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EURONICS WINTER PR CAMPAIGN: THE EXTRA MILE

THE PANASONIC STORE, INVERNESS

'WE'LL DELIVER ANYWHERE IF WE HAVE WHAT THE CUSTOMER WANTS, AND WE CAN OFFER THEM THE SERVICE THEY NEED'

No delivery is too extreme for Scottish Euronics agent, the Panasonic Store Inverness. Whether it's transporting a TV by boat to a remote cottage or using a local farmer's tractor to carry electrical goods to a customer in the snowy Highlands, it's all in a day's work for owner, Michael Freeman.

Euronics retailers always go the extra mile for their customers, but in the case of the Panasonic Store in the Scottish city of Inverness it's literally true – on the day that we speak to owner, Michael Freeman, he's travelling two and a half hours north of his store to deliver a fridge-freezer and a TV – it's a 300-mile round trip.

"Our stomping ground is a 40-to-50-mile radius of Inverness, but the Highlands covers 17,000 square miles and is so sparsely populated – in that part of the world there are no electrical stores, so we'll quite often get a call," he says, speaking from a layby on the A9, where he's parked his company van.

Call of duty

His recent trip to the far north of Scotland isn't the first time Michael's gone above and beyond the call of duty for a customer.

"In the Highlands, you've got several things against you – like access and the weather. In the winter, we always have our van equipped with snow tyres – we once had to transfer our goods on to a local farmer's tractor to get them to a customer's house," he says.

"We'll deliver anywhere if we have what the customer wants, and we can offer them the service they need."

A few years ago, he and a colleague had to deliver a TV to a client who lived in a remote cottage on the west coast of Scotland – the catch was that it involved taking a boat for part of the journey.

“The customer was a famous yachtsman called John Ridgway – [in 1966] he sailed across the North Atlantic with Chay Blyth in an open-top rowing boat,” says Michael.

“He’s also ex-SAS. We struck up a relationship from the very first moment he came into our shop – he’s quite a character. He told us about how we would have to get to his house – his property is landlocked. It’s an hour and a half walk across open hillside – it’s very impractical, especially with a TV and tools!”

Access

He adds: “The normal way to access his house is by boat, so we drove an hour and a half from Inverness to the west coast, to where he was waiting for us, with his boat, which had an outboard motor. We loaded everything into it – the boat felt quite big until we got out into the open water and then suddenly, we felt quite vulnerable. We had all our kit – a TV, tools, cables.... Once we docked, we had to drag everything up a 100–200-foot hill, on open heather, with no steps or handrails. We eventually got there... It was an amazing adventure.”

Was John happy with the TV? “He was. To this day, he’s still a really good customer. We’re actually planning a trip back out there soon,” says Michael.

Anniversary

Last year, the Panasonic Store Inverness celebrated its twentieth anniversary.

The shop opened in December 2001, as a shop@Panasonic store – the first of its kind in Scotland.

In those days, Michael managed the city centre shop for its owner, Graham Begg, who also had several multi-brand Euronics stores in the north of Scotland.

“We’re slightly off the beaten track, but we are classified as a city centre store – we’re in the old town,” says Michael. “Twenty years ago, it wasn’t the best of places, but, in the past five years, there’s been massive investment in and around the area, so we’ve ended up in a really lovely part of Inverness – it looks fresh and new.”

Rebranded

In 2009, the store rebranded as a Panasonic Store, although it now sells other brands following its decision to join the Euronics buying group three years ago to move into selling white goods from various suppliers.

“We’re going through a transitional phase – Covid has affected things over the past 18 months – but two thirds of our store remains Panasonic, and we’ve split the rest up,” explains Michael.

“We still have an ongoing relationship with Panasonic, which is very strong.—We’ve always been looking at ways in which to give the customer a bit more than just a television, so we’ve taken the plunge. Euronics was the natural progression for my business, so we joined in May 2019.”

Appliance

The shop now sells home appliance brands including Bosch, Neff and Siemens, Blomberg, Rangemaster and Smeg.

“We’ve gone from being 100% brown goods – we’re still growing our Panasonic business – to white goods accounting for 20% of our turnover. It’s substantial and that’s come out of nowhere,” says Michael.

“We’re making people aware that we’re now a Euronics agent. Lots of people know Euronics, and the infrastructure that it has in place is quite incredible – there’s a new warehouse that’s something to behold and we’re able to buy the right products at the right prices. There’s also the ability to have three deliveries a week to Inverness.”