



SUMMARY

Company **Shiply**

Country **United Kingdom**

Founder & CEO **Robert Matthams**

Postcode Lottery

Green Challenge **Runner-up 2009, won 200,000 euros**

What **Matches people needing to move goods with transport companies going there anyway.**

How **Over 25% of lorries run completely empty of cargo and over 50% run only part-full. By enabling consumers and businesses to make use of this spare capacity, Shiply dramatically cuts down on CO2 emissions, increases the profitability of transport companies and saves the consumer up to 75%.**

Founded in **2008**

Employees **Not-disclosed**

Founders wisdom **"Do your homework. Become an expert on your partners and competitors in the industry."**

EMPTY TRUCKS? THAT'S JUST SILLY

Shiply | Robert Matthams

In his student days at the University of Manchester – “back when I still had spare time” – Robert Matthams ordered a pool table. While chatting with the delivery man he was introduced to the term “empty running”. Trucks full of packages leave their stations in the morning and return empty at night. The empty return is called “empty running” and is a common and costly phenomenon in the shipping industry.

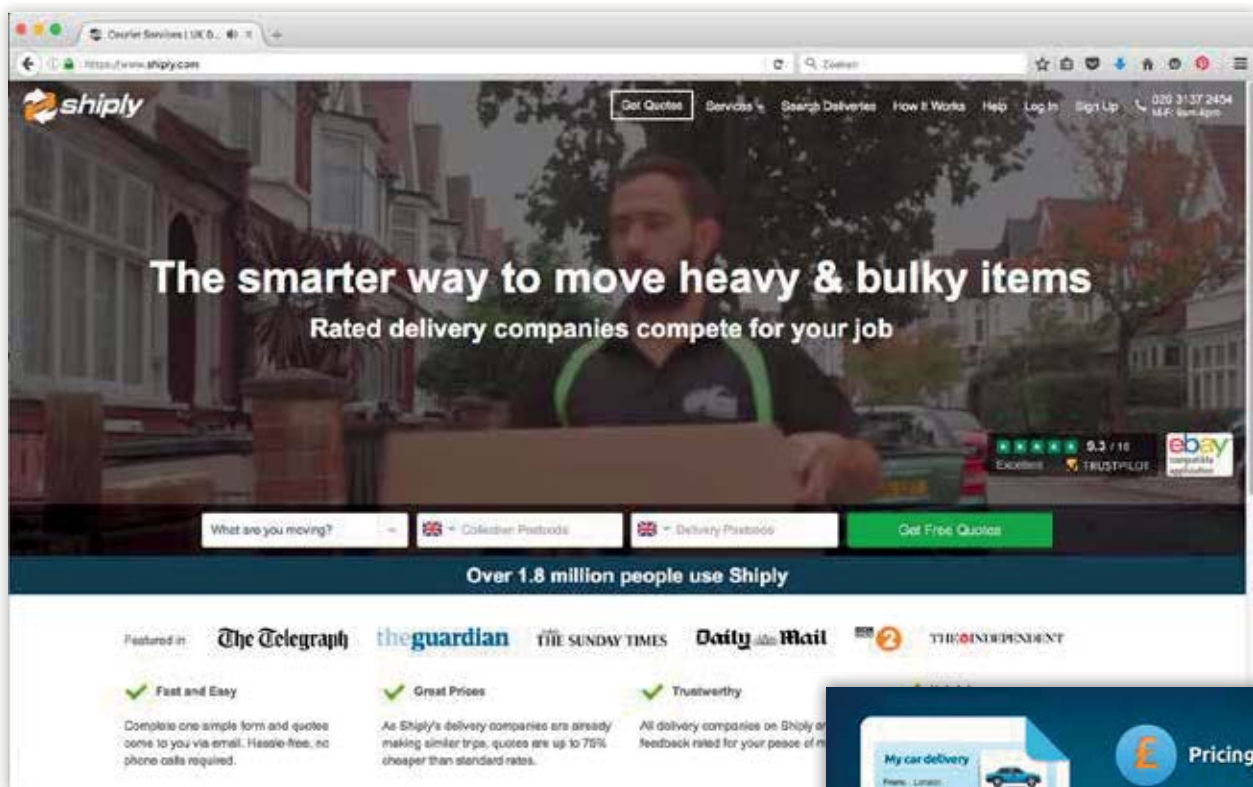
“Empty running”

This encounter planted the seed for Shiply, which Matthams founded in 2008. The idea was to diminish the number of empty runs and, as such, make the shipping industry more efficient and sustainable. Matthams didn't know much about programming and had to buy books so he could build the first version of Shiply's platform himself. “Financially, the first year was very challenging. Low rent was a lifesaver,” says Matthams.

Shiply's platform allows people to list items they need shipped and then lets shipping companies bid on those shipments. In doing so, Shiply decreases CO2 emissions (due to fewer trips made), increases revenues for shipping companies and saves up to 75% of regular shipping rates for consumers.

Shiply was founded in 2008, a difficult time for shipping companies with high fuel prices and an economy plummeting into recession. “Some of those companies told us later on that the extra revenues they were getting via Shiply were crucial in getting them through tough times,” Matthams remembers.

“For us, the beginning was difficult too,” he explains, “and actually it's still difficult at times. We were the first platform like this in Europe when we started, but since then competitors have popped up. Customer awareness is our biggest on-going battle. We don't have the resources to do big marketing campaigns, so reaching new customers while remaining competitive is challenging.”



“The expert views and the network we built and continue to have access to have been priceless.”

Matthams keeps his cards close to his chest when asked about his business and marketing strategy, but he does reveal “you have to stay close to your customer.” At one point in time, they were “guilty of adding too many layers between management and the customers,” says Matthams. “The worst advice we ever got was from a venture capitalist who thought only in terms of profitability and forgot about the interests of the customer.”

Global deliveries

Shiplify operates worldwide and has about 1.8 million users. Every 20 seconds, an item is listed for shipping. “As we scale, it becomes more complex,” says Matthams “there are more elements to think about and we can’t be quite as agile anymore. Every country is actually a new start-up altogether.” Matthams estimates their impact since 2008 to amount to 26,000 tonnes of CO2 reduction, which

is equal to driving around the world more than 3600 times. For now, Shiplify is focusing on Western Europe, but they’ll go further overseas in due time.

In 2009, Shiplify was the runner-up in the Postcode Lottery Green Challenge competition, which provided a very welcome (and crucial) financial injection of 200,000 euro, as well as giving them the media attention they desperately needed. The prize money allowed them to scale up, mostly to Germany, France and Spain and the global media platform allowed their international expansion to be fruitful. Matthams remembers the Postcode Lottery Green Challenge fondly, “that week away from our daily business gave us a bird-eye-view of our business model that otherwise would have been quite difficult to obtain. The expert views and the network we built and continue to have access to have been priceless.”