



Christian and Sally Wilse Canterbury & Thanet

What did you do before you bought a franchise business?

Christian: "I worked for charities, Premier League and sport rights, film and broadcast, technology and software. I moved from Norway to England in 1990 when I met Sally"

Sally was born in Kent and took her degree in comparative healthcare systems. Her career in publishing started on Senior Nurse magazine and ended in media analysis for companies.

Sally and Christian have built new businesses and taught business concepts around the world, living in London, Oslo, and Canterbury.

Christian and Sally have four children and recently became proud grandparents.

Purpose Christian explains "I have always loved my work. I've had fancy titles and good salaries but I have always craved what I'd call a real purpose. I've always wanted to do something that truly mattered to people. Seniors Helping Seniors came at the right time for me"

Sally found out about the great work Seniors Helping Seniors does in America.

Sally Comments: "I saw an advertisement in an in-flight magazine. It was a very humble advertisement. I realised Seniors Helping Seniors tackles two of the biggest social problems of an ageing society. Elderly care and employment opportunities for people as they age. I couldn't get the simple logic of it out of my mind."

What sold you on franchising? Why didn't you start your own business or stay employed ?

Christian Comments "Sally and I have always disrupted industries. Disrupting is more than improving products or services. Disrupting means having a completely different approach. Being made redundant in our early 50's was a blessing. We took the time to evaluate properly.

About staying employed, I think we'd done making money for other people! And the constant uncertainty of it was unpleasant. We knew what it takes to start new businesses. Starting something un-tested is high risk. Franchising allows you to leapfrog all the testing."

Why the Seniors Helping Seniors franchise?

Sally Comments: "Once I found Seniors Helping Seniors in-home care service, it kept coming back to us. Nothing else was as important and disruptive. Seniors Helping Seniors is independently owned. No Venture Capital.

Seniors Helping Seniors was the win win. Offering people flexible local work that they are uniquely qualified to do as they age, is the reason people can receive the elderly care and support they need. Everybody benefits in different ways.

It is not traditional 'care' because we do not provide personal care or medical services.. It is the work people want to do and the care people agree to most easily. Our focus is encouragement and support as opposed to 'doing things for people' Only Seniors Helping Seniors has this approach.

Christian went to meet the founders in America and he was astounded by the passion and innovation. The chemistry was there from the outset"

Christian comments: "I visited the founders and met some of the 250 partners in America in 2013"

Due Diligence Christian Comments, "The UK desperately needs services like these.

We bought a master franchise license in early 2013 and set about repeating the success in the UK.

The straight forward, honourable and joyful approach to ageing is so refreshing. Everybody feels it, and the social impact is powerful."

Opening our first office

Christian says "The first Seniors Helping Seniors in the UK started in East Kent and everything about it has been amazing.

The services make people happy, the social impact is outstanding and the ROI is 20% + The offices that followed East Kent, grow faster and forecast bigger.

Our master franchise license means we re-invest in the franchising side of the operation. We are well on track and opening our fifth office. Building on the success of our first office is everything I could have hoped for."

How did you start your Care franchise? Did you need care experience? Did you take outside investment?

After training in America, taking UK courses and consulting stakeholders in the sector locally and nationally, Christian launched Seniors Helping Seniors for Canterbury and Thanet in late 2013.

He found his core group of carers and the first clients easily. Christian explains "It's a business you can run from home so the set-up, initial investment and running costs are low. The master franchise was a big investment. We took advantage of loans and grants available to businesses with a high social impact, and award wins that were available to us because of the innovation in the services.

It's a management franchise, so technically I didn't need to do care courses but I wanted to educate myself so I could be hands on when needed and support 'the best of the best. I've met exceptionally skilled people doing great work."

Simple ideas work best

Christian adds: "Like all the best ideas, this is a simple idea. We mobilise people with some time on their hands, to help people who need support.

20 years of success

We knew we were providing outstanding elderly care from day one. We had 20 years' success in the US as our guide. Christian says, "Seniors Helping Seniors UK was firmly established after three years.

Since then it's been about repetition. Every person is different and every family and community teaches us something new but the processes are rock solid"

Sally says "Seniors Helping Seniors has been a life changing experience for us. It's the most important work we have ever done. I can feel that we are driving new standards in elderly care and local employment for people. The people we have met campaigning for better care are outstanding and I love to be part of very positive changes."

Awards, Accolades, Anniversaries

Sally adds: "We are coming up to our sixth anniversary with several key awards under our belts.

Our local Care Commissioning Group (CCG) refers to us as "perfect primary care" and referrals come from customers, carers, care co-ordinators and charities. We are signposted throughout the community and we do some ground-breaking work with our clients that not only makes a tremendous difference to their lives, it also gets us press.

We love demonstrating what people need to be well supported and the kind of work people want to do and excel at"

Magnification Christian Comments "We adapted what works in America to the UK properly.

We are trusted Care providers in the UK. I love the care and work we provide through In Canterbury and Thanet, but I love the care and work we provide from our franchised offices even more because it magnifies everything. Loving, caring, giving and compassionate carers truly change worlds for families."

Sally comments "We are British Franchise Association members (BFA) and the Seniors Helping Seniors brand helps carers and clients through our franchised offices.

We impact over a million people currently. Our aim is to impact over a million more quickly.

Angel investor We have proved the concept is teachable and repeatable in the UK through our five offices and we just won a national publicity prize because our concept is unique. An angel investor is helping us shout from the rooftops about the great work we do".

What are the challenges?

Christian explains "The greatest challenges for other care companies, are not our challenges! The best part about Seniors Helping Seniors is having no shortage of amazing carers. Professional carers and 'experts-by-experience' love to work for us because this is the caring they want to do.

Because people are living longer, many people need to earn and others want to do something worthwhile with their time. We understand their priorities and how they want to work and we deliver for them. There is no shortage of clients either.

The biggest challenge is work life balance. It's not easy to close the office when you work from home and you love what you do!"

Why don't you work with the Care Quality Commission (CQC)

Christian comments: "CQC do not regulate our services because we are 'out of scope'. We do not offer personal care or medical care and our focus is non-personal and non-medical support. The challenge has turned out to be a benefit because we do not have to invest time and money with regulators. We drive our own outstanding services. Our customers references are more than enough.

We put our carers at the centre of our operations so that people can work flexibly and locally. We decided to be Living Wage Champions from the beginning, so our carers are paid well. They have choice in the work they do and they feel like they are volunteering their time with each client. Even though the CQC does not regulate their work, Seniors Helping Seniors carers are the best of the best"

What are your days like?

Matching people Christian comment: "My day job as manager of a Seniors Helping Seniors office is meeting clients and the families, choosing and introducing them to the right carer and managing processes.

Customers We regard the people we care for, their friends, their families and their support network as our customers. Seniors Helping Seniors won the Customer Services Award for fully managing elderly care in this way"

BBC Seniors Helping Seniors UK is a Top Ten and Top Twenty most recommended care agency group in UK. BBC news aired a feature on the benefits and prospects our care service.

Christian Comments: "I've never had the BBC do a story on my work before, so, with our 9.910 customer rating, I think the pride we have in our carers and our company is well placed.

Sally and I have never been happier or more excited about what we do every day."

What will you be doing 5 and 10 years from now?

We've re-invented retirement for our carers and we'll do that for ourselves as business owners. Some of our carers are already moving into admin roles. In five to ten year's we'll have more support in the business but we'll still be independent. Just like our customers"

Final comment from Sally: "This is our legacy. Sensible things like, helping other people to do well, keeping things fair and simple, and working sustainably, resonate well with our business and our life values. Never stop doing what feels right."