



## Smiggle opens seven UK stores – 11 more planned this year

### Fast facts

Company: Smiggle

Sector: Retail

Country of origin: Australia

Investment location: London and South East

[smiggle.co.uk](http://smiggle.co.uk)



**UK Trade & Investment (UKTI) has worked closely with Smiggle in both Australia and the UK, to support it in bringing its stationery brand to the UK. The company has launched a sizeable investment and expansion campaign, opening seven stores and a UK head office. Eleven more stores are to be opened across the UK by December 2014, each employing around 10 people.**

Australian stationery brand, Smiggle, opened its first store in Melbourne, Australia in 2003. The brand of colourful, fun, fashion-forward stationery soon became a popular hit with kids across Australia. By 2007, the company had 20 stores and became part of Australasian fashion & apparel retailer, the Just Group.

Smiggle has since grown to 123 stores in Australia and has also embarked on an ambitious international strategy. The company built up 23 stores in New Zealand and 17 in Singapore. Today it

employs over 1,000 people and in 2013 achieved a turnover of AUS\$89.6 million.

“We plan to be the world’s most famous stationery brand for kids,” says John Cheston, Managing Director of Smiggle. “Our ultimate goal is to create original and fun products that will make children and their families smile and giggle. Our products are all about great design and innovation, bold colour, quirky graphics, great value and most of all, fun. We are always expanding and updating our range and our designers draw inspiration from all over the world.”

### Coming to the UK

Having got close to saturation point in Australia, New Zealand and Singapore, Smiggle began to look for a fourth market to enter. The company’s focus was to find a large market with potential for high sales and profit growth. Having carried out extensive desktop research and visited the UK several times, Smiggle and the Just Group were confident that the UK met the criteria.

With the decision made to set up in the UK, Smiggle got in touch with UKTI in Melbourne to find out what support was available. UKTI supported the company by providing information about tax and business rates in the different UK regions; advising on skills and recruitment; and making introductions to key advisers including tax and accounting that were critical in establishing the business in the UK market.

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John Cheston, Managing Director, Smiggle

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“We found that the UK ticked the right boxes,” says John. “It has a large personal stationery market, worth over £1.4 billion; we are familiar with it’s legal systems and language, making it an easy place to do business; the habits of school kids are similar to those in Australia so we were confident that they would be receptive to our products; there is limited competition to what we do; the large network of shopping centres would provide the perfect outlets; it has a high calibre pool of talent for employing; and it’s a springboard into intercontinental Europe/North America.”

#### Forging ahead

In February 2014, Smiggle opened its first UK store at the Westfield shopping centre in Stratford, London. Between April and the end of May 2014, a further six have followed at retail outlets in Brighton, Crawley, Kingston, Leicester, Guildford and Reading.

By the end of 2014, the company plans to have 18 stores up and running in the UK, aiming for a total of 250 over the next five years, each one employing ten people.

“Things have moved quickly for us in the UK,” says John. “Between February and June 2014, we opened seven new stores and took on 70 employees. The speed with which we achieved all this is unprecedented in our other overseas markets. We believe that UK sales have the potential to match our sales in Australia within three to five years. As a well-established and large publicly listed company, we have the resources and expertise that is needed to support our entry into new markets. But even so, we appreciated having UKTI on hand as a knowledgeable, well connected and trusted partner. We are currently considering an extensive list of UK regions in which to invest, and we know that we can turn to UKTI if we need anything along the way.”

#### The UK - Europe’s leading investment destination

Every year around 70 Australian businesses of all sizes, decide to expand to the UK or increase their business presence there. It’s the leading European destination for Australian businesses, and the second most popular destination overall - but why?

It’s more than just our close political, historical and commercial relationships - it’s because the UK is a fantastic place to do business. It provides a unique gateway of international connections, is a recognised leader in the fields of creativity and innovation and is the sixth largest economy in the world. The UK is also one of the easiest places to set up and run a business. According to the World Bank, it takes just 13 days to set up a business in the UK, compared to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average of 15 days.

For further information visit [www.gov.uk/ukti](http://www.gov.uk/ukti)

#### Setting up your company in the UK

Deciding where to locate your international business is one of the biggest decisions you’ll make and can be daunting. UK Trade & Investment helps businesses coming to the UK with every aspect of setting up their new operations.

As the UK Government’s inward investment agency, it’s our job to know the UK’s strengths and where investment opportunities exist.

This means we can help your company to do all the research you need to make an informed decision, and then get up and running as quickly as possible.

UK Trade & Investment can help you to:

- Do your research
- Build key contacts
- Choose your location
- Set up your new office
- Grow your business internationally.

UKTI was delighted to support Smiggle in its investment in the UK.



To find an adviser in the UK and begin your own success story now, scan this code with your smartphone, visit [www.gov.uk/ukti](http://www.gov.uk/ukti) call +44 (0)20 7333 5442 or email [enquiries@ukti-invest.com](mailto:enquiries@ukti-invest.com)

UK Trade & Investment is the Government Department that helps UK-based companies succeed in the global economy. We also help overseas companies bring their high-quality investment to the UK’s dynamic economy. We provide companies with the tools they require to be competitive on the world stage.