



F R E U I S

PLAN B | BUSINESS UNUSUAL PRESENTS

CREATING
SOMETHING NEW AND
GOING AGAIN IS PART OF
BRITAIN'S SMALL BUSINESS DNA



ALAN THOMAS

Simply Business UK CEO

Simply Business reflect on how they're supporting SMEs during a time of crisis

At the start of this year, there were 5.8 million small businesses in the UK. Nearly one fifth of them were estimated to have gone bust in the first month of the COVID-19 crisis.

How many survive the year is still anyone's guess: builders, decorators, hairdressers, accountants, cleaners, IT consultants, freelance writers, caterers and hospitality workers are among the many under threat.

In recent weeks, the online insurance broker, Simply Business, has been one of the many organisations who have been working to provide support for this network of entrepreneurs that are so vital to our economy.

"Our core customers are small businesses and the self-employed. These are audiences who have

been hit particularly hard by COVID-19 yet are people with families, livelihoods and big dreams to protect," says Alan Thomas, UK CEO, who we spoke to straight after he'd held a video Q&A session with staff across Simply Business.

"Initially we received a lot of calls from business owners who have paused their work to look after their children, with the expectation that they can be back out working in a couple of months."

Across the country, insurance companies were one of the first ports of call for many small business owners anxious about survival. We've been trying to help small business owners understand and access the significant packages of government support that's been made available.

We're confident opportunities for entrepreneurs will emerge again when we're out the other side, but for now people need to get through this difficult period," Alan says.





BRIGHT IDEA

If your business can scale quickly, so too can your social impact.

From our customers' perspective, the area that we immediately doubled down on was working hard with our insurers to provide flexible payment options. This enabled a relatively quick and easy process for customers who need to pause or cancel.

"Our passion is our business. So, when big moments like this happen it creates an emotional strain. But the ability to create something new, to go again one better – is in the DNA of small businesses across the country."

Currently, the insurance industry faces underwriting losses of £84 billion from the COVID-19 crisis, a figure that is likely to double once the slump in the value of investments is taken into account. But it won't be down to any one industry to foot the bill for a global pandemic, more likely it will require unprecedented government intervention to support small businesses and rebuild the economy, he says.

Given the pandemic has not been a standard risk covered in policies, the industry has been able to respond in other ways. Some large motor

insurers have returned their premiums to customers and others have allowed their most vulnerable customers to stagger payments.

Meanwhile, the effectiveness of business interruption insurance, a type of insurance cover that is designed to protect loss of income after a disaster, will continue to be debated and will now be put before the courts by the Financial Conduct Authority in the months to come.

The Simply Business business model means the company has a myriad of connections to small businesses, but it's been some time since the adjective 'small' applied to the company itself.

Created in the heady start-up rush of 2005, the company became one of the original 'insurtechs' – a small group of companies who pioneered the use of technology to solve problems in the insurance industry.

Three years ago, the company was sold to the Travelers Insurance Group, one of America's largest

insurers – famed for being the insurer of NASA astronauts on the Apollo space programme. Today, after a sustained period of growth, the company has a customer base of over 680,000 small businesses and landlords across the UK – making it the UK's biggest commercial insurer.



OUR CORE CUSTOMERS ARE SMALL BUSINESSES AND THE SELF-EMPLOYED. THESE ARE AUDIENCES WHO HAVE BEEN HIT PARTICULARLY HARD BY COVID-19 YET ARE PEOPLE WITH FAMILIES, LIVELIHOODS AND BIG DREAMS TO PROTECT.

It has now also expanded with a business division in Boston, Massachusetts, to crack the tough but significant US small business insurance market.

This rapid growth has also been matched by an impressive track record on workplace culture – with Simply Business being awarded The Sunday Times 'Best Company To Work For' over successive years in 2015 and 2016.

The following year, in 2017, the company also became B Corp accredited and began its partnership with the England Amputee Football Association.

"These developments have been important to us, because we believe that at work happiness and productivity are inextricably linked," Alan says. "Making sure that we're creating an inspiring place to work has an important influence of delivering the best experiences for small businesses."

Sharing hobbies, interests and socialising together informally throughout the company, with get-

togethers like yoga classes and film screenings, has been an important part of that recipe.

"Our culture is a huge source of pride for us as a business. But we are always thinking about how we keep those things alive; B Corp is a really good way of doing that. We saw it as a way of taking commitments a step further by being part of a growing movement.

"It has helped us to crystallise the importance of not only being there for our customers, but of looking out for each other and the communities we live in. There's a strong belief that we can and should have a positive impact on the society around us.

"The fact that we have scaled a lot over the past five years means that the social impact we're making can grow and scale as well."

FACT BOX

NAME Simply Business

BUSINESS Online broker of business insurance

MISSION To create something better for our people, society and the environment. We want to change the insurance market for the better – both for the people working in it and our customers – and we believe a world class company culture is crucial

FOUNDED 2005

EMPLOYEES 650

TURNOVER £100m per annum

F R E U I D S

freudsjournals.com

@2020. All rights reserved