

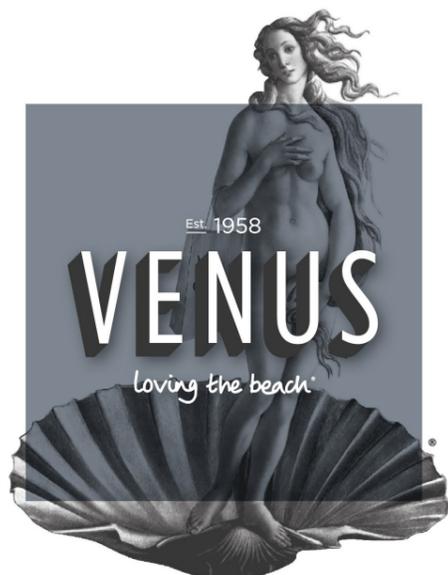
PEPLOWS CLIENT STORIES



PEPLOWS
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS

Louisa and Michael Smith are a food & drink client of Peplows. They have run the Venus company since 1995 and opened their first site in the same location as Louisa's mother had run the successful "Venus tea hut" in the 1950s. The Venus company has been a client of Peplows almost from the very start of their business, so the Peplows team sat down with Michael Smith to produce their "Client Story." It will share with you the environmental movement they have been at the forefront of since opening their doors.

Venus Company: "Take Nothing But Photos, Leave Nothing But Footprints!"



The Venus logo.



Beautiful view at one of The Venus Companies locations, Blackpool Sands.

Tell us about the Venus company and how the idea first came together?

In 1994, the site of Louisa's mum's previous café became available to buy. We realised that in terms of cafes and shops at beaches the supply didn't match the demand. The problem with British beaches is the quality of what is on the beach, not the beach itself and so we set up the first Venus café on Blackpool Sands. Due to my experience in the food and drink sector I understood the impact the sector was having on our environment so from there, myself and Louisa both wanted to carry on her family's legacy as well as doing our bit for the environment. Everyone says that it's a cliché that we weren't in it for the money when we bought the site, but it's true in our case. We firmly believe that when you come to the beach you should "take nothing but photos and leave nothing but footprints".

Do you have a favourite location that the Venus company operates in, and why?

I would be lying if I sat here and said to you I have a favourite. In terms of meaning and memories to our company the Blackpool Sands site is Louisa's family beach, it's where her parents raised her so between us, if we had to say one, it would be there. However, each location is unique and has its own perks. This is shown by the people who come to the cafes and the products that they desire. For example, our site at Watergate Bay has a significant number of tourists from the Midlands area whereas the East Portlemouth site has a lot of yachters and local affluent people are our main customer.



Stunning clear water and gorgeous backdrop at the Blackpool Sands Venus site.

From what I have observed you seem to be way ahead of the standard procedures in your sector in terms of environmental measures, can you explain some examples of this?

I came across paper straws when I was in Australia for the Olympics, so as soon as I returned, I ordered paper straws for use in our cafes. However, this wasn't last year this was 2000! This really highlights that the big corporations need to do better and that they can, but choose not to because of the cost implication. We had a picture of straws in Turtles' noses and mouths, like the ones you see on TV today, at our cafes almost ten

years ago to explain why we don't use plastic straws, but very few cared. Moreover, when Venus started using different bins for recycling it just confused customers. They didn't understand why we were separating all the waste because when we started it there was no appreciation for the problems it was causing. In order to continue striving to be friendlier to the environment we must look at every aspect of the supply chain. We have had to ask manufactures before why they don't sell this product or why they have stopped using it. The best example is compostable linings on cups. We went to a supplier and they said to us that it wasn't available, but we knew it was and that they were choosing not to supply it. Now, manufacturers are producing eco-friendly materials but only because there is the demand for them!

What is the best part about owning the Venus company?

In terms of us being able to be our own boss that is always rewarding. It allows us to be in charge of our own journey, to create our own menus and to continue striving to find more environmentally friendly methods and techniques in everything that we do. On a personal level we have managed to optimise the business so that we can employ 30 full time employees who share our vision of wanting to be the greenest café / shop in the world. This is because when we started the business, we wanted to be the greenest in the UK. Also, in 1995 when we started, every business on the beach closed in September but now we are able to be part of the community for the whole year, available 365 days to our customers and the locals.



Delicious, fresh, locally sourced Sardines as sold at a Venus Café.

How have you personally benefited from our services and how well do you feel we have adapted to changes and growth in your business?

Mike Young and the Peplows team have experience and expertise from so many different sectors. This means as the Venus company has expanded to offering different services on top of the food & drink, Mike has been able to give me expert advice from himself and the vast network of contacts that he has. On the other hand, Peplows doesn't dictate what decisions I make, they simply advise me on both the positive and negative implications of the alternatives that he suggests. This therefore means I can make an informed and planned decision. Furthermore, Peplows are pro-active. Like we do with our products and tastings Peplows explore every avenue of our business which ensures I pay as little tax as possible and can maximise my wealth.

What is the best bit of advice you have ever had from Peplows?

As I have been with Peplows so long, the consistency of a good service, tax advice alongside Mike Youngs' specific expertise in the food and drink sector means that I have always had great advice. The best advice that Peplows have made that has generated me the most money and has helped improve the business in the long run is the unique company structure they have set up. As I have some experience with accounting, I explained to Mike what we wanted to achieve and Peplows were able to develop the best solution for us. Moreover, as we are striving to keep

improving, we are really involved with the numbers and want to analyse every aspect of our business to make it more efficient and more profitable. Mike Young is great for that as he knows the business as well as we do and is passionate himself in trying to help us grow. As a result of improving the numbers, we can maintain the price level for our customers whilst behind the scenes we work hard to continue reducing the footprint of the company. After all, we are only focusing on being more efficient and thus paying less tax so that we can be environmentally friendly and remain competitive in an industry which has shifted towards being price orientated rather than quality.



Left: Customer favourite Lemon Cake. Above: The Venus trademark slogan.

Where does 'loving the beach' originate from and how has it been so successful for you?

Loving the beach emanated from our environmental awareness and having a passion for looking after the beach, the business came second as a platform to do this and raise awareness in the meantime. Due to the word Venus not being easily identifiable as a beach café, we then wanted something to add to our brand. Eight years ago, we managed to trademark "loving the beach" to which even we were a little surprised due to it being a fairly unspecific phrase. This has worked even better with Venus ever since and has helped raise the brand awareness and what we are all about- "loving the beach". The brand is now completed with a trademark of the Venus lady as the business wanted to remain feminine and pay tribute to Louisa's mum's original business. These Three aspects have allowed the brand to grow and is part of the reason we now have 5 sites across Devon and Cornwall.

Name one thing as a start up in your sector that you think a) they must do, and, b) is crucial to be wary of?

Luckily at Venus, we have a committed team of employees who all share our ideas of looking after our planet. Even the young teenagers we take on for summer jobs are enthusiastic about doing their part. However, generally in the food and drink sector it is very difficult to recruit and retain staff. This is often as it's not seen as desirable and is seen as a stop gap job. So, ensuring you have a committed team of staff is something you must do. But, why wouldn't you want to work on the beach serving great food and enjoying the surroundings we are blessed with?

On the contrary, something to be wary of is people who enter the industry as business owners often don't realise the extent of the seasonality in this business. As we survived the early years we have since been able to extend our opening periods. This is largely due to benefiting from economies of scale and keeping costs down but if you're a start up in the industry you need to ensure your cash flow is excellent else you would struggle to survive.

Where do you hope to see the Venus company in 10 years?

In terms of the business, Louisa and I have two children in the business as well as a few long serving senior managers. We are planning for the future and the structure that Peplows have helped set up ensures that this transition will be efficient and as easy as possible. On top of that, it allows us to be a part of the brand and mission of the company without having to work for the limited company, which for us is the best of both worlds. Before we retire though, Venus will be adding another site in Torquay. This is a slightly different location to all the others, but the footfall is incredibly high and the views are also stunning! For Louisa and I personally, once we retire the mission of caring for the environment carries on as we never stop learning how to preserve our natural environment.



The grass fed, locally sourced beef burger– Michaels' favourite item.



Amazing view at the Bigbury on Sea Venus location.

Why would you recommend Peplows to individuals or businesses in your sector?

In my mind, Peplows are amazing accountants for three main reasons. The first is that they are proactive meaning they actively help me to pay less tax and give me alternative options with varying pros and cons to allow me to make informed decisions. Secondly, Mike Young is the one point of contact for everything. He is always there to answer a quick question and fully understands the needs of the limited company, the partnership and my personal finances meaning he can efficiently answer and advise us. Finally, and most importantly to me is that Peplows, particularly Mike and Graham Rooke, are good friends of mine. We have a genuine personal relationship meaning that our professional relationship is warm so we can trust one another and there aren't any surprise changes when Mike comes to visit every month. Then, when it comes to the end of our tax year, I don't have any unwanted surprises either.

Mike and his team are experts in the food, drink and leisure sector so if you want the potential opportunity to save thousands with a proactive team and efficient company structure like the Venus company give

Peplows a call on

01626 208802 or 01392 223930 or visit our website at www.peplows.co.uk



Peplows Chartered Accountants



@peplows_uk



Peplows Chartered Accountants