

PRESS RELEASE:

From South Africa to the World and back: International Removal Trends

Words: 800

Date Released: 31 July 2014

The number of expatriates entering South Africa is approximately equal to the number of people leaving the country. This has been one of the fascinating industry trends revealed by the co-founder of Magna-Thomson International Movers.

According to Dave Buchanan, company co-founder and manager of Magna-Thomson's Johannesburg branch, despite the equal split in business that is seen between inbound and outbound shipments, the motivations behind families' removals (always outweighing sole travellers) varies.

"Customers leaving South Africa tend to fall into two distinct groups: young adults with their children, leaving on the strength of work permits secured in predominantly English-speaking countries; and foreign-born retirees returning to their country of birth," he explains.

Families inbound to South Africa making use of Magna-Thomson's services, however, differ: while many also accompany a main applicant on a work permit – bringing scarce skills to the economy – this is seldom with the intention of settling permanently. These skilled visitors are frequently engineering executives overseeing high-profile construction projects, or CEOs developing multinationals' local operations.

The non-settlement norm is occasionally broken, however – as was Dave's own case. With 45 years' experience in the international shipping and removals industry, he first came to South Africa in 1975 when sent to resolve problems at his then British employer's office in Durban.

In 1990 Dave founded Magna International Movers with a business partner already in the local removals industry, and in 2008 they merged with another client-centric company, Thomson International Movers (established in 1987). Magna-Thomson International Movers was born.

Shipping flexibility

As Dave knows from personal experience, a great comfort to families settling into their foreign countries is being surrounded by familiar household items. He reveals that this decision can often have significant economic benefits as well.

While the shipment of a family's entire household contents in a shipping container for their exclusive could cost R65 000 to ship from South Africa, Dave estimates that their replacement value overseas could easily be over R500 000. For irreplaceable or sentimental items, the saving is priceless.

"A growing trend is for younger families or retirees to elect to ship selected low-volume, high-value items in what is referred to in the industry as a 'groupage shipment' – that is, a container shared by as many as ten other families' goods," he explains. "It is important to remember that it is often the small items which cost a fortune to replace, so this is particularly cost-effective"





Dave feels that the minimum economically-viable volume to ship is 100 cubic feet (or three cubic meters). This equates to around 20 removal cartons, and would cost in the vicinity of R12 000 to R15 000 if shipped from South Africa to London.

People entrusting their valuables to Magna-Thomson's care have nothing to worry about. The company is a FIDI Accredited International Mover – verifying its impeccable quality of removals – and Dave recognizes the dramatic improvements to shipping over his career.

“Shipments of household contents are significantly safer now than they were as recently as the 1990s, due to the enhanced robustness of modern packing materials and the increased stability of modern ships at sea,” Dave says.

“Theft has also been practically eliminated by containers secured by numbered seals applied after loading and removed only at their final destination. Even piracy is not a concern to us as our shipments travel up the Western Coast of Africa.

Innovative service

Magna-Thomson has introduced an Agent Help Desk to offer support to removal agents operating in distant timezones – e.g. Australia and the United States – with dedicated staff fielding calls from early in the morning to late in the evening, seven days a week. A significant convenience for foreign agents and their clients, this is still a rare offering in South Africa.

For families outbound from the country, meanwhile, a unique charitable service has been available for the past four years. Many clients are unable to dispose of unwanted household goods ahead of moving, and Magna-Thomson offers to transport these items at no cost as donations to Hospice.

“Whether it is helping our clients achieve their budgetary goals or giving them valuable advice on how to clear customs smoothly, Magna-Thomson always aims to ensure their happiness during a potentially stressful time,” concludes Dave. “This is a tight-knit company, and the strong relationships forged with clients and staff are extremely rewarding.”

Given his approach, it's not surprising that Magna-Thomson's staff boast equally impressive long-service records: one packer has 30 years with the company, another 20 years, and Dave says the average experience across his team is seven years.

When he retires from the removals industry at the end of July 2014, Dave's passion and experience will be retained by the team at Magna-Thomson he has nurtured over the past quarter of a century.

Corporate Profile: *With branches in Cape Town, Durban, Johannesburg and Pietermaritzburg (sales office), Magna-Thomson International Movers is a FIDI Accredited International Mover (FAIM), and member of the PMA, SAIMA and the IAM. A specialist in highly-personal inbound and outbound international removals, the company is increasingly fielding requests for domestic removals as well.*



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