



A Fine Line

Companies on both sides of the border service U.S. and Canadian customers.

By Tom Comi

You would think that two storage facilities with a Niagara Falls address would compete with one another for customers, but that assumption is proven wrong when you consider that one is located in the United States and the other is in Canada.

Secure Storage in New York and Lundy's Treasure Chest Self Storage in Ontario are both located approximately 10 minutes from the border, and each has carved out a nice niche of attracting both Canadian and American customers.

Mary Mendetta, manager of Secure Storage, said her 377-unit facility has been doing well, and she estimates

that 35 percent of her clientele is from Canada.

"Some people like to have a U.S. address for their business," she said of the mailbox service she will be providing soon. "Also, a lot of companies won't ship to Canada—especially international companies—so they have it delivered directly to me. A lot of my customers have things that come from Hong Kong and different places like that and have to have it shipped somewhere in the U.S."

Melissa Allison, property manager of Lundy's, said she is reaping the benefits of catering to American customers and estimates that just

under 20 percent of her business comes from the other side of the border.

"I get a lot of clients who are in Canada and trying to go to the U.S. to either move or do business, but they can't cross the border for whatever reason," she said, mentioning that she offers daily rentals for such cases. "They end up bringing their stuff here and storing it until they can get across."

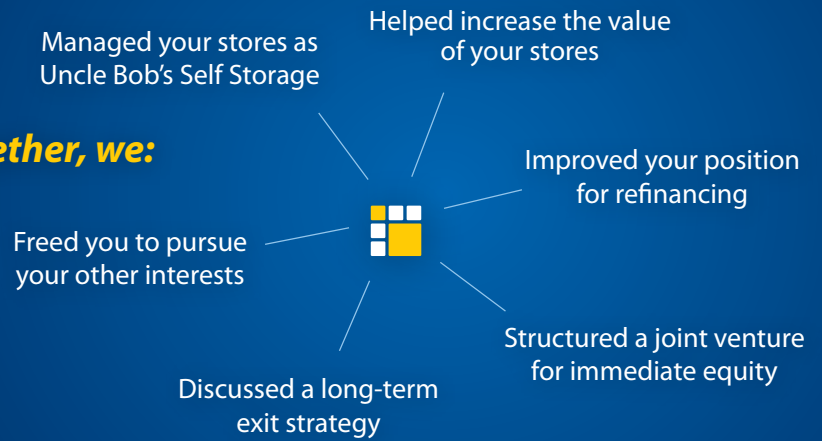
Allison said many of her 500 units are rented by Americans who have their professional and personal belongings shipped across the border in order to avoid long delays.

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"I find that a lot of my American clients who do use us for inventory reasons will do so to avoid getting tied up at the border," she said, adding that it can take up to six hours to be cleared. "We get a lot of deliveries where our clients aren't even here. I will get their inventories for them. I get a lot of American and Canadian businesses who are closing their warehouses and storing their inventory here to save a lot of money."

Mendetta said she has many Canadian customers who do business in the United States, so it behooves them to keep their things on this side of the border.

"I have some Canadian renters who run Internet-based companies and have all their packages and inventory

delivered directly to my facility," she explained. "They store their goods here, they come back over, package everything up and ship it out through the U.S.

"I also have a couple of vendors who do shows throughout the U.S. but live in Canada," she added. "They store their inventory with me, and when they go to do a show, they gather up all of their belongings they need to take with them and head out of town to Charlotte, Tampa or wherever they happen to be going. It's all about giving my customers variety."

Allison can relate: "I will customize to any client. I have some customers who are out in California and they will have things that are shipped up here. A lot of people love the flexibility of this place, and they are

willing to pay a few extra dollars to do things of that nature. It really saves them time and money and gives them peace of mind."

On the Move

As the owner of Action Movers in Vancouver, Mark Hirschi knows what it's like to do business on both sides of the border. With dozens of employees and 11 trucks, he said they make approximately 50 trips to and from Canada every year.

"We do get a lot of people who are relocating to Seattle or Tacoma from Vancouver," he said, adding that some of the moves are seasonal. "What we're noticing a lot is people in Vancouver are purchasing homes

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near the coast of Seattle, and we're relocating them there for six months or a year."

He added that the economy has also forced many out-of-work Americans to move to Canada to find employment.

"With the dollar value and job losses in the States, we've seen a fair number of people wanting to move and relocate into Canada," he said. "People are packing up furniture, clothes, everything."

Although Action Movers does not own storage facilities like some moving companies, Hirschi said his company deals with the industry quite frequently.

"We refer people to storage companies all the time," he said, "but we work hand in hand with Vancouver Self Storage, which is very environmental, clean and works well with our clients."

Perhaps the biggest misconception involved with the moving industry is that they simply load and haul a customer's belongings, but that is hardly the case in a move from one country to another.

"We have the designated forms that we need to deal with to cross the border," he said. "We know our customers have a lot on their minds when they are moving, so we take care of all of that for them." ❖

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