

## Partnerships

### James Murray and Will Murray

The sons of PC World founder Jan Murray set up Send For Help in 2010 to protect staff working solo. It recently doubled turnover to £6.1m and made the *Sunday Times* Fast Track 100. Here they talk offshoring, acquisitions and brotherly working dynamics

#### Vital stats

**Founded** 2010

**Staff** 70

**Turnover** £6.1m for 2016 and predicted to be £8m this year

**Location** Epsom, Surrey

**Background** James and Will are the sons of Jan Murray, the founder of PC World and president of Send For Help. Clients include the police, the NHS, local authorities, housing associations and retailers. The brothers previously ran Barshield Services, selling memory cards, printer cartridges and other computer consumables online.

**Interview**  
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**Photography**  
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**James Murray** We are a provider of protection services to lone workers and people at risk. We supply a range of devices that, when you activate the SOS button, will send an alarm to our 24/7 alarm-receiving centre.

**Will Murray** We also have smartphone applications for workers who don't want to carry an additional device.

**James Murray** I'm chief executive, Will is marketing director. I'm involved in the operational side and Will works closely with the sales director to generate new business.

**Will Murray** We came up with the idea when phones were coming out with GPS technology. We were looking at how we could build software that would utilise it and initially we thought it was going to be more like a tracking-type application.

**James Murray** We then realised it would be suitable for monitoring and protecting lone workers. At that point we developed an app. We decided on a fob because of the limitations of the phone in terms of battery life, and because a phone is built to do all sorts of different things rather than be a dedicated personal safety device.

**Will Murray** We were after something specifically purposed, so we went to China to work with a manufacturer and developed our own piece of technology. We visit the manufacturer regularly to maintain good production standards. It's essential – you can't rely solely on their testing.

**James Murray** We worked with Skyguard [a company that dealt in lone worker protection]. We ended up buying it because it was a good fit. It wasn't actively trading but the business was up and running.

**Will Murray** We had to build our own monitoring centre, which required £100,000 of investment, and recruit a management team. We needed several million pounds to get started and our father [Jan Murray, founder of PC World, who is also a director of the company] backed us financially.

**James Murray** We regularly turn to him for advice. He's very interested to know how things are going and is a mentor to us.

“**As brothers, we are able to have more honest conversations – we're not scared of speaking our mind. There's a real trust between us”**

**James Murray**

**Will Murray** He has a wealth of experience, 50 years' worth. He's not involved on a day-to-day basis but he's a sounding board – if we have an issue, he'll tell us what he would do in our shoes.

**James Murray** Keeping up with the growth of the business has been a challenge. We have to recruit new staff all the time. We took over Guardian24 [another player in the lone worker protection market] 18 months ago and it was a big undertaking to integrate it. You need good advisers to help you through the whole acquisition process; do not underestimate the complexity, time and resources.

**Will Murray** We have some disagreements but we know each other well enough to know we're working towards the same goals.

**James Murray** As brothers, we can

have more honest conversations – we're not scared of speaking our mind. There's a trust between us.

**Will Murray** Occasionally our father might intervene and have the casting vote.

**James Murray** We end up talking about work outside, too, as it does tend to take over your whole life. But when we go out to a family meal we don't talk about business. You have to have the right work-life balance – if we're talking about work all the time our mum wouldn't like it!

**Will Murray** When we first started the business there were areas such as operational sales and marketing that needed a lot of work, so we've had quite a mountain to climb and a lot of struggles. However, we've completely turned the business around from losing a lot of money to making a good profit. So we've done really well.

**James Murray** I'm glad to say we've paid our father back in full and the business is cash positive and profitable. We no longer need any external funding.

**Will Murray** We recently featured on the *Sunday Times* Fast Track 100. To get the business from where it was five years ago to where it is now is a big achievement for us.

**James Murray** We are forecast to do £8m turnover this year, so it's growing organically – but on top of that we're looking at making further acquisitions. We've had talks with various companies and we're hopeful that at least one will come through in the next 12 months. **D**

For more information, visit [sendforhelp.co.uk](http://sendforhelp.co.uk)

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James Murray, left, and brother Will set up Send For Help with a loan from their father, Jan. The company is now in profit and the loan repaid