



All is not lost

UNDER THE
RADAR

YOUGETITBACK.COM

Frank Hannigan

INTERVIEW

CIARAN BRENNAN

HAVE YOU ever gone through security at the airport and, realising you're running late, rush to get to the departure gate seconds before it closes, leg it on to the plane and settle in your seat, relieved that you've made your flight?

You get to your destination much more relaxed for that important meeting and zip open your laptop bag to discover that, in your haste to make the flight, you forgot to pack the laptop back into your bag at the security desk.

Frank Hannigan knows how you feel. He's been there – and not only with a laptop at an airport – he's left his Blackberry in a taxi twice. The difference is he's got it back both times, thanks to his own company, Yougetitback.com.

The Cork-based company is a straightforward, no-nonsense 24/7 lost and found service that makes it easy for people who find lost items bearing the company's security tags to return them.

Lost and found offices all over the world are full of untagged items that will never find their way home, according to Hannigan. Dublin airport alone recovers 500,000 lost items every year.

"Around one billion personal items are lost and found by somebody else each year," says Hannigan, who is the company's managing director and co-founder.

"We build ways to get back lost or stolen items to people who have lost them. The key driver for us is

people carry around a lot more personal items than they used to and those items are much more central to our lives."

Even more than the cost of replacing them, items such as mobile phones, PDAs, MP3 players, digital cameras and keys are now what Hannigan describes as "mission critical" to many people.

"If you are 15 years of age, your mobile phone is how you manage your social life," he says.

"The same goes for the chief executive of a corporation. So my Blackberry is fundamental to how I live my life. I could be in four time zones in two days and, without the Blackberry, I'm screwed. I can't do my job.

"First of all, you have millions more things that are carried around and, because they are carried around, they're more likely to go missing. Secondly, the impact of losing them is much more profound than it was even three years ago."

He cites research in New York which found that the emotional impact of losing a Blackberry led to some people having a severe anxiety attack.

Yougetitback.com's process of retrieving a lost item and, in the process easing some of those anxiety attacks, is "desperately straightforward", according to Hannigan.

You buy a security tag and tag your chosen item and then activate the item's tag at Yougetit-

back.com, he says.

Tags range in price from €10 for a medium security tag which protects your asset for three years to €15 for a lost luggage tag. If you lose the item, there is a 75 per cent chance that it will be found and returned to you using the tag. The item is reported to Yougetitback.com, which will contact you to get it returned to you. And it works, he says.

"Our proudest find is an Irish girl who lost her mobile phone in Las Vegas. It was found by a guy from Tennessee who took it back with him to his office and reported the find. We found the lady who by that stage was backpacking in Mexico. She asked us if we could UPS it back from Tennessee to her mother's house in Sutton in Dublin. That's what we did."

In that instance, she paid for the item to be sent home, but in the majority of cases, it is much more straightforward, where the person can pick it up from a finder, lost luggage department or police station.

Although the company offers a small reward to finders, Hannigan says most don't avail of it.

Another advantage of the tags is that people do not have to broadcast their personal details to all and sundry. Devices such as mobile phones can also be tagged electronically which allows you to lock down the phone so that only Yougetitback.com's 24-hour call centre can be contacted.

So there is no way anyone can

access data on the phone, he says.

The company is now in phase two of a \$1.7 million (£1.1 million) development programme which is being heavily supported by Enterprise Ireland as well as other investors. "Enterprise Ireland has picked us out as one of the winners and the guys most likely to form a global company," says Hannigan.

With turnover now in seven figures, Hannigan says the company is on the road to achieving that objective. At this stage, the company is concentrating on building scale rather than looking to be immediately profitable, he says.

"We're not interested in being a profitable small business creating 10 jobs in Cork. What everybody wants us to do is go out there and be a global leader. There is no global dominant player in our space or no local dominant player in our space."

ON THE RECORD

Name: Frank Hannigan.

Age: 43.

Family: Married to Betty with two boys, Niall (6) and Daragh (4).

From: Originally from Glasnevin in Dublin, but now lives in Cork.

Education: Attended St Aidan's CBS in Whitehall and then took a degree in business in Trinity.

Background: Hannigan has more than 20 years' experience at the helm of both established and start-up ventures. He worked with the *Sunday Tribune* in Dublin before heading south to Cork to work with Examiner publications.

He then moved to Ireland Online and also had the role of consultant to the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development in Asia before co-founding Yougetitback.com with William Fitzgerald and Paul Prendergast.

Most likes: "Being on the water – a mixture of sailing and putting around on a little motor-boat with my two boys." He has also raced yachts for 20 years.

Admires: I've worked with great managers, but the person who probably changed me was Colm Grealy, the ceo of Ireland Online.

Favourite TV programme: *Lost*.

