

# Mike Britton Goodwill Solutions

## THE VENTURE:

Goodwill Solutions is a warehousing and logistics solutions company with a mission to put the community at the heart of all that it does. It provides bespoke services to retailers and global furniture manufacturers such as pallet storage and relabeling, and also sources and sells good quality furniture to retailers and individuals.

The revenue stream from the commercial business is utilised to fund Goodwill's social goals, and specifically to run the Back to Work programme for ex-offenders. The aim of Back to Work is to increase employability and provide job opportunities for those who are automatically excluded from the job market because of their criminal record. People are referred from prisons, charities and mental

health organisations onto the programme where they receive 4 weeks of practical skills training in warehouse operations and health and safety, valuable work experience in the industry and support in preparing for the workplace.

Mike Britton, Co-Founder and Director, says 'At Goodwill we make sure that people on the programme are 'part of the team' and not seen as different, we look for people with the right attitude first who want to be trained and developed. We have found that sometimes the social business element can raise suspicions from our commercial clients, but once we've proven that we deliver clients support what we're trying to do.'

## THE IMPACT:

The University of Northampton conducted an evaluation of the Back to Work programme in 2012. 84 people attended the programme in 2011-12 and 189 work placements were

provided (in collaboration with Ingeus employment agency), resulting in 59 long term unemployed people securing paid employment.

## THE ENTREPRENEUR:



**Mike Britton** has a background in retail, logistics and manufacturing, having worked for MFI for many years. He decided that he 'wanted to do something different by the time he turned 50' and became passionate about setting up a business that was financially robust and helped society at the same time. He had a wealth of industry knowledge and experience, and has been learning how to apply this to a third sector context.

*'Through support from the Big Venture Challenge I have started to learn to speak the third sector language,' he says. 'Coming from a commercial business background I was not familiar with some of the terminology, this learning has been crucial for us in securing social investment.'*

## LEGAL STATUS

Community Interest Company

## FOUNDED

2008 / Mike Britton and Graham Tomkins

## WHY?

The Ministry of Justice report that 26% of people released from prison go on to re-offend within 12 months of release. By rendering services through the Back to Work programme Goodwill Solutions contribute towards breaking the chain of offending and re-offending. Back to Work trains ex-offenders and provides employment opportunities at Goodwill and in the wider logistics industry.

## KEY STATISTICS:

**Total number of employees:**



**Last 12 months turnover:**



**Total co-investment attracted:**



**36 PARTICIPANTS ON THE BACK TO WORK PROGRAMME IN 2013**



**189** with 59 people going on to secure paid employment  
**WORK PLACEMENTS GOODWILL HAS PROVIDED DURING 2012-2013**

## BIG VENTURE CHALLENGE CASE STUDY

# Mike Britton / Goodwill Solutions

### THE JOURNEY:

Goodwill Solutions launched its first warehouse in Northampton in June 2008, initially finding 'affordable furniture' for charitable organisations that couldn't afford products through retail routes. Their work developed into providing storage solutions and they landed significant projects with retailers such as B&Q and overseas manufacturers to house their supplies of furniture products.

In 2010 the Back to Work programme was created to allow for ex-offenders and recovering addicts to be trained up for work in the logistics industry, by gaining experience working alongside permanent members of the team in a 'real work' situation. Support from the University of Northampton in 2009 helped the Goodwill site to be used more widely as 'a social enterprise hatchery' – a place where ideas could be shaped, and in 2011 the Univer-

sity invested a 20% stake in the company and helped to grow the next stage of the business.

Goodwill was recognized for its commercial service in 2010 when they won a key contract with Asda and the company has continued to successfully increase its client base. In 2013 they became an UnLtd Award Winner on the Big Venture Challenge and secured investment of £250,000 from Big Issue Invest and CAF Venturesome with £100,000 match-funding from UnLtd in October.

It has been a busy year for Goodwill; moving from a £500,000 to almost £4 million turnover, changing premises, putting in new IT systems and expanding their workforce from 11 staff to 28. Despite challenges with the speed of the investment process, Goodwill Solutions are now in a strong position to stabilize their rapid growth and strengthen their infrastructure as they move forwards.

### THE FUTURE:

In the short term Goodwill are continuing to look for further business with existing retailers and are in conversations with potential customers. They are also developing their board and looking to add another Non-executive director with industry expertise. Mike's vision

for the future is for Goodwill to be a leading training academy to help equip ex-offenders with the skills needed to find employment and to make significant social impact through their work.

### UNLTD'S SUPPORT APPROACH:

The Big Venture Challenge has been important for providing individual support to Mike in navigating social investment by improving their access and networks with investors.

#### FINANCIAL SUPPORT:

Received £125,000 investment from Big Issue Invest and £125,000 pari-passu investment from CAF Venturesome, with £100,000 match funding from UnLtd

#### NON-FINANCIAL SUPPORT:

- Legal assistance and key support from ClearlySo in securing the investment deal
- Accessed pro bono support from solicitors to review the organisation
- Introductions to investors and potential board members

### KEY MILESTONES:



### MIKE SAYS:

'The Big Venture Challenge has made us people that investors want to work with. We have been able to short circuit the hunt for investors and speak directly to the right people in the organisation. This has been significant.'