



I've a keen interest in triathlons which gives me something to focus on outside of work. It takes discipline and 10-12 hours a week committed training. I've represented GBR for my age group at the last two World Triathlon Championships, and at this year's European Championships in Lisbon. ♦

ANY HOBBIES?

I used to do the two-hour commute into London and now take eight minutes to reach my desk. I don't just prioritise my own work/life balance but that of all my team and I try to ensure they all finish on time and leave at 5.30pm.

HOW IS YOUR WORK/LIFE BALANCE?

Everyone is equal. We just fulfil different roles and it needs to have different job titles, from managers to carpenters, but everyone's role in the business is equally important. We may all

BEING A GOOD BOSS

Never give up. It is not easy to start a business and there will be good times, but also very difficult times. You must believe fully in the company and your team and keep on being persistent.

BEST BUSINESS ADVICE?

A downward revaluation of the pound will make our imports more expensive and inevitably lead to price rises. Our customers tend to be at the premium end of the market and are generally less affected by a downturn.

WHAT ABOUT BREXIT?

We supply products across Europe and import significant volumes from the USA. We have a German employee who travels regularly to our customers in Europe and who could be directly affected. A downward revaluation of the pound will make our imports more expensive and inevitably lead to price rises. Our customers tend to be at the premium end of the market and are generally less affected by a downturn.

ANY PLANS FOR EXPANSION?

We are now located in Seven Mile Lane near West Malling, where we have a workshop, office and showroom with a mezzanine for our garden buildings and outdoor kitchens. We've also grown from a team of one to 15 with further recruitment planned. Our most recent development is a new landscaping division so we can offer a complete garden transformation service alongside our garden buildings. Our business growth has been good and last year we grew by 20 per cent. We are aiming for a similar growth this year.



Find out more

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Meeting my wife Vanessa was where the link to South Africa began. She comes from Cape Town and we got married there in 2003. We did lots of trips to see her family and it was during one of these trips that the idea for The Lapa Company was born.

TELL US ABOUT LAPA

No one in the UK was offering a genuine hand-crafted South African Lapa and I knew that I could develop this unique build-ing over here. My office was the small box bedroom and as the business started I built two dem-onstration buildings in our back-garden and created a website. It soon became clear that I could generate additional income through selling the timber poles I was importing, and as the business developed and changed shape, so our product range and brands have evolved.

TELL US A BIT ABOUT YOU

I moved to Kent in 1993 when I started working at Brands Hatch as a corporate sales executive. Four years later, aged 29, I was made group sales director, with responsibility for the revenue of four motor racing circuits, a chain of karting venues and the commercial rights to the UK's most prestigious race series. I left in 2001 to become the business development director for Red Letter Days, where I grew the business from £5m to £18m turnover in three years. During this period I met my wife Vanessa and we moved to Kings Hill where we still live with our young family; at this stage of our lives it's a great place for us all. The facilities and schools are excellent and Kent itself continues to thrive.

The director of The Lapa Company on triathlons, Kings Hill and being inspired by Africa. Compiled by: Sarah Sturt. Pictures by: Manu Palomeque

CRAIG ORMISTON

MEET THE MD: