



**SFI**

- Customer Complaints Wanted!

## THE BUSINESS

If you've ever made a complaint to a company about a product, there's a good chance that the software that handles the grievance has been designed by East Burwood customer relations solution business SFI.

Nestle, the Coles group, McDonalds, Arnotts and Goodman Fielder are among some of the companies using SFI's software to communicate with customers, track issues regarding products and set up systems to manage complaints.

Peter Gillson started SFI with partner, Mark Hudson, 18 years ago, originally distributing, and then buying, the Australian rights to the American-based CARE product.

After growing the product in Australia, Peter and Mark took their knowledge and experience to the international market.

SFI now employs 13 staff who help client's create flexible solutions to handle complaints and ultimately meet the changing expectations of customers.

## THE CHALLENGE

The changing nature of technology has an ongoing impact on SFI's business from both a technical and sales and marketing point of view.

*"Changes to technology and the speed in which technology allows people to communicate has meant that customers now also have an expectation that companies will respond to a complaint instantly," Peter said.*

*"What we are finding is that consumers want resolution on issues at the point of contact so our challenge is about both educating our clients on these requirements as well as building them into our own product development," he said.*

*"Ensuring that our own branding is current and reflective of what we do is something that has been a focus for SFI over the past few years."*

Growing the business internationally also created challenges for Peter and Mark who were faced with a range of new ways of doing business.

## THE ASSISTANCE

*"Participating in programs like Grow Your Business and E-Commerce, through Small Business Victoria, has helped us determine how we position ourselves in the marketplace. In particular, it has helped us with our company's value proposition and website," Peter said.*

*"We also recognised that we needed to take more of a strategic approach across our business and the training helped us focus the direction of the company."*

As a result SFI changed some of its sales and marketing positioning and the development of some basic marketing materials.

## THE SOLUTION

*"R&D is an ongoing, but necessary, component of the business to ensure that we stay up-to-date with technology," Peter said.*

SFI has also invested heavily in conducting research to find out what consumers want from companies in relation to complaint handling.

A recent study conducted on 15,000 Australian households by SFI has provided current insight into consumer thinking while providing new avenues for marketing and significant growth in the banking and finance, telecommunications, government and utilities sectors.

Expanding internationally has also been a growth area for the business and a steep learning curve for the directors.

*"The training also forced us to think about materials we needed for the international market and how to market ourselves overseas.*

*We knew very little about trade barriers, local laws and product safety information. Research into foreign customs, networking and engaging in industry has also enabled us to grow our market internationally."*

## BUSINESS TODAY

International trade now makes up 40 per cent of SFI's workload with international work growing all the time.

Asia is among the next regions that Peter and Mark have their sights set on following the win of a new contract in South Korea.

With its huge bank of knowledge and expertise on customer needs, SFI also wants to focus on how it can continue to educate clients about the benefits of strong consumer relations and the benefits of this on the bottom-line.

For further business information contact Business Victoria: **13 22 15** or visit [business.vic.gov.au](http://business.vic.gov.au)

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