

Did you know that, according to most recent studies, UK tourists spend in the region of £44.8 billion each year abroad and, by a country mile, choose Spain as their primary destination? Also, did you know that, when you factor in associated sub-industries like accommodation and hospitality, the travel industry globally is worth almost £6 trillion per annum? Six. Trillion. Those are some very big numbers and ones that Marc Ive, CEO of Exeter-based aviation ecommerce and technology company Rezcomm, is working hard to grab a healthy slice of.

I recently had the pleasure of meeting Marc for a chat at the Rezcomm offices at Exeter Science Park about his journey in business so far, balancing work and family life and swapping a few travel stories (of both the idyllic and the horrific kind). I found him to be a warm, inviting, confident and envisioned man and came away from our time together feeling inspired and excited to monitor the continued rise of his business.

Indeed, when I arrived to interview Marc, I could see him through the pane of glass in the meeting room door, furiously tapping away on his laptop before the clock ticked around to the allotted time of our interview. When I entered the room, I asked him what he had been working on and, evidently, it had been a pitch deck which he was creating for a new and significant round of investment that Rezcomm has been seeking to aid their next surge of business growth. They are a company on the up and up, that is for sure.

Originally from Hertfordshire, Marc moved to the South Hams as a child in 1987, when his father took early retirement. They had holidayed in South Devon as a family for years and decided that this would be their destination to settle away from London. So, Marc attended Kingsbridge Community College and, upon graduation, knew that he was keen to quickly enter the world of work rather than further education.

Marc commented, ***“I didn’t feel that University was for me really. I just had this drive to get out into the world of work and make some money. So, I went to college and got a job on the side at a local travel agency. I loved travelling, I loved business, so it felt like a pretty logical decision to make.”***

He found that he was naturally gifted in business and enjoyed the travel industry, so he worked hard and qualified as a travel agent, giving him a broad and rounded experience of the travel industry - dealing with airlines, other travel agencies, tour operators and such like. He enjoyed the business side of it so much that he decided to go out on his own and set up his own travel agency at the age of just nineteen!

His energy, vision and passion for business and travel meant that his business – called Quay Travel and based in Kingsbridge – took off quickly (pardon the pun) and he turned over more than £1m in his first year of trading. Marc expanded, ***“It was an amazing time and one that I look back on very fondly. I made all sorts of mistakes and learned a huge amount. It wasn’t all jet-setting and glamour though. It came with its sacrifices, For example, whilst my mates were out clubbing and going to bars, I was at home balancing the books and writing my business plan.”***



MARC IVE

PLANE AWESOME!

Through direct marketing and advertising in national newspapers, Marc turned Quay Travel from start-up to scale-up and, before long, it was a promising offering as a regional travel agency. It was around this time that Marc got to know the MD of Let's Go Travel – what was a fast-growing independent travel agency group at the time – and he told me, ***"I was inspired by their growth, their business model and their ethos. So much so, that I decided that I either needed to accelerate the expansion of my own business or explore the opportunity of jumping on board with the Let's Go Travel group and become a smaller cog in a much bigger wheel."***

And this is exactly what happened, with Marc hopping on board as part of the Senior Management Team of the larger organisation too. Let's Go Travel went on to open up a store in Exeter, amongst a rapid rollout around the UK of fifty stores, with a combined £65m annual turnover and over three hundred staff.

With in-store cafes, video-walls with rolling footage of luxurious destinations and investor Phillip Schofield (still an investor in Rezcomm to this day) as the face of the business, Let's Go Travel was, well, going places! They were taking on the high street 'big boys' and beating them at their own game,

with clever real estate management and geographic location choices meaning they could fight toe-to-toe with some of the largest travel companies in the world.

Through his role at Let's Go Travel, Marc worked extensively with airports, which is where his expertise and experience within aviation really ramped up. Marc explained, ***"Offering a full choice of holidays from our nearest regional airport at the time would've equated to giving bags and bags full of brochures and leaflets to customers when they came instore to enquire about a holiday. This just wasn't possible and also meant that a lot of the information given to consumers simply wasn't of interest or wasn't relevant to them."***

So, with a drive towards customer engagement and offering excellent customer service, Let's Go Travel became the first travel company in the UK to aggregate all of the content into one brochure, meaning that they could supply completely relevant information to customers at any time (for example, all holidays with flights leaving from Exeter Airport in one leaflet).

Let's Go Travel then sold the retail part of their business in order to focus on this part of their business that worked more closely with airports. They originally operated under the name Airport Direct Travel, before becoming Rezcomm in 2014. Rezcomm took this concept one step further by taking all of the aggregated content from this new brochure and digitising it and making it accessible online.

This was the first time that customers had full choice of available holidays – from charter flights, no-frills flights and scheduled flights to package holi-

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days and tailor-made holidays. All in one place. It feels so obvious and second-nature to us now, but it really wasn't that long ago that our research and booking of holidays was done offline, or at least predominantly so.

This launch online saw a huge increase of business for Rezcomm and the airports with whom they partnered saw it as a beneficial environment for them to promote their flying programmes and routes. Now with over twenty-five partner airports around the world, this airport-centric approach to travel agency was evidently one that airports had been crying out for.

Marc supposed, ***"The airports had finally found an agile ecommerce partner to work with who were dedicated to promoting aviation and airport-based travel. As a result, we became a 'preferred supplier' of sorts and airports started to discuss with us their needs to increase non-aviation revenues. In particular, parking represents a huge revenue potential for most airports. So, we started to explore what it would look like for us to build a parking platform for airports to use too."***

This was the next stage in the development of Rezcomm and they successfully designed a platform, delivering it to their first client about six months later. Such



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only the individual airlines that did). With increasing financial pressures on the aviation industry, Rezcomm perceived that airports had an opportunity to capitalise on the data of the people passing through their terminals in a way that they hadn't done before, making them their clients as well as the airlines'. After all, connecting with customers is the bedrock of the sales process.

And so, the Rezcomm Marketplace was birthed – a full ecommerce, analytics and CRM platform which effectively acts as a one stop shop for an airport to sell any product or service within their portfolio to customers who use their facilities. This has placed Rezcomm perfectly for a 'growth gear change' and, consequently, having rolled out across the UK and Europe already, they will soon be accelerating globally, pending significant investment. They will also be looking to launch a US office in a strategic geographical location, in order to facilitate a US rollout in the near future.

Marc commented, *"We have a window of opportunity at the moment where we know that what we offer is unique, we know that there is a market for it, we have sized up that market and are ready to go and chase it down. We have created a 'digital ecosystem' which draws together the historically disparate systems of airports and allows them to manage their data, marketing communications and channel partnership relationships all in one place. The business will be transforming in the next twelve months as we increase our headcount,*

was the success of this launch that it uncovered a much bigger opportunity for airports at large.

It occurred to Marc and the Rezcomm team that passengers were passing through airport terminal buildings but the airports didn't know who they were (it was



# AGRICULTURAL PROPERTY SALES

At Gilbert Stephens Solicitors we have a long tradition of acting for local farmers and landowners.

Clare Trevelyan Thomas, partner at our Crediton office, explains some important steps to take when selling your agricultural property.



Selling part or all of your agricultural property can be stressful, as family and livelihood are often closely connected with any decisions made about the agricultural property.

Firstly, you will need to identify exactly what you are selling. For example, are you selling the whole property including the business? Or only certain plots of land and access rights?

The next step is to appoint a solicitor. It is important for agricultural sales to instruct a solicitor early on and one that has experience in this area, as for each plot of land there is a lot of paperwork to be checked regarding boundaries, ownerships and rights of way etc.

Your solicitor will help you decide if you want a public or a private sale. Some land owners prefer a private sale, though public sales have the potential to reach a larger market, which could increase the sale price. Sale by auction is another possibility, though this is more popular for plots rather than whole farms.

While you are preparing to sell your agricultural land and business, you can carry on farming the land. This minimises disruption to you while you are seeking the right sale and it can be encouraging to buyers to see a working entity.

**If you would like any advice regarding selling or purchasing your agricultural land or property, get in touch with Clare on 01363 775566 or email [property@gilbertstephens.co.uk](mailto:property@gilbertstephens.co.uk).**

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***invest in marketing and open new offices, so watch this space!."***

And with a board including Neil Robson (IT Director and former CTO of a leading global parking operator), Victoria Wallace (Director of Digital and industry-leading mind) and Fiona Maguire (CFO and investment expert who has worked within the tech industry for years), Rezcomm have the dream team who are ready to take the company into the upper echelons of the tech industry.

Not only that, but with scalability into multiple other verticals (Municipalities, Stadia, Education, Retail and Healthcare amongst others), this next growth step is surely the first of many

more to come as Rezcomm travel towards a grand and ambitious future.

The company is set to achieve meaningful scale, with a goal to treble in size from a personnel point of view in the next five years. And, as far as their revenues go, well, the sky is the limit really! With a healthy appetite for the holistic approach that Rezcomm offer (they have been called 'the Amazon of airports'), and with technology which is versatile, advanced and has many potential applications, there really is no reason why they can't become a global success story. And all from the Science Park here in little old Exeter. Yet another example of why Exeter consistently punches above its weight in this David vs Goliath world.

Marc, I hope you and your team enjoy the ride during the next few years of exciting growth. What a journey it is sure to be! 🍀

**Follow @RezcommTech on Twitter to keep track of their exciting journey**