 45 days before the move, there just isn't time to complete the treatments and re-test the pet."



# US domestic relocation trends to watch in 2020

**Sterling Lexicon offers an insight into what to expect from the US domestic relocation market in 2020.**

**T**he first year of the new decade will be very busy - our nation will see a presidential election, a new generation of workers and new technologies are just over the horizon, and the economy is seeing the longest period of uninterrupted growth in its history. These are the relocation trends you should be watching in 2020.

## **Generation Z enters the job market**

Generation Z (Gen Z) are entering adulthood and the workforce in increasing numbers. 2020 will be influenced by how the relocation industry moves these workers into their roles. While Millennials (Gen Y) will form the largest cohort of workers in 2020, Gen Z will begin entering the workforce at an accelerated rate. These adults, born in the mid-90s and later, are often considered to be even more Millennial-ish than Millennials themselves. However, early studies may be revealing that Gen Z has significant differences from their Millennial counterparts.

Notice that the qualities of Gen Z are not inherently negative - qualities in this combination can be leveraged to cultivate a worker that is exceptionally engaged in their career. The key word being 'cultivated'. These qualities likely mean that a Gen Z worker will be more willing to accept relocation than prior generations, but due to higher digitalization and higher likelihood of early workforce entry, may also be less ready-made for any particular position. Despite the differences between Millennials and Gen Z, these disparities might not be so great as to require major restructuring in onboarding and relocation.

For instance, short-term assignments (STAs) may be repurposed for the young workers. STAs are temporary transfers, sometimes across national borders, that last between three months to a year. STAs are especially useful for knowledge transfers, project-based work, and providing international experience. While these transfers might stereotypically be associated with upper-management, STAs may serve multiple purposes for young workers to prove themselves ready for future, larger-commitment relocations, but also be used to fill skill-gaps.





For 2020, the relocation industry should consider whether it can help move these workers into their new careers by integrating mentorship connections into their programs - thus ensuring that a skills gap doesn't prevent the right person from getting into the right place. Be sure to remember that, like Millennials before them, Gen Z is going to be a diverse cohort of workers - do not limit your relocation candidates to any particular demographics. Also, like Millennials, Gen Z may tend to prefer do-it-yourself and cash programs, or programs that allow significant flexibility such as a Core/Flex approach.

### **Artificial intelligence still too new**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is being presented as the new panacea to all business challenges. However, while one can acknowledge that AI will eventually extend into all areas of work, 2020 is perhaps still too early to reorganize your HR and relocation programs around AI. Twitter bots going rogue (TayTweets), and facial recognition only being accurate for a single demographic, should serve as warnings against poor applications of this burgeoning technology.

Another caution against AI: while the digitally native Generation Z is likely to easily understand and use new technologies, their discerning eyes will more readily criticize poorly implemented technologies.

An alternative to AI is to consider robotic process automation (RPA). Where AI is very new, RPA is established, reliable, and proven. RPA can be used to alleviate the burden on relocation professionals of tedious data-entry and filling out forms, and instead allow them to focus on more client-oriented tasks. Implementing RPA processes can still be complicated, however, so be sure to commit extra time to understand exactly where and how RPA can support your relocation and talent programs.

For 2020, be skeptical of accepting AI solutions at face value. This technology requires an educated eye to implement, and an expert to upkeep. It may be more worthwhile to prefer new hires with computer science skills to provide the necessary filter and insight into incoming AI technologies. Fresh talent may give you the edge needed to adapt in the face of disruption.

### **Strong economic growth, but real estate sales stagnant**

The United States is currently experiencing the longest period of uninterrupted real estate growth in its history. The previous record for longest growth lasted from the

post-war slowdown in March 1991, to the burst of the dot-com bubble in March 2001 - a period of 120 months. The last recession ended June of 2009 - over 126 months ago. Despite a few doomsayer headlines portending an oncoming recession in 2020, the evidence of such is inconclusive and the relocation industry should expect continued growth.

The real estate market is filled with signs of unmet demand. Mortgage rates are expected to remain below 3.9% and may drop as low as 3.5%. Housing prices are expected to continue to rise. And the length of time one owns a home between moves is as high as 23 years in some metropolitan areas. These trends are causing younger homebuyers to look for homes in the suburbs.

The increasing trend of home tenure is another way of saying a decreasing trend in domestic migration. While during the 50s and 60s, as much as 20% of American families per year migrated to new homes, that number has dropped to 9.8%. This phenomenon is likely being driven by three general factors. First: as said before, increasing home tenure, especially by older generations, will tend to shut younger generations out of the housing market. Second: incomes, adjusted for inflation, have remained mostly flat for the last 35 years, which has a double-effect - not only are Americans having to work harder to improve their standard of living, but flat incomes have led to a swift increase in the number of dual-income households. Anybody familiar with the relocation industry will know that relocating a dual-income household comes with a great deal more involvement than relocating a household with only one income earner. Finally, third: with the increase in telecommunication and telepresence technologies, the requirement for on-site presence is relaxed, which further reduces the need to relocate.

While the yearly domestic migration rate isn't expected to rise above 12%, the relocation industry may be able to alleviate some of the complications preventing Americans from migrating by offering more sophisticated relocation packages aligned to the trends and market forces described here.

The economic environment within the relocation industry appears to be on an ongoing trend of consolidation with the \$400-million acquisition of Cartus Relocation by Sirva Worldwide, Inc in 2019. In the past, consolidation in the relocation industry has occurred sporadically, but in recent years, consolidation has greatly accelerated. We see this trend continuing in 2020 and will likely require the relocation industry to be prepared for further disruption and change.

For 2020, relocation professionals will want to keep their eye on the 2020 housing market and economics news. A recession usually causes business shrinkage and increasing unemployment - a double-edged sword for relocation. While business restructuring may increase relocations, business shrinkage may reduce them. Similarly, unmet demand in the housing market tends to anchor homeowners in place and make real estate difficult to acquire - even in spite of low mortgage rates.

2020 is shaping up to be a year full of exciting challenges. New talent, new policy approaches and new technologies are disrupting an already-tumultuous industry, and the US economy is primed for further rapid changes. Whatever challenges or opportunities 2020 presents to you and your business, you can rely on Sterling Lexicon.







# When the chips are down

Reflections on a life in the moving  
business, by Steve Jordan

**I** have never written a story like this before. I wouldn't be doing so now if the PAIMA president hadn't asked me to, and I have learned over the years that it's never good to say no to the boss. Having spent half my life writing about other people, this is the first time I have said anything much about me. Feels strange. Sorry it's so long.

Lars asked me to write a story about my life in the moving industry. My first thought was that it's not finished yet, though I did have a close

call last year! Then I thought that nobody would be very interested. But, I suppose, after 46 years of trying to make sense of this somewhat crazy business, I guess I have picked up a few nuggets.

I owe this business a lot. Without it, for example, the food and accommodation at Jordan Towers wouldn't have been so good as it's given me a living for, well, almost always. I also met my second wife in the industry when, during the 1980s, she managed to make BAR conferences far more interesting than they ever had been before or have been

since. We have two children together who, added to the two girls and their six children from my first liaison, have made life joyous and traumatic in almost equal measure. By the time you read this, our youngest, Mary, will be ready to pop with number seven. More tears of joy and sprouting grey hair for me I predict. Pregnancy is never fun for grandads.

Picture above: Editor photograph for the first *OMNI Observer* in 1995.



## First days

Walking into Scotpac (now Crown) in August 1974 to start work as a shipping clerk was not a choice: it was a necessity. Following a stint in the navy, then running a pub, suffering a serious illness and having recently married, it was the only job in town other than serving fish and chips. I remember my first task. I had to add up the volume of the Australian surveys and divide them by the price. My boss, Glyn Thomas (still a friend), told me it should work out at £2.50 a cubic foot and, if not, I should tell him. Today, if you do the same sum, it works out about £5.00, no wonder movers sometimes struggle to make a living. Then you could buy a family home for £10,000 that would cost you around £400,000 today. Somehow the moving industry has lost its way, don't you think?

## Branching out

Glyn, the depot manager, left the company six months later without warning. I was worried. By now my first child was on the way and I wanted to know if my job was secure. I knocked on his door that same evening and asked for an explanation. As the beer flowed and Gordon Lightfoot played on the stereo, we hatched a plan to start our own company. Remarkably, in the morning, after the hangover had subsided, we felt the same way. Avalon Overseas, owned by Glyn, Jimmy Hanna, a totally crazy but brilliant Irishman, and me started in March 1975.

We did military ITGBL and DPM work and got the hang of handling migrant household goods. It was tough work, very tough, with 6:30am starts and late finishes. I spent my 21st birthday, in a baking July, loading military boxes on 40ft trailers and building new ones (15 I think) on my own. I cursed Glyn, who hadn't shown up all day. Arriving home, long past 9:00pm, covered in dead flies and sweat, I found him, and 70 of my fiends and family, gathered for a surprise party. He'd been helping set up. It was hard to be angry.

Jimmy was a drunk, but a brilliant operator and a fabulous packer. The crews adored him. He said one day that if he ever got married he would move back to Ireland to have his children educated. We dismissed it because we couldn't imagine how anyone would ever marry him. Nobody would be that stupid, would they?

## On the road

The company was a success and we had plenty of adventures. I spent the best part of 20 years driving 70,000 miles a year doing surveys. I was good at it. Whether I was good at faking sincerity or I really did care about the customers, I can't tell. I even fooled myself. I was also one of the few surveyors at that time

who worked out the prices in the house. I believed then and still believe now that selling doesn't start until someone says no. If you don't give them that opportunity, you can't call yourself a salesman. I developed a technique of massaging the price as I worked it out. I appeared to be focused on my calculations while the customer would talk to fill the intentional silence. They would divulge all kinds of useful snippets about who else had been around and the prices they charged, thinking I wasn't really listening. In fact, I could work out the cost of a move to Australia in my sleep and was just waiting until I felt I had eked out as much profit as I could before spilling the beans. It didn't work every time, but it often did.

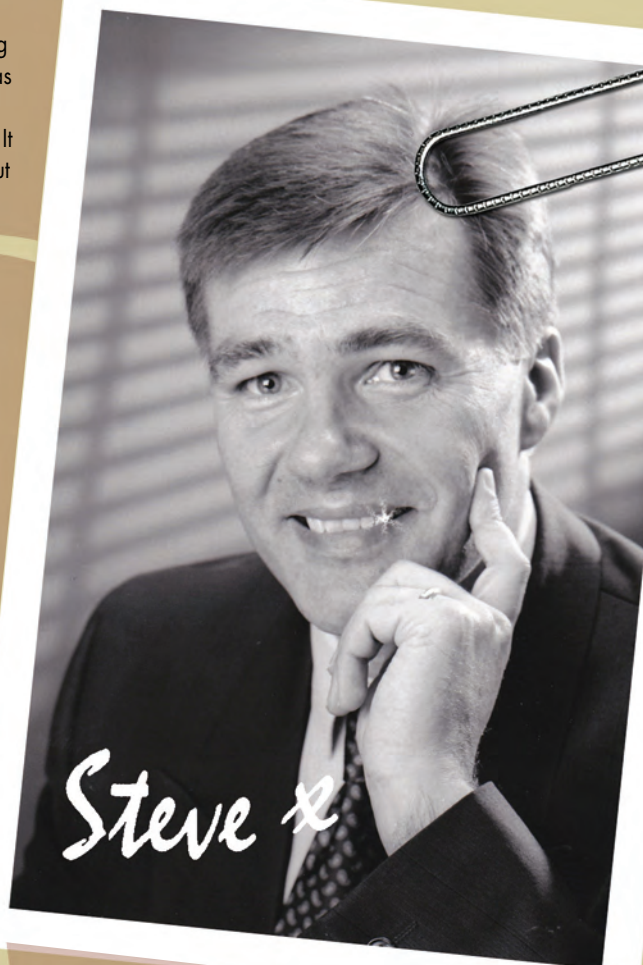
I met my fair share of nutters while on the road. There was the lady who locked me in the loft, in the dark, for 30 minutes while talking to her neighbor; and the military man who was trying to smuggle an air balloon back to The States courtesy of Uncle Sam by describing it as a laundry basket, a tent and a gas heater. He even had the 'gas heater' working in his living room when I arrived, at great danger to us all, including his two-year-old-son.

Then there was Mr Smelly, who turned out to be a pig farmer and very proud of his appropriate name; the lady with 34 cats (need I say more); the famous Italian artist, Countess Velia Rinaldi, a 90-year-old charmer who called me in every few months for a chat because she was lonely (I never shipped anything for her but still have one of her paintings on the wall in my guest room); and countless romantic opportunities with bored housewives. I loved being on the road.

## The BAR

BAR (British Association of Removers) was a great opportunity for me. The conferences, where we would sit up all night drinking beer, talking rubbish, annoying the bar staff and failing to impress the blonde in the corner, were a great joy. But more than that I was a member of the Overseas Group Council for many years

and enjoyed doing my bit for the industry. I was amazed though that committees could spend quite so much time talking about their own existence and virtually no time discussing the people they represented. I remember Rob Syers, the then general secretary of BAR, who had a dictionary definition of a committee on his desk. It read: 'A committee is a group of people who, individually can do nothing but together agree that nothing can be done'. Brilliant!



I was the chairman of the Freight Negotiation Committee for some years and became very frustrated that people would vote for contracts then use them as a base from which to do their own deals. I argued that they should be expelled from the Association for doing so but was told that was unfair. "Well let's start something we can throw them out of," I can still hear myself saying. That's when we started The Movers Trading Club (MTC). It's still running successfully now but, I suspect, with a much more lenient approach than that with which it started. I could be quite grumpy in those days.



## Disaster

I was sailing off the UK south coast in 1982 when I got the news that changed my career forever. Our warehouse had suffered an arson attack. There was nothing left. We had lost everything, including the entire contents of the warehouse, the vehicles and the offices. A friend at Interdean provided us with an office and a phone line. It was before the days of computers and every piece of paper we had was gone. Glyn and I stared at the phone all afternoon, waiting for it to ring, while doing serious damage to a bottle of Scotch. We had decided to wave the white flag; this was too hard. Then there was a tap on the door. Ken Reeves, our warehouse manager, the grumpiest most unhelpful old bugger imaginable, had been talking to the lads. "They said, if it helps, they will work for the next month for nothing," he said. Then closed the door with a gentle click.

would like his 30% of the business back please. Gulp! That's when we sold to Paul Evans at Transeuro. I guess the final Watt of energy just left us at that moment.

## Picking up the pen

I stayed with Transeuro for five years or so but had an idea that I could be a writer. One day, after a particularly difficult day at the office, I took the plunge. I'd been divorced and had no money except £500 I was saving to buy presents for the children at Christmas. I spent the lot on stationery, a second-hand computer and a fax machine which I installed in my garden shed. Bohemia, here I come. It was like leaping off a cliff in the dark.

But it worked, the bills got paid and Santa came. I had no intention of working in the moving business again but, in September 1995, Paul Mason, the then treasurer of

OMNI (Overseas Moving Network International), asked me to write a magazine for the Association. I produced the *OMNI Observer* for 18 years.

Meanwhile, BAR asked me to handle its PR on the retirement of Colin Quarrington and later to edit the Association's magazine the *Removals and Storage (R&S)*. It was a great honor and a job I loved. My brother, David, joined me and we started a small company to provide a range of copywriting services – The Words Workshop. That's what we do now, it still pays the bills.

## The Mover

Leaving the *R&S* was a wrench. For some time I had thought the industry needed an independent magazine, one that was not controlled by a trade association or group,

one that was totally unbiased, one that would accept contributions and advertising from anyone and, by implication, refuse both from anyone considered unsavoury. I would have stayed at the *R&S* and *The Mover* would not have been born, were it not for the BAR's new director general, a man called Stephen Vickers. Stephen and I did not get on. In fact, Stephen did not get on with quite a lot of people. But on one fateful day, he braced me off sufficiently for

me to throw in the towel. I vowed never to speak to him again, and I never have. It was another 'cliff in the dark' moment. On reflection, I am very grateful to him.

Then I had an extraordinary moment. The following afternoon, when I had already burned my boats with BAR, an account that provided my little firm with half its income, I made some telephone calls. I called about 15 people, asked if they would advertise with me and implored them not to say yes if they were not certain. Every one of them agreed. Some booked a series of adverts and one offered to pay up front for a year. That's when *The Mover* started. All those people were good to their word and some are still with us today. It was that afternoon, as I put down the phone on the last call, that I realised why I had spent so many hours in bars at BAR conferences in my youth. Those relationships, built without really knowing why, suddenly all made sense. People booked advertising and offered to pay for it in a magazine that didn't even exist because – well, I guess they trusted me. Very powerful stuff.

## The purpose

The split with BAR happened close on 10 years ago now. Mr Vickers has left. Last year I attended the BAR conference again for the first time since 2010. *The Mover* is still doing well, now in its digital form, and The Words Workshop continues to work for clients all around the world in a range of industries. I am very lucky to do a job that I enjoy and to keep in touch with the wonderful people of the moving industry who have given me such joy over so many years. If at any time you question why you are attending yet another industry conference, just remember my story. When the chips are really down, this industry looks after its own.

Picture top: At the BAR conference with Mrs Jordan (Sheila) in 2000;

Picture centre left: Attending an OMNI conference (one of the few times the camera was turned around).



What could we do? With support like that we had no choice but to carry on. And we paid everyone.

But the truth is, the fire had killed us. The insurance paid out and we set up again but it's hard to recover from that. To see a life's work, or so it seemed then, trashed, was a pain too hard to handle, if not for me, then certainly for Glyn. We carried on valiantly, and had some success, but it wasn't the same. It wasn't fun anymore. It was in 1989 that Jimmy came in and said, "Right, well, I'll be off then." Off where we wondered? He had booked his one-way ticket back to Ireland. He had found the world's most patient woman who had given him the most beautiful twins who were now five years old. He was true to his word. He was to have them educated in Ireland and







# A new type of customer

**Raul Quintanar (pictured right) from TriGlobal looks at how the moving industry is changing**

**F**or the past five years, we have been collecting data from our online users to try and understand how consumer behavior is changing within the removal industry. So, what kind of effect can this have on how you do business as a mover?

We work with over 150,000 consumers every year, which has allowed us to gain insights into their behavioural trends. In this article, we have selected some top facts that can affect you as a mover. We think it's important to share this knowledge in the hope it can help your company grow, or perhaps adapt to this new type of consumer, and in turn, help you score that moving lead.

## **1. Who is moving?**

Data suggests that the biggest set of people moving internationally are those between the ages of 25 and 34 years old. We see that there has been a massive growth in individuals moving, and not just complete families, and that moving has become easier and cheaper. Europeans have been moving the most for the past few years, however Asia is on the rise.

## **2. Does seasonality have an influence on the number of moving leads?**

Yes, it does. It's not uncommon to find European moving companies fully booked during the summer months, as customers prefer to move when the weather is fine. This trend has a significant effect on why our lead trends also fluctuate and have a reoccurring pattern every year. We receive the greatest number of moving requests in January, April and June and the opposite for November and December where we receive the least.

## **3. When do consumers request a moving quote compared to their desired moving date?**

Most consumers in need of a removal company, typically request quotes from two to four months prior to their actual moving date. This leaves approximately 20% of customers who require a five-month lead time and only 30% of consumers who request a quote within one month of their actual moving date.

**TIP:** Even though you are busy throughout summer, it might still be worthwhile investing in sales and marketing during this period as many customers still want to book their move two to four months from now. This is also a great way to solidify your business for the low season and possibly beat your competition as they are too busy to handle the requests.





#### 4. On what device do consumers predominantly request moving quotes?

Smartphones are still on the rise. (Almost) everyone has one and its functionality is replacing many traditional desktop functions. Statistics show that 65% of consumers use their mobile phone to research and request quotes for their move. Desktop searches have shifted to second place, currently at 30%, followed by only 5% that use a tablet.

TIP: Make sure your website and quote forms are mobile-friendly to provide the best consumer experience and ensure that you're not losing them due to a malfunctioning site.

#### 5. What volumes are consumers moving these days?

Consumers used to take their whole household when moving. Nowadays, volumes are a lot less. This is explained by the 'IKEA-effect' - whereby sometimes it's easier and cheaper to just buy new furniture rather than moving the old stuff. That said, around 40% of moves still comprise household moves however, small moves (under 3cm<sup>3</sup>) are on the rise taking up 25% market share.

TIP: Smaller jobs are increasing in size, and it's likely this trend will continue. It's worth taking a critical look at your operation to see if some of your processes can accommodate this new change in market behaviour.

#### 6. What influences a customer's final decision to choose a moving company?

Prices in the industry have been under pressure for a long time and research shows that consumers are often influenced by pricing when deciding which mover to trust with their belongings. It's a big factor, however, this doesn't mean you have to give your lowest possible price. Make sure to differentiate yourself from your competitor and use trends and data to evolve with consumer demands. Other factors that influence the decision are reviews and how quickly you reply to them via phone or e-mail.

TIP: Whilst price is important, also consider other elements in your sales pitch, like your reviews, and what added value you provide to customers that sets you apart from your competition.

#### 7. Are consumers satisfied with the service you have provided?

Review platforms aren't going away any time soon. In fact, they are still on the rise and while pricing is important, reviews can tip the balance in your favor as to whether a customer chooses your company or not. We know that sometimes reviews can be a touchy subject, but it is important to remember that customers are just as likely to leave a review for an outstanding positive experience, as they are a negative one. Our data shows that most reviews are in fact positive, with 65% of all reviews on Sirelo.org having 5-star ratings.

TIP: Strengthen your position by always asking consumers to leave a review after the job is done. The more reviews you have, even if they aren't all 5-star ratings, increases your credibility and makes your company easier to find online.

#### 8. What other topics are consumers interested in when looking for a mover?

Moving internationally requires a lot of changes in a person's life. Before taking this step, a lot of research is done by the consumer. Consumers who are interested in moving abroad also show interest in the following five topics: traveling, real estate, employment searches, cars and art.

TIP: Consider incorporating these topics into your website pages, either in words or images, as this boosts your chances of attracting the right kind of customer when they search these keywords.

So that's it for now. If you want more information about consumer trends, please send your feedback to us and we'll try to gather some more data for next time. Please reach out to [info@triglobal.org](mailto:info@triglobal.org) for any questions or comments you might have. Similarly, if you have any useful data, or know of new trends and statistics, please share them on our LinkedIn page. In this way, we can make the moving industry more aware and more efficient together.





[illegible]



# PAIMA tonnage worldwide

The following table shows the tonnage exchanged between PAIMA members as of 24th February, 2020

Booked

979

Booked  
Tonnage

4,561,351

Received  
Tonnage

4,648,501

## TONNAGE REPORT

Company	Total Booked	Booked Tonnage	Received Tonnage	Company	Total Booked	Booked Tonnage	Received Tonnage
STEVENS INTERNATIONAL, Fort Wayne, USA	147	519,583	41,397	GERSON RELOCATION LIMITED, Greater London, United Kingdom	9	47,818	91,613
G-INTER TRANSPORTES LTDA , Barueri / São Paulo, Brazil	103	398,894	238,792	ORIENT INTL. RELOCATIONS, Kathmandu 11, Nepal	9	43,786	3,300
RELOSMART LTD, Kwun Tong, Hong Kong	42	358,731	6,370	MUDINMAR, Valencia, Spain	9	42,121	90,071
AIRES, Pittsburgh, USA	78	302,033	14,161	MYANMAR EXPRESS INTERNATIONAL MOVING SERVICES CO., LTD., Yangon, Myanmar	3	38,597	5,720
CARL HARTMANN GMBH & CO KG, Bremen D-28195, Germany	53	273,140	166,007	GLOBAL PACKING INTERNATIONAL MOVERS LTDA, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil	13	37,995	2,300
G-INTER MIAMI, Doral, USA	31	205,950	205,514	MOVING SYSTEMS S.A.C., Lima 1, Peru	10	37,699	28,367
GERSON & GREY TRANSPORTES LTDA., Sao Paulo, Brazil	31	173,654	48,766	UNIVERSAL RELOCATIONS INC., Parsippany, USA	5	36,220	7,061
RODI CARGO INTERNATIONAL, Miami, USA	31	169,828	267,530	BURKE BROS MOVING GROUP LTD., Wolverhampton, United Kingdom	5	35,000	50,363
RODI CARGO INTERNATIONAL GROUP, Carolina, Puerto Rico	21	147,161	278,398	EXPRESS TRANSPORTS, S.A., Lima, Peru	4	32,538	5,721
SWISS MOVING SERVICE AG, 8952 Schlieren Zurich, Switzerland	21	142,841	13,330	GALLEON INT. SHIPPING CO. LTD, Aveley Essex, United Kingdom	7	31,430	54,255
DEMECO SAS, Vincennes, France	32	134,960	164,368	NEYGI MOVING SRL, Buenos Aires, Argentina	3	30,428	13,221
DEWITT MOVE WORLDWIDE, San Diego, USA	39	108,943	16,022	MASSTRANS FREIGHT L.L.C., DUBAI, UAE	7	27,431	29,480
HUMBOLDT INTERNATIONAL, Boston (Canton), USA	21	106,584	44,841	EUROPEAN RELOCATION SERVICES, Marseille, France	4	24,470	20,210
FRIEDRICH KURZ GmbH, 35578 Wetzlar, Germany	20	94,750	1,080	EUROPEAN REMOVAL & STORAGE CO., Taastrup, Denmark	4	22,048	10,479
GLOBAL INTERNATIONAL RELOCATION, Lisbon, Portugal	19	88,571	40,020	TEAMWORK INTL. MOVING, Osasco, Brazil	7	21,990	83,339
MUDANZAS INTL GLOBAL, C.A., Caracas, Venezuela	32	81,062	15,475	BALBOA MOVERS, INC., Panama City, Panama	6	20,292	10,416
WICKMAN WORLDWIDE SERVICES, INC., Fishers, USA	26	80,848	98,874	GLOBAL MOVING & STORAGE LTD, Yangon, Myanmar	6	14,705	0
NFB INTERNATIONAL RELOCATIONS AS, N-1340 SKUI (Oslo), Norway	12	75,298	450	SMART RELOCATORS PTE LTD, Singapore, Singapore	3	14,320	19,513
DXI LOGISTICS LLC, Dubai, UAE	6	71,166	9,868	MUDANZAS GOU, S. A. DE C. V., Azcapotzalco, Mexico	2	14,149	67,150
UNIPACK GLOBAL RELOCATION, Carlsbad, USA	10	70,439	54,406	MERCOVAN ARGENTINA SRL, Buenos Aires CP 1429, Argentina	4	13,869	32,339
MULTI TRANSPORTES MEX, S.A. DE C.V., Mexico City, Mexico	10	65,963	31,900	A-CROSS CORPORATION, Tokyo , Japan	3	9,806	2,103
JJ MARI INTERNATIONAL MOVERS, Caracas, Venezuela	11	58,988	2,478	SOBOLAK INTERNATIONAL GMBH, Leobendorf, Austria	5	7,172	0
TIPPET RICHARDSON, Toronto, Canada	13	58,008	51,961	CONOTE SERVICES LIMITED, Abuja, Nigeria	2	6,025	0
ORIENT EXPRESS FORWARDING PTY, Singapore, Singapore	21	55,354	26,619	KOEMAN NIGERIA LIMITED, MAGBORO, Nigeria	1	5,788	14,352
AMR INTERNATIONAL RELOCATION, Shanghai, China	13	52,864	67,736	EXPRESS INTERNATIONAL GROUP, Cairo, Egypt	1	1	28,594
EDELWEISS SPEDITION, Martinez, Argentina	4	50,140	45,870				



# Moving into self storage

**M**oving in 2020 is a labor intensive, low margin business. For this reason, many companies are considering diversifying into self storage. One man who switched completely from being a family moving man to exclusively self storage is Paul Fahey (pictured right). **PAIMA Report Editor Steve Jordan talked to him to find out about the how and the why.**

Paul Fahey is part of the third generation of an Irish immigrant family that made their home in Manchester, England. Patrick Fahey started a moving company, P. Fahey & Sons. Many years later, his grandson Paul, just 18 years old, became its managing director. But as the UK moving market changed, Paul refocused on a different market: self storage. It has dominated his working life ever since.

He said he came across self storage by accident having been asked to research the sector by a business associate. Over the next few years he was involved in opening a string of stores, always on the basis of 'open, fill and sell'. Having filled the stores and created a successful business, he sold to the major companies such as Big Yellow and Safestore. In 2013 he started a new brand, Storage World, now with three locations, which he still owns.

In 2012 Paul became chairman of EasyBox, an Italian self storage company with seven stores, moved out to the country and transformed the business. This he acquired in 2016 and sold to an American investment fund in 2018. He still retains an interest in the business, as do two of his daughters and their husbands.

Paul soon became the chairman of the Self Storage Association (SSA) in the UK and, in 2004, the founding president of FEDESSA (European Self Storage Association), a position

he held for three years. He is now on the Board of the Self Storage Association Asia (SSAA). This position at the hub of the industry has given him access to statistics which paint an interesting picture of the industry worldwide.

He said that there are currently 4,500 stores in Europe and the market is by no means saturated. "My first visit to the USA was in 2000 to a self storage conference in Denver," he said. "Then there were 25,000 stores in the USA and everyone said the sector was saturated. Today there are 55,000 stores and they are building more every day. Awareness is nowhere near peak. People just don't understand how effective, flexible and economic it can be, especially in the provinces where it is still a pioneer market to some degree."

In mainland Europe, the Netherlands was first to get the self storage bug, then Spain. Germany was one of the last to catch on. Italy is still poorly serviced with only 60 stores for 60m people, though Paul said the real estate market and business environment are difficult there.

I asked Paul what advice he would give to a company wishing to enter the self storage market. He said that it's not as easy as it once was as banks are less willing to lend and there is more competition. The main form of promotion is web marketing and it's very hard to compete with the spend and brand awareness of the big companies. Finding the right location is still important and, although the business appears to be simple, owners will

need to have a blend of marketing, retail management, and property experience and be experienced at sourcing funding. "In a pioneer market it's sometimes better to be second than first," said Paul. "Educating the customer is very difficult and expensive. You can't spend enough on advertising to do that. A warehouse on a busy road does it better."

"It's very cash heavy and you then face potentially two years of losses and a year of break-even before it starts to become a lucrative cash cow," said Paul. "But, if you have the means, and can afford to wait for a medium-term return, the value of the business becomes considerable and businesses now are selling at up to 20-times profit."

So, there you have it. The heady days of the pre-crash financial world are behind us and it's not as easy to get started as it was. That said, Paul is still enthusiastic about the industry and is still investing himself, though now more for the long term than for fast returns. "The competition today is more sophisticated and funding is more difficult," said Paul. "But it's a great sector that is still in its infancy. If you are determined, and have the resources, do it!"

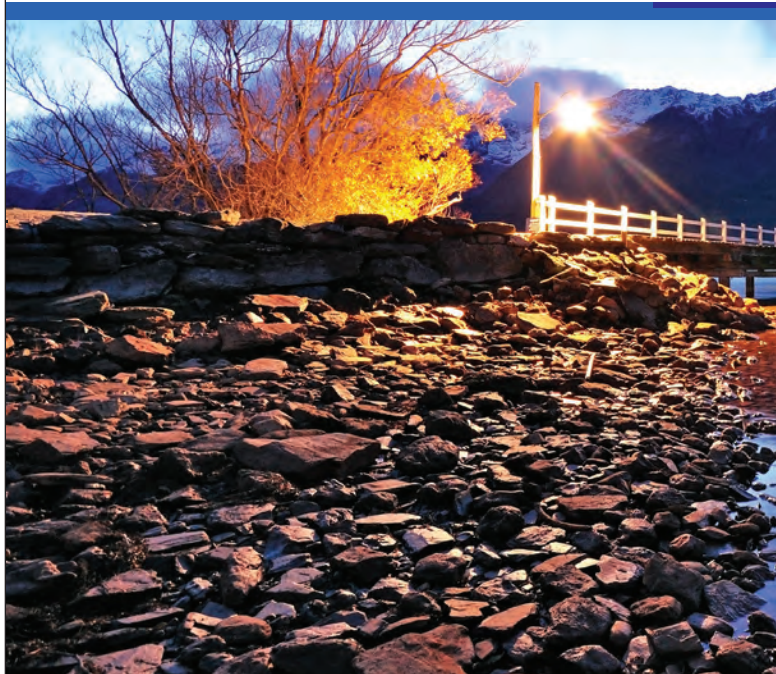
There is much talk in moving circles about diversification. Companies are trying their hands at office moving, fine art, document storage, and much more. But self storage still has a way to go and, for those with the resources, could be a route to maximum returns with minimum hassle.





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# San Diego – America's Finest City



**This year's PAIMA conference - the Association's 36th - takes place on 18-20 October in the bustling Californian city of San Diego.**

Just in case you're wondering, San Diego's slogan, *America's Finest City*, was created by the city's mayor Pete Wilson back in 1972 as a bit of self-promotion. A bold claim perhaps, but one that many people visiting this prosperous southern Californian city may well agree with.

For those interested in history, the city is the ancestral home of the Kumeyaay people, an indigenous tribe that has inhabited the area for more than 10,000 years. In 1821, San Diego became part of the Mexican Empire before California became a member of the United States in 1848 following the Mexican-American War.

But enough about the past, what does San Diego have to offer PAIMA delegates during their well-earned breaks between networking and conference meetings?

## **What's the weather like?**

One thing that can pretty-much be guaranteed is the weather. In October the city averages temperatures of between 70 and 75 degrees and average rainfall is only 0.3 inches, so unless you're very unlucky, you're not going to need a brolly.

## **Visit the Top Gun bar (upper right)**

If the weather does take a turn for the worse, there's always the Top Gun bar just opposite the Hyatt hotel. Don't expect luxury, but this place has an atmosphere all of its own and film buffs will delight in checking out the place where Maverick (Tom Cruise) and Goose (Anthony Edwards) sang *Great Balls of Fire* in the famous 1984 film.

## **Sight-seeing in the harbor**

San Diego is a natural harbor and home to a large part of the US navy fleet. Take a ride on one of the many boats offering trips around the bay and drink in the sights while enjoying great food and a glass or two of Californian wine. Some boats also have live entertainment, to make your cruise even more memorable.

## **Whale watching in the bay (opposite page)**

If wildlife is your thing, why not try a spot of whale watching? A number of boats set sail every day in search of breaching whales and that once in a lifetime photo opportunity. If possible, take a good camera with a longish lens to capture the magic moment. If not, your phone will do just fine.





### **USS Midway museum (previous page lower picture)**

Staying with the maritime theme, San Diego is home to the *USS Midway*, the longest serving aircraft carrier in the US navy and now a museum. The famous ship served for almost 50 years and some of the sailors who crewed her now work as volunteer guides giving visitors first-hand accounts of what life was like onboard and a look behind doors that are normally off-limits. The ship is one of San Diego's top attractions and well worth a visit.

### **Gone fishing**

San Diego is a great place to go deep-sea fishing and there are lots of companies doing day trips for visitors. Most provide all the tackle and bait you need so there's no need to bring your own. Some of the fish in the bay are very large and it's not unusual to catch one weighing in at 40lbs or more. If you don't want to eat your catch you can throw it back to fight another day; otherwise ask the crew to fillet it and take it home for dinner, that's if you can find anywhere to cook it!

### **Eating and drinking**

You certainly won't go hungry in San Diego. As you would expect, just about every type of food from around the world is available in abundance, from traditional American steaks, barbeques and burgers, to fine dining restaurants serving haute cuisine. All are no doubt delicious, but as you're only 17 miles from the Mexican border it would be rude not to sample some real Mexican food. Look out for fish tacos, or try one of the myriad types of *mole*, pronounced (moleh) a rich sauce popular in Mexican cooking. The most popular mole is *mole poblano*, typically served over chicken or turkey.

Mexico's national drink is of course tequila, but if you find it too fiery for your taste buds, try a paloma, a tequila-based cocktail made with a grapefruit-flavoured soft drink served with a wedge of lemon. Alternatively go for a Mexican beer, there are lots to choose from. Whatever you decide to do, enjoy the conference and have a wonderful time in San Diego - America's Finest City.



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