

more about...



MORE ABOUT....

EASYSTART

After two decades of supplying companies with batteries, it is safe to say Easystart knows a thing or two about powering mobility scooters. THIS caught up with Sales Director Cillian Brugha and Area Sales Manager Katie Horner to learn more about the importance of staying local, the need for knowledge and valuable battery tips for retailers

Based in Corby; Northamptonshire, the company was started in 1996 by Trevor Horner and began by supplying starter batteries for vehicles such as cars and motorbikes. Since that time, the company has expanded its portfolio and now provides batteries to a range of industries and applications including industrial, commercial and leisure.

One of the organisation's strongest areas is mobility, where it has successfully supplied the Haze range

of both gel and AGM batteries to dealers for over a decade.

Cillian and Katie discussed the company's enduring 20 years of success and how the mobility market has changed.

THE POWER OF STAYING LOCAL

For Cillian, one of the fundamental aspects of Easystart's success can be attributed to its focus on locality.

"We have always centred around the idea of supporting local business," he explained. "We supply within 100

miles of our three depots (Corby, Manchester & Belfast) with our vans, so we can be very hands-on and flexible with the customers that are local to us. I think customers really appreciate that, which is why we still have a lot of customers that have been purchasing from us since day one."

Cillian continued: "We don't need to have nationwide-coverage and next-day distribution to absolutely everyone in order to have a good business model. There are services we offer to



The Easystart team in Corby

distributors around the country to use our products, but for us, the areas local to our depots are great.”

Alongside the targeted regional activity, Easystart has also managed to gain and retain years of industry knowledge within the company, which Katie acknowledged as being key to company’s development.

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

“For me, it really comes down to the people at Easystart. There are a handful of guys who have been with the company since the start and they

have so much knowledge. You can send them a picture of a battery and they’ll know exactly what it is and exactly what it is fitted on,” she said.

“The guys in the office offer a lot of technical advice for when something comes back that a client believes is not working. They have a good knowledge on what could be causing issues and if the customer is in the boundary area, we will go and pick up the battery and do all the checks for them quickly. This is important because if the dealer knows the battery is good, then they will also know that there is something else wrong with the device.”

Cillian also highlighted the need to have the right experience in the industry in order to offer effective customer service, stating that “it is an industry that can’t be learnt from a book.”

One of the key lessons the company has learned over the years is the importance of quality when it comes to supplying batteries and being able to determine the good from the bad.

Katie explained: “We have been through years of trial and error and a long time ago we thought we

needed to supply batteries that were affordable but possibly sacrificed quality to meet a demand for them in the market. We have learned that this just leads to more problems than it is worth, so we only supply the best of what is out there now. We also have the knowledge needed to determine what is best and are able to tell very quickly if something has been miss-sold.”

Echoing Katie’s sentiments, Cillian discussed what processes the company carries out to ensure it supplies the highest quality batteries available.

“Importantly, we only deal with manufacturing brands. Every time there is a new product released, we do a lot of testing ourselves before we begin distributing it to our customers. If we aren’t happy with it, then it would be impossible for us to release it to the market,” he said.

“The focus is definitely on customer service and selling reliable batteries. People really do rely on their scooters and powerchairs for their daily lives and if they are using a product that can’t be relied upon, they will blame their dealer.”

“It often comes down to buy cheap, buy twice. There is a lot of that out there and unfortunately, mobility is a notorious marketplace for it”

CILLIAN BRUGHA



HOW THE TIMES HAVE CHANGED

Having supplied batteries to the industry for so many years, Cillian and Katie remarked how the industry's attitude to batteries has changed.

"As I mentioned, Easystart did a lot of trial and error with cheap batteries many years ago; I think so too have a lot of mobility companies and they came to the same conclusion. It would seem most are moving away from buying cheaper, purely because of warranties. It's more hassle for their customer and therefore, more hassle for themselves," she said.

"Some turn to the internet, thinking they will be able to grab a bargain, until the battery goes down. Then they have to pay to send it back and if it is fine, pay to receive it back. And it can go back and forth. This can become costly for the dealer, especially if the battery supplier isn't based in the UK and frustrating for the end-user."

Cillian agreed, highlighting the problems that cheaper batteries can cause for dealers and customers.

"It often comes down to buy cheap, buy twice. There is a lot of that out there and unfortunately, mobility is a notorious marketplace for it. Anyone can type 'mobility battery' on the internet and pick from hundreds of options, but you just don't know where they are coming from and, as Katie said, can be very costly if there is a problem with it," explained Cillian.

"I do think the growth of online sales has made people go to the other end of the spectrum however. These are the ones who understand that short-term savings aren't necessarily always beneficial for the long-term. I think people are really seeing the value in

quality, factory brands, because they know they can rely on them."

Katie pointed out that despite the rise of the internet in the industry, many of her brick and mortar retailers are enjoying growing success.

"Most of my mobility customers are thriving at the moment because people want to go into stores and speak with someone face to face to get reassurance that they are buying the right product," she commented.

"When we go to see one of our customers, we go to do training with them, going over topics such as correct charging, testing and the different ranges available for different needs. Our customers become knowledgeable about the batteries they are selling, which they in-turn pass on to their customers.

both the dealer that we sell to and their customer."

TOP BATTERY TIPS FOR RETAILERS

Working with their customers in the industry for so many years, the company has picked up some valuable advice along the way which Cillian and Katie were keen to share.

"A battery should very much be sold on a user basis. If someone uses their scooter once or twice a week, then having the standard AGM batteries should be perfectly adequate for what they need. If they use it every day or load it up with things like the weekly shop, they would be better off using gel batteries," Cillian told us.

"We would never say one is better than the other, although we do find

"People rely on these scooters so much now that if they are not looking after the batteries, they will get caught out eventually"

CILLIAN BRUGHA

This training and advice on how to correctly use and care for batteries and ensuring the right battery is used for the right customer works really well and we have such a low return rate because of it."

Cillian added: "A lot of people can sell a cheap battery; you can sell anything if it is cheap. But to sell a quality item at the right price, that is going to last, is a lot harder. We sell top of the range products and that comes with a price tag but it comes with reliability and peace of mind for

we are selling and recommending gel more as people are relying more on their mobility scooters."

The pair agreed that the most useful advice they could give retailers to relay to their customers is the need for correct battery care.

"Battery care will make a battery last so much longer," stressed the Sales Director. "People rely on these scooters so much now that if they are not looking after the batteries, they will get caught out eventually. They need to be put on charge immediately after



more about...

they are used, even if it has only been five minutes.

"If a battery is used even 10 percent, left discharged at that 10 percent and then used later on without a recharge, it will start to damage the battery. The worst thing for a battery is to be left flat or to be used in a discharged state because the lead plates start to break and capacity is lost."

Cillian asserted that this is especially the case with an AGM battery, which will see a step down in performance if not fully charged which can never be recovered fully.

Katie described a common issue that she has found occurs every Spring in the industry.

"We always have an influx of warranties that come back around April time and it is because people are getting their scooters out after the Winter. Almost 90% of the batteries that come back to us around this time are just flat from not being used and

left in a discharged state, so we just give them a big charge up and send them back ready to be used."

The last tip from the battery specialists is not to neglect the importance of the battery charger, recommending that every time a new battery is purchased – every three to four years – a new charger is needed as well.

Cillian explained: "The two will work together a lot longer from new. If an end-user starts using a five-year-old charger with a brand-new set of batteries, it might not be doing the full job."

CHARGING INTO THE FUTURE

Katie highlighted how technology perceived to be expensive has become more affordable over the passage of time, making Easystart's quality batteries more accessible.

"Traditionally, a gel battery is noticeably more expensive than an AGM. However, as the technology

and as Haze's manufacturing facilities have evolved, we buy just as much gel now, if not more, as we do AGMs. This means we have a good buying power that we pass on to our customers. People before would believe a gel would be a lot more expensive, but now it is just a matter of a few pounds."

With mobility being one of the largest sectors in Easystart's portfolio, the battery experts gave us some insight into what are their ambitions for the market in the future.

Cillian commented: "We want to see the mobility market and our customers continue to grow. It is not slowing down; our range is only getting better and people seem to be happy with the way we supply them so we are planning to continue as we have been and look forward to the next 20 years."

www.easystartbatteries.co.uk

UNIQUIS™ iRetailer
Software That Saves You Money



Reduce Admin & Paper
Scan Barcodes
Reduce Costs

Reduce Stock Levels
Improve VAT Compliance
Mine Your Customer Database

Retailers can fully integrate their sales and stock process on one platform. This subscription-based cloud accessed application allows small businesses to gain the advantages enjoyed by their larger competitors with a lot more flexibility.

STAY PROFITABLY COMPETITIVE
MODERNISE NOW

For Special Offer See 'Deal On'

Stand B20
Trade Days

+44 (0) 844 335 6791 www.assistivepartner.co.uk @UniquisRetailer

Stay in the know

Sign up to our weekly email round-up to keep up to date with the latest industry news, jobs and products.



Subscribe at
[www.thiis.co.uk/
trade-news-service.aspx](http://www.thiis.co.uk/trade-news-service.aspx)

more about...



Haze Gel batteries power more than mobility scooters!

BACK TO THE FUTURE

In the car industry today, all the talk is about electric being the future. An interesting project Easystart has been involved with however, shows that this trend towards electric is nothing new

At the start of the 20th century, 38 percent of American automobiles were powered by electricity. Among that 38 percent was the Waverley Pope, produced from 1896 to 1914.

The car has now made a 21st century reappearance after Glyn Powell-Evans, a photographer and inventor based in Surrey, restored an antique Waverley Pope to working order with help from Easystart. What makes the project particularly interesting is that it is powered by the same batteries used in a mobility scooter!

Cillian explained: "Glyn got in touch with us initially around April time looking for some leisure batteries.

After we found out what they were going to be used in, we suggested to use gel batteries instead; the exact same batteries we use in mobility scooters. The batteries were perfect for powering an electric car."

Using a tiller from a boat to steer the 1906 vehicle, it is powered using an electric motor and five Haze gel batteries and is capable of doing 30 to 40 miles on a charge.

"The car is completely road legal, although we doubt he will be breaking any speed limits! There are only three or four of these vehicles in the entire country," added Cillian.

"It such a unique project and something we've never knowingly done before. The funny thing is, it is

the exact same concept as a mobility scooter, in as much as it is an electric motor running a 4-wheel vehicle."

To find out more about hiring the Waverly Pope for events and special occasions, email glyn@powell-evans.com

