



CASE STUDY

COTSWOLD
COMPANY

The Cotswold Company In partnership with Van Monkey

Van Monkey is a fleet and finance provider for businesses across the UK. Van Monkey provide and maintain fleet vehicles for The Cotswold Company. Carl Smith, Managing Director of Van Monkey, has a wealth of knowledge in the fleet vehicle sector after more than 15 years of experience.

The work between Van Monkey and the Cotswold Company began when Emma Houghton was tasked with putting together a dedicated fleet for deliveries in 2017.

Emma was searching for a fleet provider to fulfill the needs of the company, but she wanted to be sure the business she would be working with would not just treat the operation as a simple transactional process. After a recommendation from the transport team of fragile goods haulage specialists PDS, Emma contacted Carl Smith at Van Monkey.

Carl provided the contact information of current clients so Emma could check out the reviews first-hand. Emma said, **“Recommendations are everything. It was a seamless and friendly service from a local and knowledgeable team. Carl has a long history in this business which really helps.”**

For both companies to have matching values and authenticity to their communication and approach is important. That is why it was integral for both companies to have conversations and build a relationship that can last. This was confirmed by Emma, **“The business relationship we have between The Cotswold Company and Van Monkey is a relationship built to last.”** That is something that a professional but personal approach provides.

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Van Monkey has supplied The Cotswold Company with the vans they have needed to build their dedicated home delivery fleet from five to sixteen vans. But the recent addition of VM Vehicle Maintenance has been a key step for the business relationship too.

The rapport that Emma's Assistant Manager Lee has with the Director of VM Vehicle Maintenance, Adam Smith, has been a vital part of the work they have done together and the trust that Emma and her team have in Van Monkey.

Emma said, "I know that Van Monkey will do what we need, and they will deliver on what they have promised. They never over-commit and never let us down. We always try to be authentic and that's what we want from our business relationships too."

As the fleet that Emma manages grows, it is important that the business relationship remains as it did from the start and, like any strong relationship, is built on trust and honesty. That is why Emma was confident to say, "If ever I need anything, Van Monkey is always my first port of call."





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COMPANY PROFILE

Interview with Transport Manager - Emma Houghton

The Cotswold Company is a well-known furniture brand that was put together 25 years ago in the idyllic Cotswold town of Bourton-on-the-Water. The company has grown and their headquarters are now in Norwich with their flagship store in the nearby town of Stow-on-the-Wold but they have other premises throughout the UK and have expanded with conviction each year.

Part of this expansion process was with the introduction of their own in-house fleet of delivery vehicles which could ensure a Cotswold Company quality guarantee right to your door. This move required a new Transport Manager for the new venture. Emma Houghton became just that in 2017 and took to the task with both hands on the wheel.

To begin with, the Cotswold Company fleet consisted of five vehicles but has quickly grown to sixteen. Their vehicles are black and have the Cotswold Company logo emblazoned in white on the side of their vans making them stand out in a classy way.

Emma said, **“It’s a moving advertisement for us so it has a double benefit. We can provide a great service as well as advertising the business.”**

As the majority of the furniture orders are made online via the website, it means that the first human-to-human contact with the company is with the delivery team. The delivery role must be considered a customer service role too and Emma was keen to explain how important the level of customer service was to the company.

“We want people to say, ‘it was a great customer service experience delivered by knowledgeable and friendly people’ and we want to be known for being reliable, on time and cheerful.”





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The furniture and accessories that The Cotswold Company have on offer are priced at premium levels and this is recognised as an investment on the customer's behalf when they are making their home.

Emma said, "We want the furniture to last a lifetime and I want the customer service on delivery to last as long as the furniture does." This is to make sure The Cotswold Company is a one-stop-shop for the homes of customers and will encourage those who have bought a dining room table, to buy bedroom furniture because of their positive experience with the company.

Since the introduction of their own fleet of vehicles, Cotswold Company have seen their scores on review websites improve- which Emma puts down to the company's ethos and control they can have right to their customer's door. The aim for this time next year is to be delivering half of all their orders themselves and to have a fleet that is around double the size of the one they have now. This will include trailers and 7.5 tonne vehicles too.

Like many modern companies, The Cotswold Company is looking at the growing trend of last-mile delivery. This works by having a network of warehouses that services a smaller area for more efficient and environmentally friendly vehicles to deliver from. By housing potential furniture orders in these warehouses, the network of deliveries will expand but it will also allow the company to think environmentally about their emissions. Although there are not many options available at the moment to suit the needs of the company in the electric vehicle world, Emma will be looking into ways in which they can incorporate the technology in the fleet she manages. The main area for this will of course be inner-city deliveries but the sustainability plan lies in attitude as well as technology.

The core values of the company come packaged in five ideals: Being happiest together in a united ambition; Always being authentic in action and communication; Having a passion for progress and loving what they do; Inspiring fellow colleagues and customers; And constantly caring for the wellbeing of both colleague and customer. For Emma, these have amounted to a happy and healthy working environment, "I've enjoyed every day of my time here. People have told me about days they dread going into wherever they work, and they sit on their car park- not wanting to go in. But I have never felt that. I work hard and it can be stressful as a Transport Manager at times, but I can't wait to get started every morning."





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An effortless way to see how a company will care for potential customers, is to examine how the company treats employees. During the Covid-19 pandemic, it was immediately demonstrated which companies cared for their workers and which went into panic mode. Unprecedented times they may have been but masks, gloves and protective equipment were provided to The Cotswold Company employees so they could be safe in their working environment. Emma said, "I think we handled it really well- especially for something that no-one knew how to handle."

The way in which the company has almost tripled in size after the pandemic can be attributed to a bumper-time for the company. The Cotswold Company have beaten sales records month after month and their sales have not seen a dip since. As a lot of the population were forced to sit at home and potentially cancel holidays, there was a vested interest in home improvement. When restrictions were lessened and lifted, we wanted to welcome loved ones back into our homes and entertain. There was a role for the Cotswold Company there too, as they could provide furniture to impress friends and family when they came over.

The future for the Cotswold Company is about developing on the base that they already have. The expansion of their dedicated fleet will allow the company to make sure they bolster their company values and friendly customer service from the warehouse, right to assembling a coffee table in a customer's living room.



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