

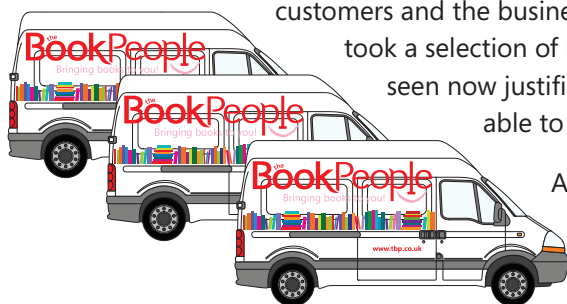
The Bertrams / The Independent Bookseller of the Year



Julian Bevans Independent Bookseller

History

Julian Bevans' independent bookselling business has been in his family for 20 years. Started by his father in 1988, Julian joined the family business straight after finishing University in 1994. Within four years they had doubled the number of customers and the business started to take off. The business originally started with one van that took a selection of books to businesses in the Staffordshire area and the growth they have seen now justifies three vans and three members of staff. Two years ago Julian's father was able to retire and hand the running of his business over to Julian and his wife.



As a local independent bookseller Julian can offer people in a variety of workplaces the chance to browse and buy a targeted selection of approximately 16 books on a monthly basis, with great savings and no obligation to buy.

Julian visits over 2,000 places of work every five to six weeks and reaches all types of customers from the avid reader to those that are unlikely to go to a bookshop. He regularly calls upon cake shops, nursing homes, pubs, health centres, vets, PCT Headquarters, estate agents, hairdressers, banks, chemists, dental practices, garden centres, schools, hospitals, pre-school nurseries, toddler groups, the Police Traffic Department and a prison. In all of these calls he encounters busy working mums and dads who welcome the distraction that an enticing selection of books brings and who are all glad of the opportunity to buy a book on impulse.

Over the course of the last year Julian has added over 50 new calls to his territory, expanding his reach further out into the community and increasing the number of readers in the Staffordshire area. Julian regularly approaches new businesses to call on and his professional and friendly manner is equally as appealing as the attractive product offers. He also explains the process of the business in a clear way and offers incentives to new customers.

Knowing the customer

The key to Julian's success has been not only providing a smooth-running, professional service but also having a positive, friendly approach that means he develops a good relationship with all of his customers. Knowing his customers so well means that he can offer them a targeted selection of books and make specific recommendations. He will go out of his way to speak to customers he knows will enjoy a particular book in his selection.

The targeted selections can be incredibly specific for example Julian has sold over 2,000 copies of *Haunted Shrewsbury* written by the town crier! He has also sold thousands of copies of the *Staffordshire Street Atlas* – some of which were sold to the Police Traffic Department and the Highways Department.

Julian's customers are loyal to him because they trust his knowledge, selection, regular service, product quality and the community appreciates the fact that he and his family have been calling on many of them for 20 years.



It is this loyalty and enthusiasm for Julian and his family that has led to new business through word of mouth recommendations. In the last year, at least five out of the 50 new calls came through customer recommendations. His sign written van means that he is recognised wherever he goes and many people approach him when he's parked on the street whether it's to ask him about product or just to stop and say hello.

Charitable donations

Julian calls at five different hospitals and is able to make significant donations. Three of the hospitals are given 10% of sales in the form of a cheque made out to the League of Friends Charity or the Hospital Fund which goes towards new equipment for the hospital. The other two hospitals receive 10% of sales in the form of free books. So over the last year Julian's business has donated over £5,000 to the five hospitals in the area.

Schools also benefit from the free books scheme and many can maintain their libraries through the free books that Julian gives them.

Commitment

On 23rd December 2007, Julian was recovering from a hospital stay when he received a call from his contact at the local prison. Being a rather forceful lady, the customer insisted that Julian deliver her books before Christmas. Julian dragged himself out of bed and delivered 300 books to the prison. On seeing the poorly bookseller, the customer apologised and immediately sat him down, gave him a cup of tea and turned the electric fire on. She has been one of his most loyal customers ever since.

Julian is committed to giving his customers the best possible service. Not only does he go the extra mile to make sure customers receive their books when they need them but he carefully plans the routes and calls that he makes throughout his territory and this is paramount to the success of his business.

Financials

Julian turned over £661,000 last year, an increase of 13% year on year.

Julian regularly encounters the same pressures as other independent booksellers in his area and he is certainly aware of the increased competition from both the internet and supermarkets. However he is determined to offer his customers a personal, targeted, friendly, convenient and value-for-money service and he looks forward to one day, handing his business on to a third generation of Bevans.

