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Storing Vehicles



To blog or not to blog

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Tim Ryman, Owner

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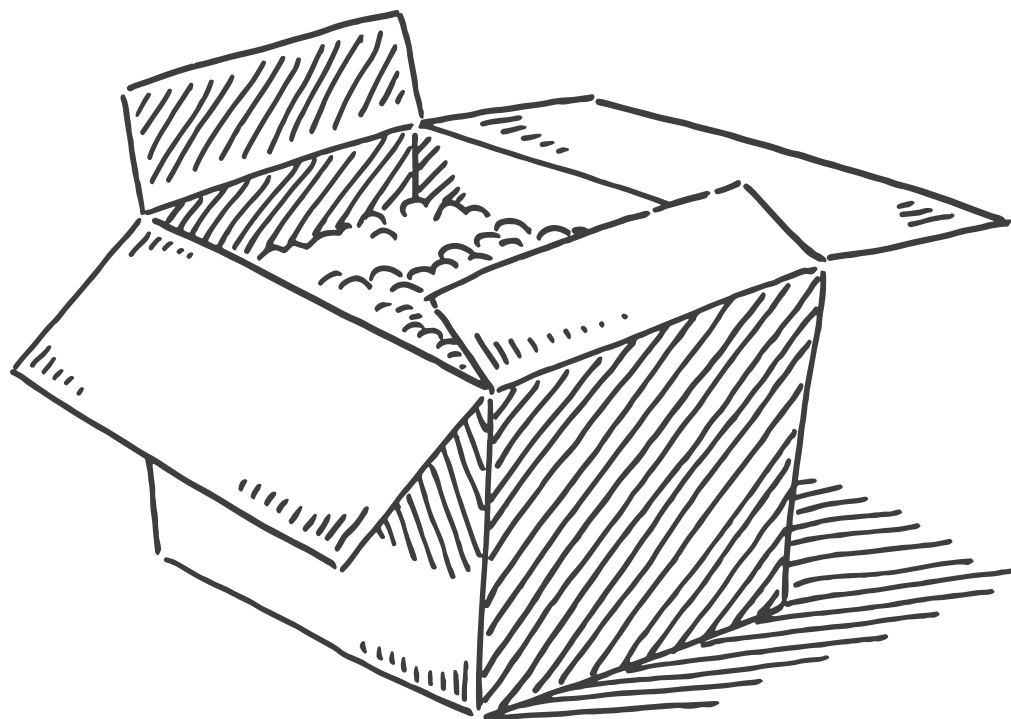
Editorial: News items and articles on all aspects of the self storage industry are welcomed and should be sent, together with photographs if appropriate to: hbourke@ssauk.com

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Carlo Swaab
FEDESSA President

We have already secured some incredible speakers such as Isabel Aguilera the former CEO of Google Iberia and of General Electric Spain and Portugal

While the pandemic is still restricting travel somewhat, many Associations have already planned in-person events for 2022 and our online training programme continue

President's Report

The past 12 months has certainly been challenging for many industries, but the self storage industry has continued to show its resilience to adverse conditions by growing in size, occupancy and returns. It shows again how the industry benefits from change, which often creates new demand drivers for storage. This is a good thing looking forward as 2022 is sure to have more changes in store. The pandemic is still influencing our lives, but governments are moving away from giving subsidies to businesses as they move to policies based around living with the pandemic and rebuilding their economies from the impact of lockdowns. Inflation is fast becoming the buzz word for 2022 and in this industry we have already seen the impact of this with the increase in building costs over the past 12 months. There is no doubt that the cost of doing business will increase as inflationary pressures are felt throughout the economy. So, while the industry remains in a strong position, we should not become complacent as there will be new challenges ahead.

Change will be the theme of this year's FEDESSA Conference & Trade Show in Portugal. The team are busy finalising the programme and sponsorship packages with tickets expected to be released early in March. The speakers will all be covering topics designed to challenge operators to improve their business in today's ever-changing environment. We have already secured some incredible speakers such as Isabel Aguilera the former CEO of Google Iberia and of General Electric Spain and Portugal. We also have John C. who was the Alfred von Oppenheim Scholar in Residence at the German Council on Foreign Relations in Berlin and is a senior research fellow at the Hague Centre for Strategic Studies. His views on how global politics will influence our business will be fascinating. We have other speakers covering topics including, personalising your online offers, delivering engaging websites, marketing to grow your market and an exciting case study on what happens when you get rid of discounting in self storage. This really is going to be a conference very different to anything we have held before and is sure to make delegates re-think about how to improve their self storage business.

The FEDESSA team are also working on a series of QuickGuides to help members on key issues such as traffic usage for self storage, cyber security, mystery shopping, vulnerable storers, policies for wi-fi usage and many more. These will all be translated into a range of languages and distributed to the local associations. We plan on building this into a library of resources for members so if you have any ideas for topics or areas of interest you think we should cover, then please contact the FEDESSA office.

While the pandemic is still restricting travel somewhat, many Associations have already planned in-person events for 2022 and our online training programme continues. Details are contained in the Calendar of Events in this issue of the magazine. We all hope that as the year progresses travel and meetings will become easier, and we continue to benefit from networking with our peers and suppliers in person.

Carlo Swaab
FEDESSA President



Rennie Schafer
SSA UK and FEDESSA CEO

Changes in people's lives create a demand for self storage whether those changes are positive or negative. There is no doubt that inflationary pressures will provide its own demand drivers for storage

Hopefully, the coming 12 months will end the uncertainty about living with COVID-19 and we can put lockdowns and travel restrictions behind us

Reflections from the CEO's Desk...

As we head into a new year, it's always a nice opportunity to look back on what was and forward to what could be.

2021 was hardly the relief from the pandemic that we hoped it would be, yet the industry remained strong and continued to prosper. Ongoing working from home and other changes to people's lives continued to drive demand for self storage. Online retailing continued to grow while the retailers struggled with import delays and delivery logistics which also drove demand for storage as they looked for places to store their stock. Those looking at expanding their stores or building new sites were dealt with a shortage of steel and other building supplies that forced prices to sky-rocket and delays in supply. Despite this, the construction suppliers were kept busier than ever with new supply being added to the market, including in developing markets like Portugal and the Balkans. At an Association level, we returned to in-person events to some extent, with a popular Birmingham conference in the UK as well as several regional meetings in various countries. However, the bulk of in-person meetings remained on hold. Online training and information sessions continued, and we trained more members in 2021 than we had for the 3 years prior to the pandemic, proving that online is a great method of delivering focused information to members. So, all things considered, 2021 was not a bad year for self storage despite the ongoing pandemic.

Hopefully, the coming 12 months will end the uncertainty about living with COVID-19 and we can put lockdowns and travel restrictions behind us, but only time will tell. What is clear is the industry will be facing a new challenge in the form of inflation. We have come off an extended period of low inflation but that is rapidly coming to an end across Europe. Costs in all sectors are rising and this will impact all businesses including self storage. We have already seen considerable increases in construction costs for the industry, and some expect more to come. Governments will be looking to profitable industries to rebuild their tax revenue post-pandemic, especially with the reduction of traditional tax streams like retail and petrol/diesel taxes. Already some self storage businesses in the UK are being advised to expect a 25% increase in business rates. Inflation will also impact interest rates, which is a real concern when they have been so low for so long. If interest rates rise 1 percentage point and you are now borrowing at 5%, then moving to 6% is a 20% increase in your interest payments. Inflation will impact all businesses including those customers of self storage businesses. Members should be preparing for this in their business plans, particularly in their pricing strategies.

Of course, we know that self storage benefits from change. Changes in people's lives create a demand for self storage whether those changes are positive or negative. There is no doubt that inflationary pressures will provide its own demand drivers for storage. Downsizers will look to storage for their surplus goods. Businesses will look to move from fixed warehouses to flexible storage. Home businesses will continue to grow. There are many possible scenarios that drive demand for self storage. The main thing for operators to remember is that change is the new normal, new challenges will come, the market will change, technology will continue to impact the industry and we are bringing in a new generation of millennium aged customers. Now is not the time to be complacent in your business. Look at what you can do better, more efficiently or differently. Just because it worked in the past does not mean it will still work in our ever-changing future.

Rennie Schafer
SSA UK and FEDESSA CEO



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Young Storage Network (YSN) Update

A new year and some exciting news from the YSN as we continue to grow our network of young storage professionals. During 2021 even though the industry was stretched due to staffing demands and huge increases in occupancy the group continued to meet and had several free training sessions on topics such as insurance, technology, and sales. These were hosted by some of the best minds in our fantastic industry.

We at the YSN have decided that as part of our role in the SSA UK, to continue this training and mentoring for young storage stars of the future and have created no fewer than 10 sessions for 2022. These consist of 4 quarterly YSN Members' Meetings to discuss the wider industry with short training discussions, often with external speakers but new for 2022, we have also added 6 one-hour specialist sessions hosted by 3 members of the YSN Board and 3 delivered by some of the biggest names in self storage.

Christel Land, storage genius (and phenomenal children's author) will be discussing a session on the dark art of **Digital Marketing**. Dave Davies will be using his 73 years of storage experience and immense knowledge to talk to the group on the incredibly important area of **Revenue Management & Pricing** whilst Lord Rennie Schafer, commander and chief of the SSA UK, will be entertaining, educating and explaining **Handling Online Reviews**.

YSN board members Emma Banks, Anthony Adams and Paul Whittaker's sessions will focus on **Social Media**, **Add-on Sales** and **Operational Excellence**.

Member Meeting dates for 2022 have been scheduled for; 24 February, 19 May, 25 August, and 18 November. Paul Whittaker will be hosting the first training session on Operational Excellence on the 24 March followed by Christel's Digital Marketing Masterclass on the 21 April. Dave's Revenue Management & Pricing will be held on 23 June, Emma's Social Media on 14 July, Rennie's Handling Online Reviews on 22 September, and finally, Anthony's Add-On Sales will be held on 20 October.

If you or any of your team are 40 or under and would like to take advantage of these complimentary training sessions as well as building relationships and increasing their knowledge of the industry, joining the YSN is a must. These sessions will be available soon to book on the SSA UK website and should you wish to join the YSN, please contact Hannah Speed at the SSA UK at hspeed@ssauk.com or if you have questions or need information, email YSN Chair Paul Whittaker at paul@flexiss.co.uk.

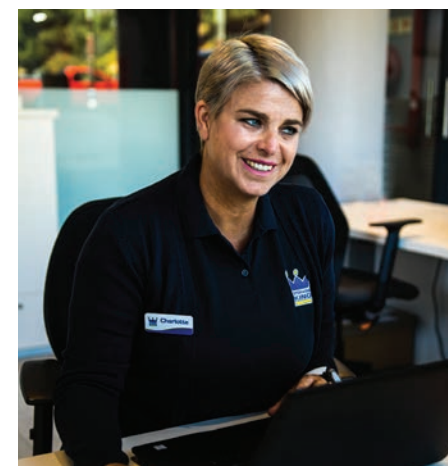
Paul Whittaker – YSN Chair

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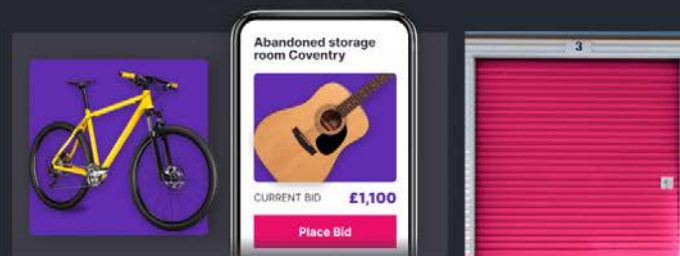
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Agreements with Removers - can you sell up goods if the remover stops paying?

It is common knowledge that removers often use self storage to store goods which they are moving for their customers for all sort of reasons. Self storage can often be the perfect solution for a remover, given the range of unit sizes and flexibility to take more or less space as required. This can also be good for the Facility Operator where the remover becomes a long-term customer but, as we all know, things may not look so rosy if there is a problem with the remover further down the line.

Removers will usually sign the storage agreement in their own name but the goods they place into the unit will almost always belong to someone else. Typically, the remover will pay the storage fees, and will no doubt have factored this cost into the fees it is charging its own customer for removal services. Even though the remover is storing its customer's goods as the customer's authorised agent, the customer may not know where their goods are being stored and, more importantly, does not have any legal relationship at all with the Facility Operator. It may also be the case that the remover may not take a separate unit for each of its customers so that a single unit may contain goods belonging to a number of the remover's customers. Although the Facility Operator will usually know that a unit is being used by a remover, the Facility Operator will not normally know who the remover's customers are, what the agreement between the remover and its customer says and whether a unit contains goods belonging to one or more of the remover's customers.

Problems can arise in a number of different situations, most importantly when the remover stops paying the storage fees. If the remover is named as the storage customer on the agreement, then the only person that the Facility Operator can take action against to recover the fees is the remover. If the remover doesn't pay and the agreement contains appropriate lien sale clauses (such as those incorporated in the SSA UK standard agreement), then the Facility Operator can exercise its right to overlock the unit



Even though the remover is storing its customer's goods as the customer's authorised agent, the customer may not know where their goods are being stored and, more importantly, does not have any legal relationship at all with the Facility Operator



and start the debt recovery procedure. Ordinarily, if the debt recovery process doesn't result in the fees being paid, the Facility Operator would then go down the lien sale route. The problem here is that the Facility Owner knows the goods in the unit don't belong to the remover and, once the goods are in the possession and control of the Facility Operator, the Facility Operator is in a difficult position. Where goods in the unit belong (or are assumed to belong) to the named customer, the Facility Operator can proceed to a lien

sale and, provided this is done properly, the Facility Operator can sell the goods as if it were the owner. This means that legal ownership of those goods passes to the buyer and the customer cannot make a claim against the Facility Owner regarding the sale. Unfortunately, where the Facility Owner knows the goods belong to someone else, the Facility Owner will not be able to pass on legal ownership of the goods as if it were the owner, as it has no contractual lien which it can enforce against the owner. This means that, if Facility Operator sells the goods, the owner could

potentially make a claim against the Facility Owner at a later date. This places an additional burden on the Facility Operator to look after the goods in the unit until it has taken all reasonable steps to try to trace the owner and make arrangements for the return of those goods. This might include looking through the goods to try to ascertain who owns them and then trace the owner, which may be difficult given that any address or contact details may be out of date because the owner has moved, not to mention the fact there may be goods of different owners in the same unit. It may also involve advertising in the press, but this is also difficult as the owners could be anywhere and may not even know where their goods were being stored. In any event, you will have to go the extra mile before you treat the goods as abandoned and this means the goods will be taking up units that could be available for paying storers for much longer than necessary.

If you have removers as storage customers, you may want to consider implementing some additional controls to minimise the risk of being stuck with goods for a long time. You could do this by having a set of additional conditions of storage for removers which form part of the storage agreement, along the following lines:

1. All boxes placed into storage by the remover to be clearly labelled with the remover's customer's name and contact details (email, mobile telephone, alternative contact);
2. Remover to supply the Facility Owner with a list of the customers whose goods are stored in the unit from time to time with customer's contact details (email, mobile telephone, alternative contact);
3. Any customer whose goods are stored in the unit



(and any person named as their alternate contact on labels or the remover's list) are deemed an alternate contact person for the storage agreement so that the Facility Operator can discuss the account with the remover's customers in the event that the remover is in arrears and/or the Facility Operator's attempts to contact the remover and/or resolve the situation are unsuccessful;

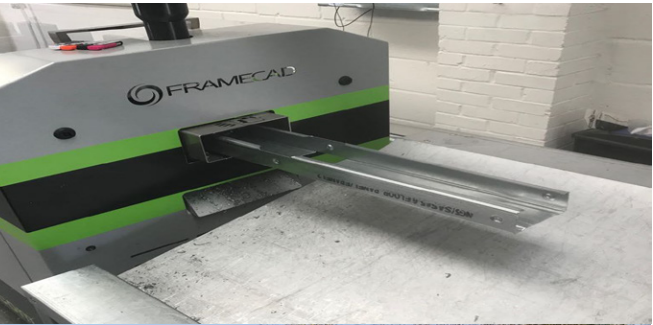
4. Remover to inform its customers where their goods are being stored;
5. Remover to require its customers to prepare and retain an inventory of goods where they will be placed into storage and to update their contact details as necessary;
6. Remover to pass on updated contact details to Facility Operator;
7. Remover to provide Facility Owner with its standard terms and conditions with its customers and any updates to them from time to time.

Although this will not take all the risk out of this situation, the more information you have regarding how to contact the owners of the goods the better - in the event of default on the part of a remover, this should go some way to helping you get in touch with the owners of the goods quickly so that arrangements can be made for the collection of goods or their continued storage on an agreement in the owner's name. If you have contact details but get no response from the owners, keep records of the attempts you made to contact them. If you then sell or dispose of the goods as abandoned, these records will assist in limiting liability in the event that the owners later make a claim.



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Terminating Employees – Using Protected Conversations

At some point, every employer-employee relationship comes to an end. Typically, this would be via either the employee resigning or the employer terminating the employment contract. When terminating an employee's contract, if an employee has unfair dismissal rights, there are 5 potentially fair reasons upon which an employer must dismiss. The most commonly used reasons by employers are dismissal because of conduct or capability (i.e., performance).

However, a time-old problem that arises is where an employer takes the view that an employee is no longer a 'good fit' (e.g., because of personality clashes or they are simply going through the motions with their work) but has failed to deal with either previous conduct or performance issues (or both).

When an employer decides that an employee has to leave the business quickly, there may be no existing conduct issues they can utilise or they may be unwilling to follow a performance management procedure, which can take months. An employer can also sometimes sense when an employee may be unhappy and would not be averse to a mutual termination of their contract on agreed terms. This is where 'protected conversations' come in and can be used to remove a difficult or problematic employee (they are also sometimes referred to as 'pre-termination negotiations').

What is a protected conversation?

A protected conversation is a discussion held by the employer with the employee that has a special status in employment law. Put simply, it allows the employer to have an 'off the record' conversation with the employee about the potential termination of their employment whereby a financial package/proposal can be presented.

They differ from 'without prejudice' discussions because there does not have to be a pre-existing dispute between the parties. By way of example of the difference, if an employee was subject to disciplinary proceedings and during that process the employer wanted to make a termination proposal, they would do so on a without prejudice basis, rather than hold a protected conversation.

In practice, the two types of confidential discussion can often be mixed up by employers and the protection conferred will depend upon the specific circumstances of the case.

How do you hold a protected conversation?

This can be done in the much the same way as any other conversation is instigated. Best practice would be to invite the employee to a meeting for an initial discussion. The important words to say or write at the start of any communication is that you are having a protected conversation (and ideally, state that it is being carried out pursuant to Section 111A of the Employment Rights Act 1996).

Practical Tip

If inviting an employee to have a protected conversation by email, be sure to include the words in the subject line of the email (which will make it easier to search for later on) and at the start of the email itself.

Can protected conversations be disclosed?

The existence of such conversations (save for a few exceptions, see below) should not be disclosed and remain confidential from an Employment Tribunal. This is the case whether the protected conversation is verbal or set out in writing (e.g., over email/WhatsApp).

What can a protected conversation not be used for?

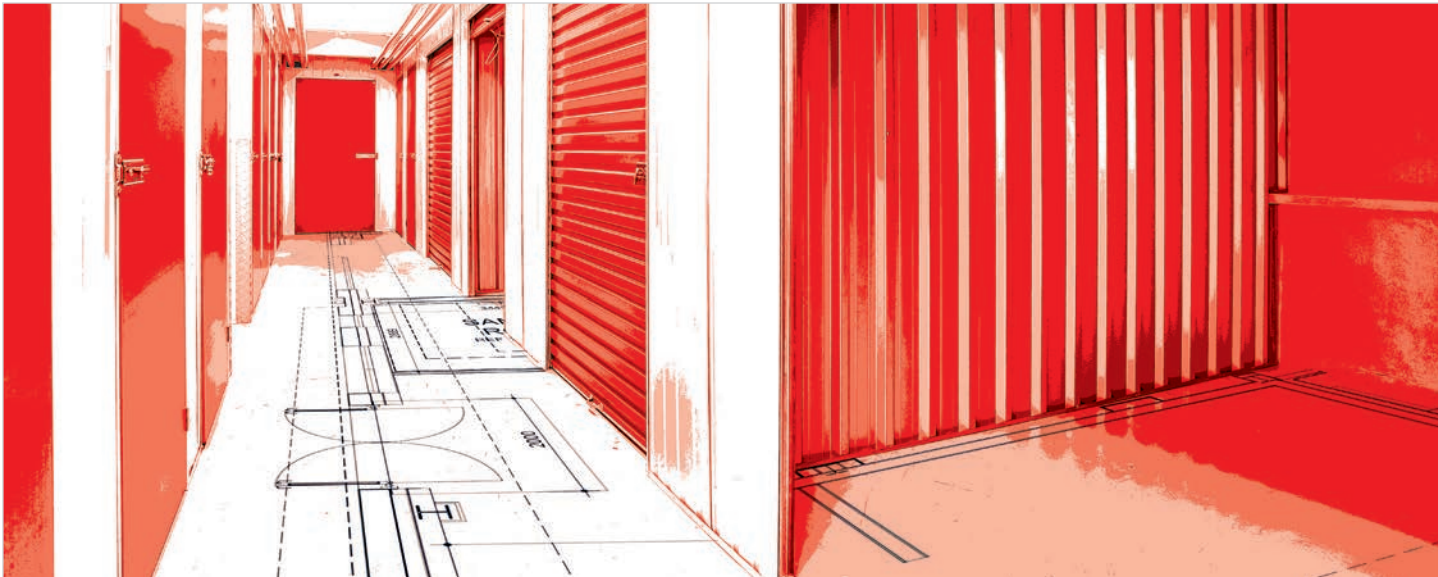
A protected conversation that relates to any of the following issues are not protected:

- automatically unfair dismissal, such as, whistleblowing, health and safety or asserting a statutory right,
- breach of contract or wrongful dismissal; and
- discrimination, harassment, victimisation, or other treatment prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.

When can a protected conversation actually lose its protection?

As a starting point, a protected conversation, subject to the excluded issues set out above, will be confidential and inadmissible as evidence at an Employment Tribunal.

However, a protection conversation can lose its special status if there is any "improper behaviour" in the subsequent negotiating process. The ACAS Code of Practice for



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In doing so, the employer runs the risk of a potential constructive dismissal claim from the employee and the protected conversation being admissible as evidence.

In circumstances where a protected conversation is deployed, there will have been no real pre-existing dispute. However, that can also mean that if an employer misjudges the situation and initiates a protected conversation, it may feel as if it has ‘come out of the blue’ for the employee. This risks the irreparable damage being done to the relationship and potentially a constructive dismissal claim.

Seeking legal advice from the outset

If you are thinking of having a protected conversation, it's safest to seek advice beforehand. A little bit of time spent in preparation can potentially save a lot of time and cost later on.



How Accessible is your Self Storage facility?

All too often things are designed with the perfect user in mind or for the fictional average person. However, people's functional abilities vary hugely. Sight and hearing ranges from perfect to none, with a full spectrum in between. People's literacy levels and memory vary due to common conditions such as dyslexia, autism, dementia, and stress. Physical abilities vary too with differences in mobility, dexterity, and strength. Everyone is different - people have different vision, hearing, motor, and cognitive abilities.

We should aim to meet the needs of everyone and ensure that a customer who has a disability is not excluded from or finds it difficult to access self storage.

The industry standard for operators outlines the minimum requirements of what is expected and serves to promote best practice, but store accessibility is also very important. However, identifying the different areas where accessibility can be improved for customers should not be too challenging with often only small adjustments needed which in turn, create a far better experience for the customer and improves the perception of your business.

There are a number of different types of accessibility issues that may affect your customers. Have you considered the following?

Visual – It might be easy for you to see and read, but is it for your customers? Are you using fancy fonts and clashing colours on your website, or small font sizes when advertising or on signage? Do you also have leaflets and agreements in braille or a larger font size available?

Mobility – How easy is it to move around your site? Are the corridors wide enough for wheelchair access? Do you have a customer lift for first floor and above access, or do you only allocate units on the ground floor for customers with mobility issues? Will your customers be able to easily access all areas of your site?

Auditory – Do you offer a hearing loop in your customer reception? Do any staff have basic sign language skills?

Cognitive – Customers may have, for example, a learning difficulty or have difficulty processing text and therefore need information which is clear and easy to understand. Is the information you provide suitable and is your sign-up process simple?

Until you consider the needs of the range of people that will be using your service you can't confirm that you are not unintentionally excluding customers. It's the start of a new year so what better time to review your accessibility on and off-line and see if any areas can be improved.

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Legal Case Study – Breaking locks for partners

In this new regular feature, we will bring you real-life case studies from members who have had legal issues with customers – with actual names removed of course.

The Case

The self storage store we will discuss today was a relatively small store which had after-hours access via a pin code system from 5pm – 9pm when the office was usually unmanned, and also on Sundays when the office was only manned in the morning. They do not offer insurance to their customers.

Some years ago, a couple came into this storage store and took out a unit. While both people were present at the time, the contract was put in the gentleman's name. Let's call him Bill. The lady, Annie, was put down as an alternate contact, but only Bill signed the contract.

Bill and Annie moved their goods into the storage unit together, but after that time the staff rarely saw Bill. Annie on the other hand, was a regular visitor to the store, who had a great rapport with the staff often chatting to them when she came in. She also set up a regular GoCardless debit agreement to pay the account from her credit card.

One day Annie advises the store manager that she is having trouble opening the lock on her unit. They go down to the unit and the key is fitting into the lock but not turning. They try using RP7 and other things but cannot get it to open. Annie is getting quite upset as she says she has to get her goods out and then get back to work. Eventually, the manager gets his bolt cutters and cuts the lock so Annie can get access to her goods. Annie then proceeds to take an unusually large number of items from the unit and purchases a new lock to resecure it.

Two days later Bill arrives at the office very upset and being abusive to the staff as the lock has been changed on his unit. He tried to come in the night before after hours and could not open his unit. He had no means of contacting the managers out of hours as the store phone number was not being answered. A different staff member was on that day to when Annie came in so was not aware the lock had been broken. The staff member asked for proof of ID from Bill which he provided. He then broke the new lock at Bills request. When opening the unit Bill was livid as he claimed the bulk of his goods were gone. He was quite aggressive to the staff member demanding to speak to the business owner and threatening legal action. He immediately blamed Annie, claiming she must have taken the goods and accused the store staff of being accomplices to this theft. He eventually stormed off threatening legal action. Shortly after he came back to his unit, videoed the contents, emptied his unit and cancelled his contract.

After being contacted by the manager about the incident the business owner spoke to the other staff member and checked the login records and CCTV. He could see that Bill had come in on the prior Sunday afternoon, taken some goods from the unit and changed the lock. He had also attempted to gain access to the unit the evening before as he claimed. The owner attempted to contact Annie, but she was not answering her telephone or responding to emails or messages. He rang Bill to try and sort out what had happened, but he would not discuss it and stated he was contacting his lawyer

A couple of weeks later the business got a letter from Bill's lawyer claiming losses of £20k for goods taken from Bill's unit.

What the store did wrong

Obviously, in hindsight, the store manager should never have cut the lock for Annie. She is not a signatory on the account and has no authority, despite paying the bill and being an alternative contact. The fact she regularly had prior access has no bearing. The manager should have contacted Bill to get approval before cutting the lock. The manager got caught up with the rapport that Annie had built with the staff and forgot to follow the legal process.

The store should have some means for customers to contact management after hours when staff are not present on site. Often this is through the use of an after-hours emergency number just for customers. Sometimes this number is also displayed in the store or by the gate. In this case the staff probably could not have helped Bill. But what if he was reporting that a shutter door or gate was not closing or had tailgated someone in and now could not exit the site? If you allow after-hours access to customers, you need to provide a means to contact you after hours in case of an emergency.

Another factor that influenced this case was that no insurance was offered, hence there was no record anywhere of the value of the goods. So, when Bill claimed there was over £20k of goods in his unit, the owners had less opportunity to refute this. If Bill had insured the contents of his unit for £5k, that would have helped the store refute the value of his claim.



The outcome

The business settled the claim out of court for around £10k. Video footage of what Annie removed from the unit helped to reduce the claim. Some of the items Bill claimed to have been taken were clearly not visible on the video footage when Annie left. Fortunately, the owner kept all the CCTV footage for that unit after the incident so they could show no-one else had accessed the unit after Annie left. The owners possibly could have reduced the claim through further argument about ownership of the goods, as it appeared that most of the goods Annie took did belong to her. However, Annie could not be contacted, she appeared to have left Bill and the country. The business owner decided to settle the claim rather than enter a protracted legal case.

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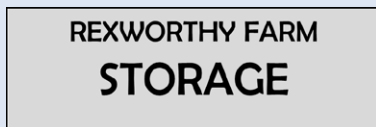
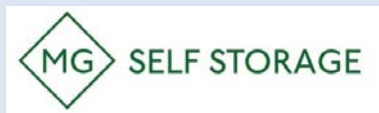
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Trading Standards

Industry Code of Practice update: promoting best practice and engagement with law enforcement

In the upcoming months, Trading Standards officers from approximately 30 Local Authorities across England and Wales will be contacting self storage businesses in their area to get them signed up to the Tick Box. Keep it Real. Keep it Legal. Code of Practice. Further information about the code can be found here: www.tick-box.org.uk.

To date (as of January 2022) 60 self storage businesses have signed up to the scheme and we are seeing the benefits. In Manchester, where I am based, the improved engagement with local businesses has led to self storage staff reporting counterfeit goods on three occasions in the last three months. This has resulted in officers visiting the premises, seizing the counterfeit goods and using their powers to request the relevant customer information as valuable intelligence. We were also able to utilise our industry contacts to assist the Police with locating and arresting a wanted man, which subsequently led to a Police seizure of illicit prescription drugs and cash from his self storage unit.

Since the project began in March 2020, we have seen businesses implement a range of improved due diligence measures following law enforcement seizures or as a result of signing up to the code of practice. Examples include one business who took

the decision to outsource all customer identification checks to a reputable third-party verification service in order to reduce the risk of human error or misjudgement. They recognised it is not always easy to identify a fake passport, driving licence or utility bill. This decision was taken after a Trading Standards investigation identified a customer who had used a fake identification document to store counterfeit goods.

Another Trading Standards investigation identified a group of counterfeiters who were asking their customers to make payments directly to the self storage business, resulting in irregular third-party bank transfers and cash payments from unknown people. The business no longer accepts cash payments, they record an electronic payment method for all customers and strongly recommend direct debit payments for all business customers. They are also in discussions with their accounts departments to ensure suspicious and erratic third-party bank payments are flagged and investigated.

Several businesses, after signing up to the code, decided to give refresher training to all staff to reduce the risk of complacency

Several businesses, after signing up to the code, decided to give refresher training to all staff to reduce the risk of complacency. They used the training material provided which gives an explanation on counterfeiting crime, suspicious activity warning

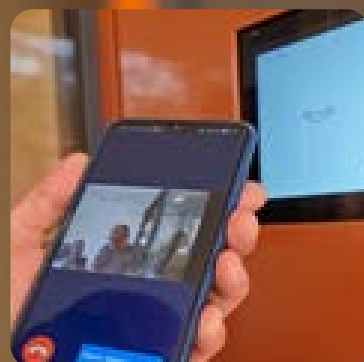
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signs, Trading Standards powers, and methods of reporting to various law enforcement agencies. The businesses also re-emphasised their existing policies on customer identification, payment processes and how they process customer deliveries.

After a good start to the scheme in 2021 there is much to look forward to in 2022 as the code of practice looks to go from strength to strength. With more business sign-ups coming soon, we want to continue to assist with improving industry standards and consumer confidence. As ever, if you would like to sign up or would like further information, or have a

suggestion as to how we can achieve our aims more effectively, please contact:

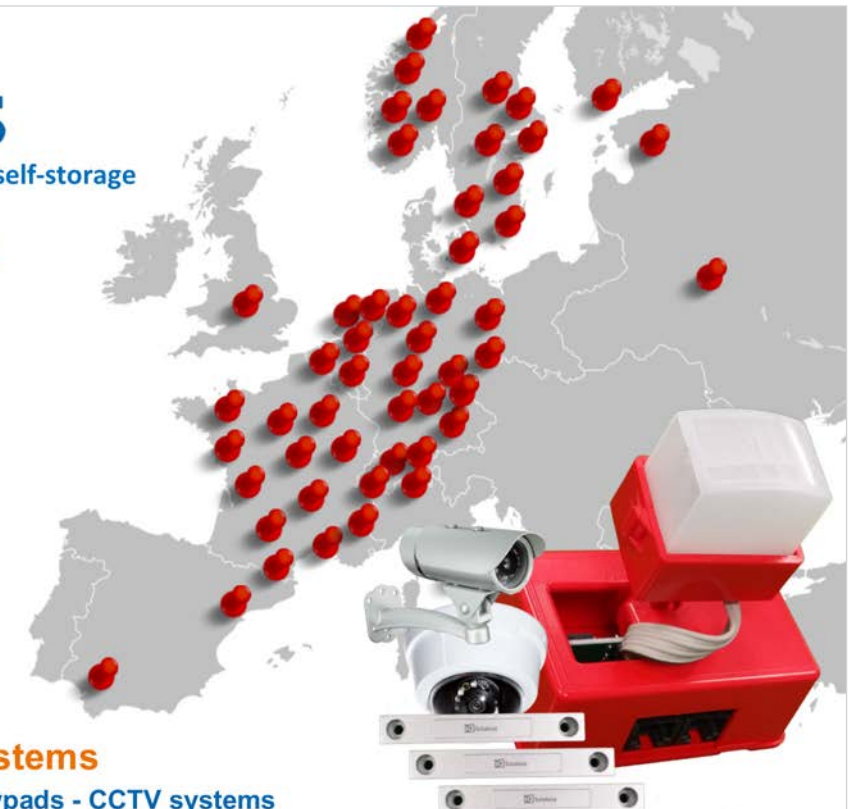
enforcement@ipo.gov.uk. For existing members, we are building a bank of photographs to promote the scheme on various social media channels. If you would like to send a photograph of your code of practice alongside something which identifies your business (the more creative the better), please send to: enforcement@ipo.gov.uk

Matthew Knowles
Trading Standards



The businesses also re-emphasised their existing policies on customer identification, payment processes and how they process customer deliveries

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iBidOnStorage partners with Engage Storage Management

Selling customer goods remains one of the riskiest elements of operating a storage business. Over the past 12 months, the industry has benefitted from using iBidOnStorage, an online auction platform which is now a preferred method of sale when it comes to selling customers goods. This is because it evidences the market has set the price secured for the goods, not the storage operator. This selling risk has now been mitigated even further by a new partnership just announced between the iBidOnStorage team and Engage (www.thisisengage.co.uk), to deliver a professional inventory service where units are photographed, comprehensively inventoried, personal effects removed and then listed on the iBidOnStorage platform.

iBidOnStorage recently won the FEDESSA Innovation Award for 2021 and their main objective is to become part of the UK industry's standard practice when it comes to the sale of unpaid storage. The team worked closely with Lindsey Hemingway (Knights PLC), to ensure its Terms & Conditions were aligned with the UK's industry standards and the Self Storage Association's Manual of Advice and Procedures. The website www.ibidonstorage.co.uk launched in September 2020 and is the only online auction platform dedicated to the local storage industry. In the UK, it has since hosted over 800 auctions, signed more than 200 seller locations, and registered over 5,400 bidders.

The platform offers a simple and straightforward mechanism to sell the contents of unpaid and abandoned storage units, while helping mitigate the risks associated with the process. Auction summaries can also be downloaded for each auction, allowing the seller to have every detail of the auction available – an audit trail of sorts.

Professional Inventory Service

Engage will be providing the comprehensive inventory service (initially within the M25 London area) for those iBidOnStorage customers requiring this additional service. Engage have been providing storage management services since 2009 and are also members of the SSA UK. The inventory service will be affordably priced and would include removing personal items, drafting a comprehensive inventory, photographing the unit, and then listing the unit

on the iBidOnStorage auction platform.

Engage would then upload the listing to the iBidOnStorage platform where the operators branding could remain anonymous if required.

By using the new inventory service, you will get the benefits of a professional inventory service as well as the benefits of listing on a targeted, transparent public platform to help mitigate your seller's risk even further.

The image shows two screenshots from the iBidOnStorage website. The top screenshot displays the 'Inventory Service' section, which explains the process: 'Have your units photographed, inventoried and listed on the iBidOnStorage platform with: engage'. It includes a 'Take the hassle out of selling abandoned storage' banner and three steps: 1. Personal items are removed from the storage unit by an Engage representative. 2. Storage unit is photographed and photographed by an Engage representative. 3. Unit is listed on the iBidOnStorage platform. The bottom screenshot shows a unit auction listing for 'Unit ID: G2026 (IB-9362)' located at 'Crawley - Crawley Station Manor Business Park, Gatwick Road, West Sussex, RH10 9NH'. The listing includes a 'SOLD' status, a winning bid of £320, a 89.59% debt recovery, and a total of 20 bids. It also shows a description of the unit's contents, including a small LED TV, a table clock, a glass dome, a pepper grinder, a Chinese type tea jar, a medical frame, a seat, a food fabric, a microwave, a china souvenir, a box of ornaments, a tea set, a novelty tea pot, a Whimsy figure, a box of books, a box of vinyl records, a box of CDs, a box of records, a box with barometer & toy pistol, a box of records, a box of Christmas decorations, a box of glassware, a black seal cushion, and a case with plastic train railway parts. The unit size is 20sqft, and it includes a cleaning deposit. The facility accepts credit card only.

Summary:

The professional inventory service may just be the answer for those storage operators who want complete peace of mind when it comes to selling customer goods. Using the iBidOnStorage platform in conjunction with the Engage inventory service, will help the industry consolidate the sale process, allowing it to effectively adopt its own standard practice, which in turn will go a long way towards protecting the industry if an individual business was ever legally challenged.

New Member Benefit – QuickGuides

The SSA UK has developed a new range of QuickGuides to help members quickly access valuable information on a range of key topics, many topics based on FAQs from members.

Covering matters often faced by members for example legal issues - how to deal with the death of a storer or, who can access a self storage unit. Informative guides include topics such as, Storage Facility Signage, PAT testing, Vulnerable Stors or REITs and much more.

Each QuickGuide is deliberately short, simple and covers the key points of the topic. The material contained in some of the legal QuickGuides may also be found in the Manual of Advice and Procedures (MAP) where more comprehensive information is available.

To access, login to the members only area of either the SSA UK or FEDESSA websites and view or download.

The first set is available now with further topics being added over the coming months. Topics to date include:

- Guest W-fi Access
- Parking and Traffic Requirements
- Tax Status on going concern basis
- Installing Solar Panels
- Defibrillators on site
- Business Rates
- Music Licence Registration
- Legalities of using app-based access systems

The image shows a screenshot of the SSA UK website's 'Membership Benefits' page. The page features a purple header with the SSA UK logo and navigation links. The main content area is titled 'Membership Benefits' and includes a section for 'The Self Storage Association UK ensures a sustainable self regulated self storage industry as well as supplying tangible benefits to its members and their businesses.' Below this, there is a list of member benefits, including access to the licence agreements, legal support, industry data, online resources, a monthly e-news and quarterly industry magazine, security alerts, HR and business support, member promotion, access to a mystery shopping service, networking events, member helpline, a UK national conference and a European annual conference along with training sessions tailored specifically for the self storage industry. A 'Benefits Chart' is also mentioned. The page includes a 'Submit an Enquiry' button and a 'Download the SSA UK Membership benefits chart' link.

The image shows a screenshot of a 'QuickGuide' document titled 'Guest WiFi Use Policy'. The document is from the SSA UK (Self Storage Association UK) and provides information on the acceptable use of guest WiFi. It states that if a user is giving customers access to WiFi, it is important to give an 'Acceptable Use Policy' to ensure they can use the service appropriately. The policy should be accepted either in writing with giving customers access or more commonly, as an online acknowledgment when they first connect. Below are two examples of such policies: a 'Short policy - ideal for casual, low volume personal use' and a 'Detailed policy - ideal for businesses and other regular users'. The 'Short policy' is a simple statement of terms, while the 'Detailed policy' is more comprehensive, covering various aspects of acceptable use, including security, privacy, and liability. The document is presented as a stack of guides, with the 'Guest WiFi Use Policy' guide in the foreground.



Looking towards the Shipping Container Market in 2022

There's no doubt the Covid-19 pandemic has heavily impacted the entire infrastructure of the shipping container industry. Here at Cleveland Containers, we have certainly felt the knock-on effects over the past two years, working as hard as we can to fulfil orders and supply alternate options where possible.

Amongst ongoing transport issues such as driver shortages, port delays and the Suez Canal blockage, one of the main challenges that emerged last year was the reduced manufacturing capacity in China. Following Chinese New Year in February, we will see factories lower production capacity even further from an average of 600,000 TEU (20ft equivalent unit) per month to 300-350,000 TEU per month, with employees working fewer hours.

All these factors combined with the increased demand for shipping containers has contributed to the rise in prices over the last two years, and I can see this continuing until at least April this year. We envisage prices plateauing from around this point, but I don't personally believe we will see prices rise much further (although, it wouldn't take much extra demand from shipping lines to push the prices up more). We don't expect prices to reduce much either – if only we had a crystal ball!

Shipping rates have quadrupled during the pandemic, and it looks like they will remain at these levels throughout 2022. Due to this, it is not currently viable to bring in Mini Sets (10fts and under) from China as they are shipped in empty. Equally, shipping costs of

specialised containers, specifically side openers are still rising, so these will be in short supply certainly throughout the first 6-9 months of this year.

In terms of the second-hand container market, more stock of 20ft Standard and 40ft High Cube containers is becoming available now in the UK, so we should see prices on these stabilise.

I am feeling hopeful for the year ahead. Many of the big shipping lines are now ordering larger 23,000+ TEU container vessels, so that will create a strong

demand for the factories for the next couple of years.

Yes, there are still some repercussions from the pandemic which won't be resolved overnight, however there are plenty of opportunities for us to grab hold of. It's incredibly important for suppliers to consider both the short and long-term future of the container industry in order to adapt and ensure customer demand can be met.

Stephen Collins - Cleveland Containers

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AISI Conference in Milan – a great success

On 29 November 2021, we finally had the opportunity to host the fifth Italian self storage Convention in Milan.

The event was a great success and a wonderful opportunity to gather together storage operators from all over Italy, industry professionals, sponsors and speakers and include activities such as seminars, Q&A sessions and networking events.

In his opening speech, Cesare Carcano, President of the Association and Casaforte Self Storage said, “*The potential of our industry is huge, and this Association is a point of reference, a national and international sharing space for self storage operators, creating a*



network of experiences and competences”.

The AISI Conference represented a significant occasion for discussion, sharing stories and professional experiences, but also the opportunity to spend quality time together and get to know each other better.

During the meeting all the participants had the opportunity to learn, understand how to improve or discover something new about the world of self storage thanks to the sessions covered by experts and professionals in the field.

There was a range of industry topics such as issues related to self storage contracts, legal aspects, the importance of insurance, how to improve the operation and performances of sites and other interesting presentations.

We also organized an exclusive tour for participants to visit two of the most innovative self storage centers in Europe. We had the opportunity to visit the new Easybox center in Bisceglie, which won the Multi Site Operator of the Year Award and the Casaforte Express center in Piazzale Loreto, winner of the Innovation Award during the FEDESSA Trade Show

Conference 2021 in September.

As the conference was a great success and a beautiful experience, we have already started to plan and organise the future events that allow us to acquire the skills necessary to thrive in the self storage market of the future.






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FROM THE MARKET LEADER!



A Marriage for Customer Convenience: A creative union of container storage and self storage

On the French Réunion Island in the middle of the Indian Ocean, a visionary self storage entrepreneur has developed an innovative concept. Riaz Mall spent three years developing a storage solution that brings together the best of container storage and self storage into one classy product. Meet Izibox.

Riaz Mall already owns one storage facility on Réunion Island; Boxea. Boxea offer traditional indoor self storage and they stand out for their creative and professional marketing. If you see someone dancing with storage boxes on TikTok, there is a decent chance you are watching the Boxea team.

When it was time to expand the business, Riaz wanted to go further than simply duplicating the Boxea concept to a second location. He wanted to innovate and disrupt as well.

Container storage was attractive to him, because of the shorter return on investment. But in a tropical climate, container storage also had its limitations with humidity and heat. The Boxea brand is a premium brand and Riaz wanted the future expansion to fit this premium positioning.

This is how the idea of Izibox was born. Drive-up, climate-controlled container storage units. Shipping containers that are waterproof, dustproof and with tight seals around the doors to keep rodents out. Each container has its own individual door alarm for individual security.

These containers come with some of the well-known attributes of traditional self storage; access to the site 7 days a week, personalized access codes, fire and intruder alarms, CCTV monitoring and zone-



When it was time to expand the business, Riaz wanted to go further than simply duplicating the Boxea concept to a second location



controlled LED lighting. And as an extra perk; the floors are made of dust free material so that the Izibox containers can provide a completely dust free storage experience.

Sustainability in Innovation

During the development of the Izibox concept, it was also important to Riaz that the company's green credentials could not be questioned.

Using a concept called bio climatic, the natural air flow is used to control condensation when the temperature difference between the inside of the container and the environment becomes too large. As such, the climate control at Izibox is completely carbon-emissions free.

The flooring of the containers is made of bamboo wood, which is one of the most renewable wood resources available and it is at the same time very resistant to woodworm and other insects. To top it all off, all the lighting at the facility comes from solar polar.



The Customer Response

Réunion Island already has traditional container storage and indoor self storage, so the burning question once Izibox opened was; how will the customers respond? Will they understand the premium container concept and be willing to pay more for it? Will they understand that although it looks like a regular container from the outside, it holds so much more magic on the inside?

The numbers speak for themselves. After 7 months, Izibox had provided over 2,000 online quotations and reached 70% occupancy. The conversion rates and customer segmentation were the same as for Riaz's indoor self storage facility Boxea. A growing number of new contracts are already coming from word of mouth, despite not even being open for a year. And because of the convenience of the drive-up units, Riaz finds that the Izibox site is visited more frequently than the indoor Boxea site is.



What is yet to come

Izibox is not the end of innovation for Riaz Mall, it is only one step on the way. Whilst his concept is now proven and ready to scale, he also has his eye on his next innovative concept. I ask if we can come back and talk about the next development when it is ready and Riaz responds: "Of course, I have innovated by building on top of the great ideas of others. And in life, there has to be give and take. So, if I didn't give out to others of my experiences, I would be stealing."

On that note, we leave Riaz for now and look forward to seeing what has yet to come.

Events | Webinars | Training Workshops & Conferences

We are delighted to announce our forthcoming Events Calendar for 2022. Our range of UK and European events is extensive, from online training sessions, Sector Forums and regular webinars to in-person Regional Members' Meetings and Conferences with great networking opportunities. With something for everyone, pricing to suit all budgets and many complimentary sessions too, there is plenty happening throughout the year.

March 2022

- 1** **Sector Forum Technology & Innovation - Online Meeting**
Member complimentary session for those with an interest in technology/innovation
- 3** **CEO Update Webinar - Online Webinar**
Complimentary, monthly member's update including the latest sector news
- 8** **Sector Forum Containers - Online Meeting**
Complimentary meeting of interest to container operators or container suppliers
- 15** **Sector Forum Security - Online Meeting**
Complimentary meeting on security issues and protection from all potential threats
- 17** **Improve your Revenue through Add-On Sales - Online Training**
Important for self storage businesses if you want to sell more than just units!!!
- 22** **Sector Forum Security - Online Meeting**
Complimentary meeting to help improve industry security and evaluate technology
- 24** **YSN Educational Session – Operational Excellence - Online Training**
Complimentary session for YSN Members on essential self storage operations
- 29** **Sector Forum Women in Business - Online Meeting**
New for 2022, join some of the leading women in the industry for discussion
- 30-31** **Spanish Self Storage Conference - In-Person Conference**
Two days of presentations and networking at the Wanda Metropolitano in Madrid

April 2022

- 5** **Hot Topic Webinar – Auctions & Clearance - Online Webinar**
Delivered by supplier members, iBidonStorage, Keepers Cottage & Rosan Reeves
- 7** **CEO Update Webinar - Online Webinar**
Complimentary, monthly member's update including the latest sector news
- 21** **YSN Educational Session – Digital Marketing Masterclass - Online Training**
Complimentary session for YSN Members led by marketing specialist Christel Land
- 26** **Pricing Strategy - Online Training**
Create pricing policies to maximise the revenue of your business
- 28** **Suppliers Summit – Manchester - In-Person Meeting**
Just for supplier members to discuss activities and opportunities for the coming year
- 28** **Regional Members' Networking Dinner – Manchester - In-Person Dinner**
Join us for dinner and an evening of networking with industry colleagues

May 2022

- 5** **CEO Update Webinar - Online Webinar**
Complimentary, monthly member's update including the latest sector news
- 5** **Swedish Self Storage Conference - In-Person Conference**
A day of presentations and networking at 7A Odenplan in Stockholm
- 9 & 16** **From Start-Up to Success - In-Person Training**
Tips and tricks for opening new stores from two top industry professionals
- 10** **Hot Topic Webinar – What makes an Award-Winning Facility? - Online Webinar**
Led by CEO Rennie Schafer, top tips for those wishing to enter the industry awards
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Learn how the industry has performed over the past 12 months
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June 2022

- 9** **CEO Update Webinar - Online Webinar**
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- 7** **Practical Marketing - Online Training**
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- 23** **YSN Educational Session – Revenue Management & Pricing - Online Training**
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July 2022

- 5** **Sector Forum Security - Online Meeting**
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- 7** **CEO Update Webinar - Online Webinar**
Complimentary, monthly member's update including the latest sector news
- 12** **Sector Forum Containers - Online Meeting**
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- 14** **Recruit and Retain a Winning Self Storage Team - Online Training**
Learn how to recruit and develop the right staff and keep them!
- 13** **YSN Educational Session – Social Media - Online Training**
Complimentary session for YSN Members led by Emma Banks, YSN Board Member
- 21** **Hot Topic Webinar - Understanding and Selling Customer Insurance - Online Webinar**
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John Hulsman

John is a renowned expert on geopolitics, macroeconomics, and politics. He will be turning his attention to issues impacting self storage in the coming years.



David Meade

David is a world-class international corporate speaker, performer and TV personality with a renowned reputation for helping organisations work more effectively. As our keynote opener he will get you motivated to improve your business and customer service skills.



Isabel Aguilera

The former CEO of Google Iberia and of General Electric Spain and Portugal, Isabel Aguilera knows how to increase competitiveness by focusing innovation, human potential and brand. She will be talking about adapting new technologies and the challenges of the 21st century to make your business prosper.

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Country Profile

AUSTRIA

Austria has faced successive waves of the pandemic with varying degrees of intensity. The restrictions on mobility have generally led to significant drops in economic activity before a strong recovery through the summer of 2021. This reflected particularly in the large share of tourism in economic activity, which has also led to regional differences in the impacts of the pandemic.

After the strong start to the recovery during 2021, with GDP rising by 5 percent, it is expected that the economy will grow with 4.5 percent in 2022 and 3.0 percent in 2023. This means that the Austrian economy, which had already reached pre-crisis levels in the third quarter of 2021, should be able to catch up with the pre-crisis growth trend within the forecast period.

Self Storage in Austria

23 years ago, MyPlace opened their first self storage facility in Austria and today there are about 30 self storage operators and 145 facilities spread out throughout the country. In the beginning most centers were located in Vienna but over the years more and more facilities appeared in other cities. The biggest player in the Austrian market when considering the number of units available, is Myplace with 13 stores, and they are also the market leader in Germany. Although they opened their first store in Austria, they focused more on opening self storage centers in Germany as the German market is ten times larger.

Austria has an average floor per capita of 0.015 which is

below the European floor space per capita average of 0.020. This shows there is significant room for growth in Austria. The average rent in Austria is € 279 and compared to other countries in Europe, it hardly increased in Austria compared to 2021 (0.9 percentage point increase). In the latest FEDESSA Self Storage Survey we saw an increase in the average occupancy across Europe. However, occupancy in Austria remained stable and stays lower than the European average of 81.5%. Looking at the business and domestic split by area and units, this remains 20% business and 80% domestic. (Source: FEDESSA European Survey 2021).

"Over the years we have seen a slower development of the classic self storage facility, larger than three thousand square meters and purpose built", says Martin Gerhardus, CEO MyPlace. "There has been an increase in small sized (less than two hundred square metres) rented facilities in ground floor apartment houses in the main cities", continues Martin.

The Austrian operator STORE ROOM's first opened facility is a modern, climate-neutral, mixed-use property that combines office and store space and is currently the largest facility of its kind in Austria. The last two STORE ROOM facilities are significantly smaller in size. This is because in recent years, the demand for smaller storage compartments has risen sharply. The trend is increasingly towards smaller flats and, especially in large cities, these are often without basements. "Many small businesses, for example with an online shop, also need uncomplicated

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storage options, while large companies are also looking for storage solutions that make life easier for them and for their clients. Thanks to digitalisation, companies can give customers access to pick up their goods, Andreas Stadler commented, Manager of STORE ROOM.

Although self storage awareness has increased over the past few years, it is still very low compared to other countries. If you asked 10 years ago if people knew what self storage was, 9 out of 10 would say they did not know about it. However, today people have a better idea of what it is but they are still not using it to its potential as they do not fully understand the benefits of self storage, or they think it is too expensive. According to Andreas, around 90% of customers are renting a self storage compartment for the first time in their life.

The industry is mostly faced with rising costs in terms of energy and construction. Nevertheless, the self storage industry has also proven its resilience and stability in Austria. Today the Austrian Self Storage industry does not have its own national self storage association, four of the Austrian operators are members of the German Self Storage Association. However, maybe it would be very beneficial for the sector to consider establishing an Austrian Self Storage Association particularly to help increase awareness and support operators to lobby at a local level.

STORE ROOM, Austria

After more than 30 years of experience in self storage, Martin Kopf, owner and Managing Director, founded STORE ROOM GMBH in 2019. The company opened their first Austrian facility with a fully digital self storage system in November of the same year. In April 2021, they opened another two more city-central locations.

The first location, which is situated in Vienna South/Brunn, is not only a modern building but also probably the largest



self storage facility in Austria. It offers storage space from 1 to 50 m² in a total area of 9,000 m². The store is easily accessible due to its proximity to the Vösendorf junction and the A21 motorway, Brunn am Gebirge exit.



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The three fully digital locations are the most modern self storage facilities in Austria. The compartments can be booked online and unlocked around the clock with the help of a smartphone app. In addition to the digital access system, the self storage facility is video monitored, except for the inside of the storage compartments. Free WLAN ensures that access is also possible with devices without mobile internet connection.

The STORE ROOM facility in Vienna North offers 138 units and the other facility, 45 units. As one of the few inner-city warehouses, Vienna North has both a car parking deck and an HGV entrance for loading and unloading.

The issue of sustainability is also reflected in the corporate culture of STORE ROOM. When they constructed the facility in Vienna South, they also built a solar power plant. In addition to the photovoltaic system, the store has its own absorption chillers, green roofs to improve the microclimate, as well as a rainwater collection system and its reuse for irrigation of the outdoor facilities. Thanks to the complete digitalisation of all processes, there is no need to print the contracts or other documents.

And as an extra benefit, thanks to the digital solution that has been developed in-house by STOORE ROOM's

subsidiary company KINNOVIS, it has made it easier for STORE ROOM to launch its next expansion through a franchising model.



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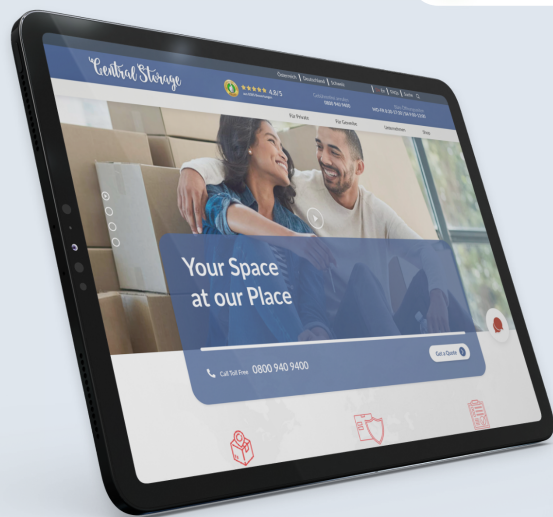


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Nuveen Real Estate acquires Green Storage and 24Storage

Nuveen Real Estate, one of the largest real estate investment managers in the world with \$142 billion of assets under management, entered the European self storage market with the acquisition of the two Swedish self storage companies, Green Storage and 24Storage.

Nuveen is an American asset manager and fully owned subsidiary of the financial planning firm TIAA. TIAA Investments is a global asset manager focused on achieving the best possible long-term risk-adjusted returns for its clients. Today, Nuveen manages the entirety of TIAA's own capital as well as all capital sourced from third parties.

Globally for many investors, investing in self storage is an alternative choice. However more and more new operators are entering the European market, increasing the number of facilities, and driving the development of this emerging sector, which is providing opportunities for investors.

Also, investor Nuveen realised that self storage in Europe is a winning sub-sector given low levels of supply, proven resilience during times of volatility and the scope to drive efficiencies by creating a digitalised platform of scale. There are more than ten times the amount of self storage facilities in the United States compared with Europe and the fragmented nature of the European markets offers significant consolidation potential for the group.

Nuveen Real Estate entered the European self storage market in October last year with the acquisition of a majority interest in Green Storage, a self storage

platform in Sweden from Green Group.

Green Storage was formed in 2017 by Green Group and has today ten stores in the Greater Stockholm area and four facilities under development. The Green Storage Management team led by Stefan Nilsson (CEO, Green Storage) will continue working closely with Nuveen to continue building on Green Storage's strong tech and sustainability-focused strategy, and accelerate the platforms expansion plan both in Sweden and in the pan-European market.

“For Nuveen the acquisition of Green Storage was an excellent entry into the competitive European storage market.”

For Nuveen the acquisition of Green Storage was an excellent entry into the competitive European storage market. The company's proven track record and strong management, makes Nuveen strongly believe that they have an excellent operating partner to create a best-in-class platform in a growing sector. The ability to create a fully-automated storage solution is a game-changer for Nuveen and they are keen to expand the portfolio quickly to

create a market-leading platform in Sweden with the scope to expand further across Europe thereafter.

Only one month after the acquisition of Green Storage, Nuveen Real Estate acquired 24Storage, the second largest self storage operator in Sweden. The company has successfully built a high quality real estate portfolio in Sweden's top three cities with a strong focus on technology and sustainability to drive operational efficiencies and provide a future-proofed storage solution.

The privatisation of a high profile listed company reinforces Nuveen’s ability to access interesting investment opportunities in both the public and private markets while also demonstrating a commitment to grow the self storage footprint across Europe. The combined portfolio with Green Storage will create a market-leading platform in Sweden with significant synergies and exciting growth potential in the coming years. The acquisitions enable Nuveen to build a market-leading platform in Sweden, underpinned by a high-quality portfolio of 44 assets and a highly

experienced management team. The acquisition of both 24Storage and Green Storage is fully consistent with Nuveen’s ambitions of actively expanding its alternative real estate platform. Considering self storage is one of the most attractive sub-sectors given the significant under-supply of modern space, proven resilience in times of changeability and scope to generate value through scale, the use of innovative technology and active management.



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The global self storage sector has demonstrated strong performance and significant growth. Janus Europe is very proud to be part of this industry, and excited to contribute to driving its continuous progress and innovation. We work with exceptional self storage businesses across the world to create state-of-the-art facilities for the next generation.

Sustainability

ESG (environmental social governance) credentials are becoming increasingly important in all industries, and it is encouraging to see self storage operators implementing eco-friendly initiatives, such as solar panels, green roofs, and e-vehicle charging points.

At Janus Europe, our commitment to ESG sits firmly at the core of our business model. Our raw materials originate from companies that adhere to strict ESG guidelines and our timber suppliers meet the UK Forestry Commission standards and International standard for wood packaging.

We can offer customers new and more sustainable self storage products and solutions to satisfy environmental requirements.

Digital access

Self storage automation and access control technology is another expanding area that provides operators with an opportunity to future-proof their facilities and gain a competitive edge. Digital solutions bring convenience and security benefits for both owners and tenants and can be used at manned or unmanned sites. Janus Europe offers an award-winning, digital key management solution, the Nokē Smart Entry system. Nokē is designed specifically for the self storage industry, and allows tenants entry to a facility and its units using a smart device. The electronic lock comes with a feature-rich Smart Storage Entry application, available in any language.

Product innovation

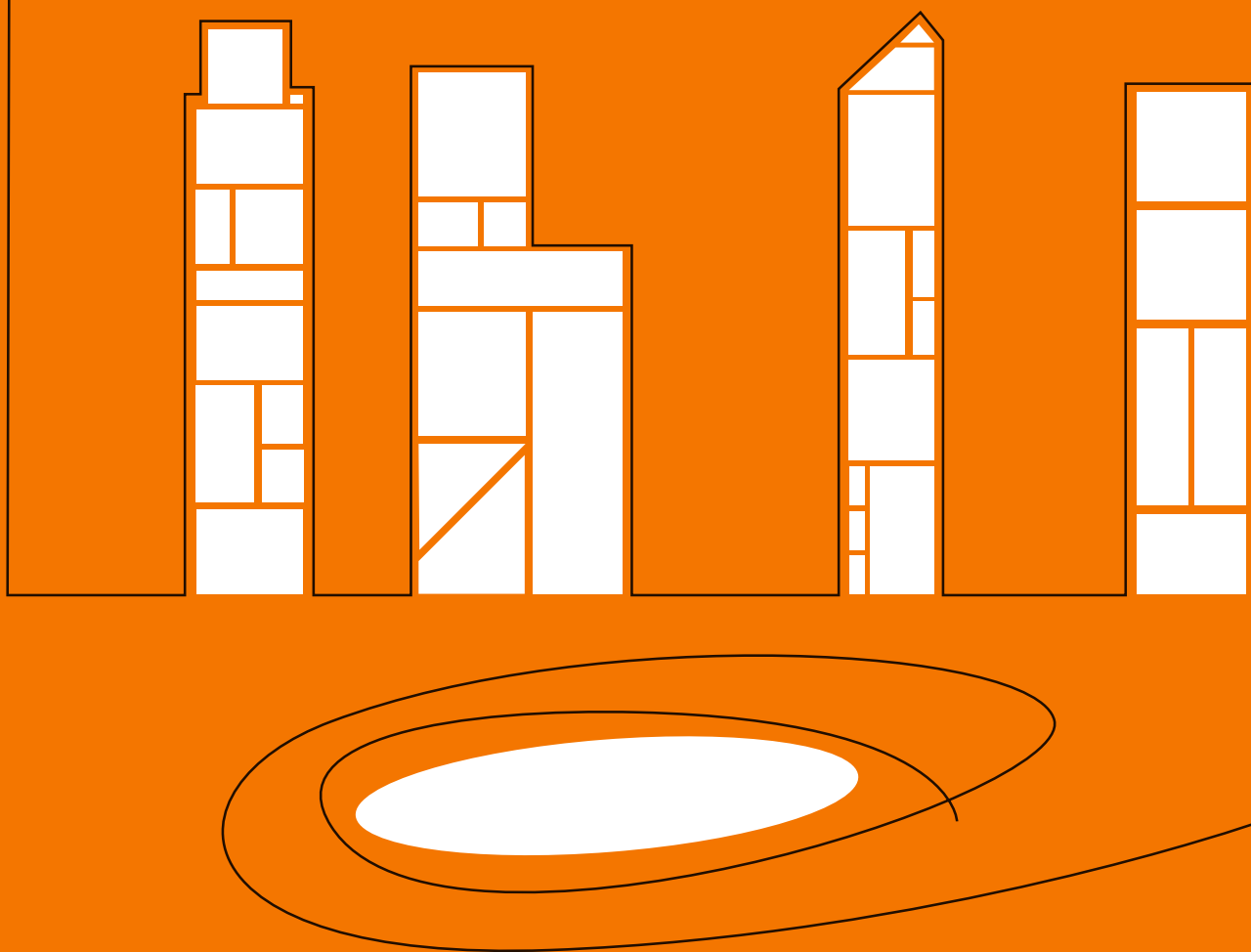
Janus Europe’s extensive range of self storage products and services combines the latest technology and sustainable materials with customer-centric consultancy and design. We manufacture, supply and install high-quality self storage doors, partitions, lockers and many other products. There is currently a high demand for outdoor storage units in the sector and Janus Europe has developed two types of relocatable, external units; the versatile Vault and MASS Units. Both solutions are original Janus designs, manufactured in Europe, and customisable to enable operators to maximise lettable space.

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Policúbic - from gardening to self storage

Policúbic is a Spanish operator located in Centelles, a small village in the province of Barcelona. This self storage centre has a very interesting history compared to other self storage centres in Spain.

Silvia Roca's parents dedicated their whole lives to gardening and working on a farm owned by the family. Once they decided to retire, Silvia and the rest of her family started to think of different alternatives to make the most of the space they had. At first, they started renting plots of land to agriculture and gardening enthusiasts who were looking for a place to plant their vegetable garden and take care of it. This service was quite successful in the area and the tenants began to ask Silvia for a place to keep their tools, so they did not have to carry them each time when going to their garden. It was then the Roca family began to set up storage spaces to cover these needs and almost without realising it, they entered the self storage sector in a very organic way and before they knew it, Policúbic was born.

From the moment they started renting out their first storage units, Silvia was clear they had to specialise and professionalise in the sector. For her it is very clear that delivering a high-quality service and doing things properly is what makes the difference in this business. *"Living close to our centre helps us to have a much closer relationship with the client and to reinforce their trust"*, says Silvia. That is why, once they realised their new line of business could be self storage, the first thing they did was to join the AESS. They joined the Association seeking advice and guidance to be able to manage their new centre in accordance with the characteristics of the sector and its regulations.

Silvia remembers how, a few months after joining, she attended one of the AESS congresses where she learned about the sector and how she could grow her business. The combination of education, networking and facility tour at the conference has undoubtedly clarified her ideas and showed her the path she should follow.

Policúbic's future plans are to continue adding services to meet the needs of its customers, like for example, clients looking for large spaces. Although they have various sizes of storage rooms available, those who choose Policúbic do so because they wish to rent spaces in which they can keep and store a large number of objects.

Currently, Policúbic is not planning to expand its number of centres. Silvia prefers to make the most of the space available so that she can continue to serve her neighbours and other interested parties in the area.

Today, the profile of Policúbic's clients is very varied. Gone are the days when three or four market gardeners kept their tools in the first spaces that Silvia set up. Nowadays, some self-employed people, market gardeners, and mainly individuals who need a place to store their things for a particular period of time are Policúbic's main clients.

Moreover, as it is located in a small town, its own clients are the ones who recommend Silvia's centre to others as the first option for storing their belongings.

"We continue working to offer more services to our clients", says Silvia.

Silvia and Policúbic are undoubtedly a great example of seizing opportunities and that keeping your business vision alert is essential to embark on adventures as exciting and with as many possibilities as those offered by self storage.





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Their commitment to excellence means that they take care of all their internal processes and quality controls for which they have obtained the European certifications ISO 9001 (quality), ISO 14001 (environment) and ISO 45001 (prevention of risks).



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Modulnor provide comprehensive advice to clients, adapting to each specific need. This is demonstrated by offering solutions adapted to all sectors; residential, education, health, leisure and catering, airport services, engineering and architecture studies, public administration, distribution, petrochemical, and recycling.

In 2014 they introduced a self storage line to their product portfolio and since then the growth has been constant which has led them to becoming the main manufacturer and installer in the Iberian peninsula, with about 75.000 m2 of production and annual sales.

Modulnor have been able to expand their offer by applying their previous experience from the other sectors they have worked in and today, cover all solutions available to optimise the implementation of a self storage centre:

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Defaulting customers that leave behind a storage unit full of unwanted items, are a nuisance and risk for storage operators. It requires the storage unit to be sold, emptied, and cleaned as quickly as possible to minimise the loss of income, and with as little legal risk as possible to the storage operator. The team at iBidOnStorage, with over 50 years of self storage experience, recognised the requirement for a dedicated storage auction platform to mitigate the risk of selling unpaid storage units and developed iBidOnStorage, the UK's first and only online auction platform dedicated to the local self storage industry.

Launched in September 2020, the website www.ibidonstorage.co.uk has since sold over 500 auctions, signed up 175 UK facilities and registered 4,000 bidders. The professional platform offers sellers the benefit of a public auction, the preferred method of sale when it comes to selling customers' goods, is simple to use and can be integrated into a storage operator's existing self storage software or can be used with an open API to perform custom pulls of the data into an operator's own reporting. And, total transparency means that should the need arise, iBidOnStorage can assist the seller to obtain every detail of the auction including the fact that the market set the sale price and not the storage operator, protecting the industry if an individual business was ever legally challenged.

The challenge for iBidOnStorage was online auctions, designed specifically for the self storage industry, were developed in the USA, Canada, Australia, and South Africa but were not well known or understood by the UK industry, so it was important to educate the sector which resulted in a rapid take-up by operators.

The iBidOnStorage platform achieves better prices through a larger targeted audience and sells over 90% of the auctions listed. Sellers are paid within 48 hours of the auction closing. There are no admin fees, no collection fees, and no expectation of an ongoing commitment.

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SEO Trends

2021 saw some important shifts in how Google determines their rankings. We have collected the most important SEO trends for you, so you can be ready for 2022.

Mobile Is King

Most web searches are on mobile devices and Google now predominantly uses the mobile version of your website for rankings. Mobile-based searches are also more likely to be local and with self storage being a very local business, there is even more reason to put some time and effort into ensuring that your mobile site is top notch.

The Written Word Moves from King to Prince

Historically, SEO has been based predominantly on the text that is written on a website. As a result, you may have noticed that when you are navigating a website some pages seem to be written more for the search engine than for the user. These pages use all the right keywords in just the right frequency to help rankings. But as website design has evolved into more graphical communication, the search engines have had to adapt to keep up. The written word is still important but not quite as important as it has been in the past.

Images and Video on the Rise

During 2021, Google started using artificial intelligence to understand the sentiments, context and intent when scanning images and videos on websites. When the function launched it included 75 languages, and more are being added as it develops. Reviewing the images on your website and starting to experiment with video production if you haven't

already, are good long-term SEO tactics.

User Experience Trumps All

So, which should you focus on; the text, the images, the video? The answer is: everything. During 2021, Google introduced its ranking factor known as Page Experience Signals. This part of the algorithm looks at everything from loading speeds to how mobile friendly your URLs are and how stable your visual layout it. To master SEO, your website needs to master user friendliness.

Backlinks: Quality over Quantity

Backlinks improve your website's reputation and thereby ranking, but not all backlinks are created equal. One link from a top tier new site to your website can impact your rankings more than many low-quality links can. Investing your time into PR activities to get stories about your business into the traditional media channels can really pay off.

Zero-Click Searches

More than 50% of Google searches are now what is called zero-click. This is when the user searches for something and finds the answer without clicking on any website links. Consequently, it is even more important to have your Google My Business account updated and that when you write blogs, to tailor them around specific search phrases. If someone is searching for "best storage options when moving house" and your blog uses exactly that phrase, you may find yourself right at the top of the search results, with an excerpt of your blog displayed to the user. That is SEO at its best!

“iBidOnStorage.co.uk has helped us simplify the process of administering the final stages of delinquency. With its national potential purchaser base, we are able to demonstrate clearly that we have sought to achieve maximum value for the goods sold at auction instead of the limited bids more commonly received from a small, local pool of prospective purchasers.

The transparency of reporting and ease of listing has made these final and sadly, sometimes unavoidable stages of debt control a much easier task to complete.”



Daniel Saunders
Director





A conversation with.... Jan Bikker – 1Box The Netherlands

In this issue, we travel to the Netherlands to interview Jan Bikker who has been part of the European self storage industry for over 20 years and now has 15 stores under the 1Box brand.

How did you first get involved in self storage Jan?

In 1999, I had sold my residential real estate business and was looking for another challenge, something in which I could also make better use of my construction knowledge. I applied to a newspaper advertisement and was hired as Development Manager Europe at Devon Selfstorage. I started in Amsterdam, after that The Hague, Utrecht, Marseille, Toulouse, Lyon, Cologne and Berlin.

How have you seen the sector as a whole change during your journey into self storage?

In general, a lot has changed since the digital era arrived. Where we used to send pen drawings on A0 size by Fedex to DBCI in America, only to receive a drawing back after two weeks, now everything is digital. The same goes for the business itself, the digital links between the Webpage-systems, software, access control, bank accounts, CCTV and e-mail invoicing are here to stay. And now the electronic locks with app control follow on from the digitalisation.

You have grown your portfolio to a significant size in the Netherlands, how does managing multiple branches across the country compare to your first few branches?

With only a few branches, it is often difficult to respond to market situations due to a lack of sufficient data. With the expansion, the daily operational management has been professionalised and there is

much more management based on trends, actions, availability and price.

How do your new branches differ from the first one you opened?

The new branches are more no-nonsense and always focused on the needs and experience of the customer. And especially the customer experience is the part that has changed enormously compared to 15 years ago. Renting a unit has transformed from a necessity into a life style product.

Would you consider expanding outside the Netherlands?

The entire European market is taking a step forward in the self storage sector; there are good opportunities in the surrounding countries, and we will certainly investigate these.

What do you think is the role of the bigger players in the industry? To what extent do you take their actions into account when developing your business?

As the product "self storage" is more widely known to the public through the larger players, the demand for storage space only increases; in other words, the demand is created thanks to the work and visibility of the larger players. Therefore, competition is not yet fierce and there is, in a way, synergy

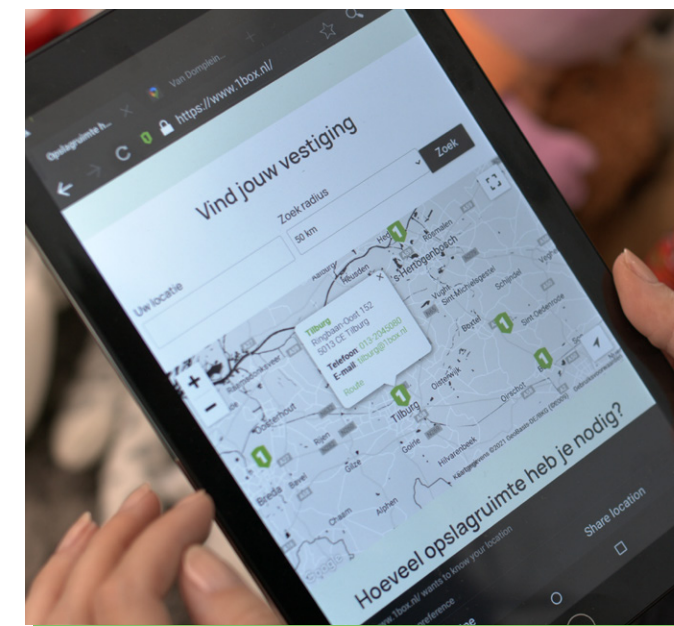
With more customers finding self storage online, do you think operators still need expensive locations to raise their profile?

In the year 2000 three pillars were still important for a new self storage facility, namely: location, location, location. This is still the case, only the third location

is the location with the search engines (Google) The physical location continues to play an important role.

What do you think about fully automated branches, especially the smaller ones we see in Austria and the like?

We have investigated this further, but not only small sites can be unmanned, also large sites, such as Green Storage in Stockholm with 10 large unmanned sites. We did notice that the culture and habits of people differ in the European countries. But also per city we see differences. Especially the small unmanned facilities fulfil a need for the customers, who have an extra space close to home without having to take a car.



What do you think a storage facility will look like in 10 years?

I expect that by then it will be a fully established phenomenon, a life style product, as common as electric cars, which we also only got used to 10 years ago.

What do you see as the challenges and opportunities for the sector in the coming years?

Joining forces means consolidating, because staff costs and marketing costs are becoming increasingly difficult for single operators to bear. Another challenge is to keep out malafide tenants. This can be done by professionalising security, creating a uniform, sector-wide image and combining knowledge, so that dishonest customers will rent elsewhere (outside the professional sector). Together with the Dutch Self Storage Association, we are working hard on DEKRA certification, which is the basis for this professionalisation.



If you could go back in time, what tips would you give yourself when you started your self storage journey?

It is difficult to give tips for myself, but better to pass on my experiences or points for improvement from the past to so-called newcomers.

Firefighter and self storage entrepreneur have one thing in common: you are infected by a virus. Once a fireman, always a fireman. Once a self storage entrepreneur, always a self storage entrepreneur, and then (in my case) your social circle and family come second. And I see the same thing happening to many of my colleagues. So my tip is: whatever you do, however many hours you work, however many beautiful plans you manage to work out; don't forget your family and social network. And to the next generation, I would say: learn to speak the language of finance and try to understand it because at the end of the day, self storage is a boring product, which takes on its lustre when you handle it financially in the right way.





Why lock checks and empty unit locks are important

Regular lock checks and placing locks on empty units should be part of your daily routine. If not, then you may not see the impact of crime or customers expanding their storage units on their terms.

Part of the weekly routine of any store manager should be to walk around the store and check the locks on all the units. Some stores even make this a daily exercise. This may seem like a tiresome and somewhat boring task, but it is essential in identifying potential crime and customer misbehaviour, especially if you have after hours access overnight. The nature of self storage is that most customers do not access their unit regularly, some not for months or years. If a unit is broken into then the customer may not be aware of this for some time, after which CCTV footage has been overwritten and there is little chance of catching the perpetrators. If you are doing regular lock checks then you have the opportunity of identifying units that have been tampered with early enough to act on the crime and notify the customer. It is also a good opportunity to check the general maintenance of the store, ensure customers have not damaged corners or walls, left rubbish or goods outside their unit, or otherwise made a nuisance of themselves.

It is also useful if the staff doing the lock check have a list of occupied units to cross check. It is not unusual for customers to decide to expand their storage space by taking an adjacent unit without telling management. In some cases, these customers have even broken the security seals or company locks on empty units and replaced them with their own locks. If the staff member knows which units should be vacant, they can check this while doing their rounds.

Preventing customers taking over empty units is a prime example of why it is important to place company locks or seals on empty units. If a customer sees an open empty unit, then they can be tempted to move their goods in there. Sometimes this is just for a short period while the customer sorts their own unit out, other times it is a more permanent arrangement by opportunist customers. As mentioned above while customers can break a lock or seal on an empty unit, this is a much more positive action from the customer, rather than the opportunist action of opening an unlocked door. Locks and seals also prevent customers from moving into the wrong unit. If their unit

“ In some cases, these customers have even broken the security seals or company locks on empty units and replaced them with their own locks ”

is the only one open, then it is pretty clear which one is theirs. We have had one case where a customer who was allocated a unit, ended up moving into the unit next door, possibly accidentally. Then a few days later the store rented that unit, this customer found a lock on their unit when they arrived so just moved into the unit next door which was unlocked. Neither customer told the store staff of the situation. So now we have customer A in customer B's unit and vice versa. But from a lock check point of view both look occupied. This was not a problem until customer A stopped paying their bill.

They did not respond to correspondence and the store manager cut the lock on the unit and valued the goods for sale. Except of course they were not customer A's goods as customer B was using that unit! Fortunately, in this case customer B turned up to their unit before the goods were actually sold and wanted to know why their unit was overlocked. Had that customer not tried to access their unit during the default process the store most likely would have sold the wrong customer's goods which would have created all sorts of legal issues.

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We are all now aware of the continued damage we are doing to our planet through climate change, destruction to wildlife and ecosystems, and increasing usage and demand for single use non-sustainable products.

Every aspect of life and business has a need and responsibility to make changes wherever possible and the self storage industry is no exception.

Numerous self storage providers are adopting a range of green initiatives designed to reduce their carbon footprint such as solar panels, electric vehicle charging points, and increased building insulation, all of which help towards providing the goal of net zero carbon buildings. This can be further achieved by encouraging clients to make greener, more sustainable choices with the products and services offered within a facility such as packaging materials.

So, what is sustainable packaging?

Put simply it is the sourcing, development and use of materials that have minimal environmental impact and footprint.

This would include FSC, (Forest Stewardship Council) certified cardboard cartons which ensures that the product comes from responsibly managed forests, which continually replant and replace after felling.

Other drivers here are recycled content and recyclability after use of the product. Something to bear in mind here is that a 100% recycled cardboard box is less strong than a virgin Kraft paper carton and will degrade and soften far more rapidly whilst in long term storage. This being the case an outer Kraft skin with a recycled inner is a better option for performance. The carton would be approximately 20% virgin and 80% recycled and the box is 100% recyclable at

end of life for reuse. Another option for sustainable storage is re-useable plastic crates which although being made from plastic, have a high percentage of recycled content and a much greater lifespan than cardboard.



"With the world the way it is it's nice to feel we are making a difference, even if it is a small one. Our Eco Green bubblewrap and the new cardboard packaging (rather than plastic) for padlocks and covers are things that our customers mention to us more often than not and we get great feedback on them".

Jamie Galbraith, GoStore

As well as a product's recyclability it is important to be aware of the ease of recycling. For example, a cardboard carton cannot be processed if it has sealing tape still on the product as this is classified as mixed waste. This has led to an increased demand for Kraft Paper Tape. As well as being a green alternative to traditional polypropylene (PP) or Vinyl (PVC) tapes, paper tape can be left on the carton and the whole item recycled.

SSA UK supplier member, Simpson Packaging, have recently launched a complete range of sustainable, environmentally friendly products driven by current awareness of issues, customer demand and by the lead of other large industry leading self storage providers.

Simple changes to the product offerings are the elimination of single use plastic packaging such as padlocks being sold in recyclable cardboard boxes rather than plastic blister packs, mattress and furniture covers packed in cardboard envelopes instead of plastic bags, and other ancillary products (marker pens, safety knives, tape dispenser etc.) packed similarly.

Even multipacks of boxes, which have been traditionally shrink-wrapped, can be bundled in packs with a single strap to reduce waste.

"We're delighted with the new sustainable packaging range offered by Simpsons. At SureStore we've been working to improve sustainability across our self storage locations, and sustainable packaging plays a vital role in our goals to reduce our carbon footprint and contribute towards a cleaner, more eco-friendly planet".

Maria Ormrod, SureStore

Another notable change is the move towards Green Eco Bio Bubble and Loosefill, which as well as being 100% recyclable, also have a recycled content. This push for recycled content will become law in April 2022 when the UK government introduces the plastic packaging tax (PPT). This will mean all plastic packaging will be required to



contain a minimum of 30% post-consumer waste (recycled materials) or will be subject to a £200.00 per tonne tax. The aim of the plastic tax is to provide an economic incentive to businesses to offer greener products, which in turn should stimulate increased levels of the collection and recycling of plastic waste, thus directing it away from landfill or incineration.

The tax will be applicable to any business that imports into, or manufactures in the UK, plastic packaging exceeding 10 tonnes per annum. Other EU countries are also introducing similar taxes on plastic packaging.

"Our main site is located in a Transition Town and we see ourselves very much as part of our local community so reducing waste and using sustainable goods whenever we can is really important to us. We love the new padlock packaging – no plastic and much easier to use! Our customers love the new Bio bubble wrap and we've found that the paper tape is much better than plastic tape. Not only is it really strong but our customers can recycle their boxes without having to pick bits of tape off first".

Jo Moon, Dartmouth Self Storage

Obviously, the main driver for all these changes is to offer a greener, more environmentally friendly, sustainable product range, and whilst the barrier has historically been the price difference between standard products and green alternatives, the volumes and demand are now significantly increasing, which will eventually achieve a near price parity. At this point, the switch to sustainable packaging is a simple and obvious transaction and allows the products to be ever more accessible to the consumer.



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To blog or not to blog?

When it is time for you to update your website, one of the questions you will be faced with is whether or not to have a blog. The idea of a self storage blog may not seem like something that has wide appeal to the public but there are several ways that a blog can support your branding and marketing efforts. These are the top three ways that you can use blogs to market your self storage business.

Search Engine Rankings

Using your blog to reach good organic search engine rankings is a great place to start. Go through your website analytics to discover all the different keywords that people are typing before landing on your website and write a blog around each of those keywords. Before you do, make sure you read up on the concept of “keyword stuffing”. If you use the chosen keyword too much, search engines will penalize you for it and this is known as keyword stuffing. Instead, write your blog in a natural style that focuses in on one or two search phrases, without going overboard.

Lifestyle Customers

Another great way to use your blog is to attract the attention of lifestyle customers, who may not know all the ways self storage can help them. These are the long-term storage customers we all want to attract, but who are the less obvious target markets, compared to for example people moving home. Whereas you might not kick off a pay-per-click campaign targeting keywords around weddings, divorces, or specific sports and hobbies, you can target these segments and keywords in blogs, making it a much more cost-effective exercise.

Showing Who You Are

You can also use your blog to really showcase your company identity. Do you support a local charity? Sponsor a local football club? Did you arrange an Easter egg hunt for the local school kids, or a pumpkin carving competition at Halloween? Self storage facilities are a breeding ground for good news stories, so use your blog to tell them. Show your existing and future customers what you care about and how you get involved in the local community. Most importantly, show them not just what they can buy from you but who they are buying from!



Offer Value, Then Sell

Whilst your blog can be an important tool in your sales and marketing, it is important to keep in mind that these are pieces that first and foremost need to add value to your customers. So go easy on the overt selling. Focus your blog on giving value and offering advice on topics that your customers may not even have considered. Showcase your expertise and in the process, build trust in your brand and your product. Then, finish it off with a note on how customers can get in touch.

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Storing Vehicles

Sometimes customers want to store vehicles in a storage unit, whether it be a car they are working on or a trailbike when it is not being used. Is this allowed and what are the rules around storing vehicles?

Can customers store vehicles?

Vehicles are not strictly excluded under the Standard Storage Licence Agreement so they can be stored in a unit if a business chooses to allow this. However, some companies will exclude them on business grounds, often due to the issues that can arise from having vehicles in a storage unit as detailed below.

What are the conditions of storing a vehicle?

The vehicle itself is not a prohibited item but the petrol it may contain is. It is recommended that any vehicle stored has its petrol tank emptied and battery disconnected to limit the risk of fire. This is good in theory but hard to police, particularly if the vehicle is being worked on in the unit. For this reason, some businesses prevent people working on vehicles in their unit and allow vehicles purely for the purpose of storage. Disconnecting batteries is also not as simple as it used to be as often this resets the vehicle's computer which can cause issues. Then there is the question of electric vehicles, they obviously don't

have petrol tanks but also you can't easily disconnect the batteries. This applies not just to electric cars but the growing market of electric motorbikes, trail bikes and scooters.

What about insurance?

Insurance is another area you need to consider. Some customer's goods insurance policies exclude vehicles unless they are approved in advance by the insurer. So, the normal customer's goods policy you offer your customers may not apply to vehicles. You should check the details of your policy first. The emergence of electric vehicles in this area also creates some confusion. Is an electric vehicle a motor vehicle and if so, how far down the line does this apply, electric trail bikes, scooters, mountain bikes? Best to get clarity from your insurance provider on this if you are planning to allow vehicles to be stored in your units?

Selling abandoned vehicles

If a customer with a vehicle in their unit stops paying their bill, then you may end up having to sell or dispose of it. If the vehicle is unregistered or unregistrable, then this is not so much of an issue. However, if the vehicle is registered then there is a process you need to complete to have the registration transferred to you before you sell or dispose of the vehicle. There

have also been cases of vehicles in storage that were under finance or lease, where clearly the finance company has first option to claim the vehicle.

In summary

You can have customers store vehicles in a storage unit, but they should be briefed on the conditions the vehicle can be safely left in. You also need clarity on the impact this has on your insurance and the customer's goods insurance you may have for the customer. Be aware that disposing of a vehicle may also be problematic, particularly if it is registered with the licencing authorities.





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What are Omnichannel Sales and what does it mean for Self Storage

Omnichannel is the new buzzword in marketing. It claims to be a new style of marketing, sales, and after-sales, but is it really just returning to old fashioned sales and marketing techniques across the new digital platforms? How will it impact your marketing strategy and what exactly does Omnichannel mean anyway?

What is Omnichannel?

Basically, Omnichannel is the combination of all your marketing channels, particularly digital, into one streamlined approach that the customer can conceivably jump between on their purchase journey. The goal of an omnichannel marketing strategy is to create a convenient, seamless user experience for consumers that offers many opportunities for purchase. As the internet and social media developed businesses used these streams for their marketing and customer engagement, this was the era of multi-channel marketing and sales. But the result was often communication in silos. There was the website, e-mail, phone, and Facebook page, but limited interconnection between them.

Omnichannel marketing takes a consumer-centric view of marketing tactics. Consumers can now interact with brands on innumerable channels, from social media to customer service hotlines. An omnichannel approach ensures that the consumer has a positive, consistent experience on each channel, by offering a few key elements:

- Consistent, identifiable brand tone and vision
- Personalised messaging based on specific interests
- Content that is informed by past interactions and current stage of the buyer's journey

An identifiable brand simplifies brand recognition, while personalisation based on interests and shopping history makes consumers more likely to interact with branded

content across channels.

Thanks to online channels, modern consumers have more options than ever and expect information in real-time. Omnichannel marketing enables them to engage with businesses on their own terms, leading to a better customer experience overall.

How does this impact self storage?

This style of marketing is increasingly being used by major brands and small organisations alike, giving the customer a more streamlined experience. The type of experience more customers are starting to expect from businesses in 2022. Most customers rely on more than one source of information before making a purchase decision. One such scenario is: a customer sees a self storage unit in their area, finds the business through google, visits their website, clarifies questions using online chat, checks reviews on Facebook or Google and then finally makes a booking back on the website. After that, they might check the blog for tips on moving and packing. Online and offline presence influence each other – according to Google, 40% of online searches convert to buyers after being influenced by an offline channel. In other words, by blending your offline and online channels, you can increase your chances of gaining new customers. Your customers are already using multiple channels to make a decision. You should engage with them on as many of them as possible. Your customers have preferred channels, and you have to be there to get their attention, not the other way around.

How to implement Omnichannel

The first thing to consider is that you need to look at all your customer touch points and marketing streams from the customers point of view. And not in isolation as part of their customer journey.

The most basic things are to ensure consistent branding and messaging across all your channels, online and offline. This may sound like common sense, but it is surprising how many businesses do not have consistent messaging across all their online platforms, particularly social media. You can also develop an online strategy that does not align with the branding, colours, staff, and general feel of your in-person offering.

Another item to consider is how are your communication streams linked. Can a customer review your business on Facebook or Google directly from your website? Can they read customer reviews from your website? Do you have social media links on your email footers and website? Do all your social media streams include basic contact information, opening hours and key benefits of your store? Is your website adaptive so it displays equally well on a mobile device as it does on a desktop? Can people book a unit from a mobile device? Can people move between your website and social media pages seamlessly?

An important part of your omnichannel presence that is often overlooked, is your staff. Do your store staff have access to all the past interactions/communications with the customer? Are they using this information, or are they asking the same questions to the customer over again? This is where omnichannel can set you apart from your customers. Some businesses are integrating all their website and social media analytics into their Customer Management System so that when a person contacts the store the staff put their name and

email into the system, and it will quickly show them any activity that person has had with the business online in the past. Even just training staff to ask the customer questions like, have you been on our website to see the features of our business, have you got questions about how we safely secure your goods? Rather than starting a standard sales script explaining details that the customer has already seen on the website.

It's actually nothing new

Omnichannel is not a radical change to marketing, it is taking a common sense, customer centric approach to how you promote your business. It's about communicating a consistent message to prospective and existing clients across all channels. Instead of storing information in silos, all communications: email, web, social media, calls, and face-to-face; flow together to create a more personalised and natural conversation. This is no different to the marketing techniques used 30 years ago, the challenge now is we have so many digital channels to bring into our plan. We also use digital specialists and other consultants that may not have a comprehensive understanding of our business, in-person offering or other digital streams. Another old-fashioned technique is to take a journey in your customer's shoes. Research your business from a customer's point of view. Complete the journey through to booking, including seeking reviews and asking people on social media. How seamless and easy was the process?





Are you underinsured due to rising construction costs?

The cost of construction in self storage escalated significantly in 2021. The cost of steel rose sharply to levels not seen since the GFC in 2008. Timber and other building materials experienced similar rises. Combine this with staff shortages, complications from the pandemic and Brexit and the price of building a new self storage store is the highest it has ever been. Despite this, demand is strong for new stores

and expansions so construction companies remain busy but lead times are extended due to slower supply of materials and availability of installation staff. Planning departments are also dealing with massive pandemic induced backlogs, taking months to deal with new applications. Obviously, this means if you are planning a new build or expansion you need to consider current planning and development timelines

and potential escalating costs. However, this situation also has an impact on existing businesses. Does your current insurance policy cover you for the cost of rebuilding your store now?

Often businesses just roll over their insurance without giving due consideration to how their circumstances have changed during the year. Even if you have not changed your business at all in the past 12 months, the cost of rebuilding it will have increased. You should get your business revalued to determine the true cost of rebuild and factor that into your insurance coverage. One member in the UK did this recently and found that the cost of reconstruction was 50% more than what they were insured for. The whole point of building insurance is to provide assurance that in the worst case scenario, you can rebuild with limited financial loss. Could you afford to cover a shortfall of 10, 20 or 50% of your rebuild costs if you are underinsured?

You should also consider your business interruption insurance. If your site did burn down or suffer some

other catastrophic loss, how long would it take you to clear the site, get planning to rebuild, rebuild, then fill back up to mature occupancy. Bearing in mind it could well be at least a year before you even start

“ You should get your business revalued to determine the true cost of rebuild and factor that into your insurance coverage ”

construction with the current delays in planning. Depending on the size of your store building and then filling up will be several more years. Do you have enough insurance to cover this?

Remember, you are taking this insurance as you don't believe you will have the funds to rebuild your business in the case of a disaster. If you have the funds to do this, you really don't need the insurance. However, if you have a shortfall you cannot cover, you have paid for this insurance, but it will not actually

give you the funds you need to rebuild the business, so while you will get some compensation, you will not have enough to restart your business. This is the last place you want to be, during what will already be an incredibly stressful time.

Take the time now to get your business valued and check your insurance coverage is adequate.

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Interview



Lennert De bruynne
Storo

How did you first get into self storage?

After completing my studies by the end of 2018, my father saw by chance an advertisement about self storage in Antwerp. At that moment we had a mixed-use development project with co-working, retail, etc., in the pipeline and there was still room for self storage. At the same time, we were considering diversifying our real estate portfolio. This combination of circumstances made us decide to go to the trade show in Paris, where I immediately fell in love with the self storage business. We made it our goal to digitalise the self storage business as much as possible from online bookings, online payments, signing the contract on the website to electronic access in the building, backed by a fresh branding. The result is a 100% frictionless online/offline customer experience. We decided to start with two locations in Flanders. Storo was born!

What has been the biggest change in the industry since you started?

At this moment we are planning two new sites for 2022. The rise in material costs in comparison with our past two projects were significant. Hopefully, they decrease as we find our way out of the pandemic. Also projected delivery times are higher than usual. A positive change is that we seem to notice that self storage awareness is rising, since more and more facilities are opening in Flanders, also in smaller cities. People and businesses also see more and more that self storage has a lot of advantages to make their life easier.

What do you like most about the self storage industry?

Everybody in the industry is eager to give each other good advice! I really find this remarkable. Also renting out storage space is a 'simple business', but at the same time, it requires a lot of knowledge if you really want to get good at discovering the tricks of the trade. This goes from marketing, to fitting the buildings properly, improving procedures along the way, price strategies, etc.

What do you like least about the self storage industry?

The uncertainty about exactly how long a customer will stay, as this is always a little bit of guesswork.

What is your favourite book or movie?

My favourite movie is 'Saving Private Ryan'. the camaraderie between the soldiers and working towards one goal excites me every time I see the movie. My favourite book is 'Shoe Dog' from Phil Knight. He is the founder of Nike and tells us the whole story behind the brand. It is wonderful how he managed to go from zero to hero.

If you had a time machine where would you go?

If it goes in reverse, I would like to go to the 70-80's. Superb music, less phones, real conversations. If it goes forward, bring me ten years ahead. I would like to know where we stand with Storo and what my life has brought privately. Hopefully some kids with my beautiful wife.

I think industry associations like FEDESSA are important because?

You stay connected with industry suppliers and competitors to share knowledge, issues and opportunities. On top of that, it creates a framework to maintain and improve industry standards while defending our common interests before authorities and governments.

Right now, I would rather be?

Skiing, my favourite vacation!

What life advice would you give a younger version of yourself?

I just turned 25 and I still have a lot to learn. The advice I would give my younger self is to listen more carefully to other people with more (life) experience.

I'd really like to have dinner with?

Marc Oursin. A chat with the CEO of the largest European operator Shurgard, seems very interesting. Marc, if you read this, please contact me.

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Janus is committed to providing the highest quality products while also protecting the environment. We utilise sustainable manufacturing processes involving materials that are long-lasting and highly recyclable. Our full range of self storage products and services combines the latest technology and materials with customer-centric consultancy and design. Fused with our hallmark creativity and extensive industry knowledge, we are the perfect end-to-end solution for your self storage business and can meet all requirements across Europe.

To find out more about Janus visit: www.januseurope.com

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Self Storage Association
of Australasia