



Female-led removals

Moving with the times

Meet the woman redressing her industry's gender imbalance

The flat was dark and damp, with a crack running down one wall. The young woman surveying the scene had just arrived in London with no family support, only a dream of becoming an actor – and she was beginning to wobble. “She said, ‘I don’t know if I’ve done the right thing,’” recalls Hannah Crawford, who had spent the day moving her in.

Instead of unloading more boxes, Crawford gave her a hug and found the one box that mattered: the woman’s trinkets and keepsakes. “We put them out first, made the bed, then dealt with the rest. I couldn’t leave without helping her make it feel like home.”

This might seem beyond the remit for a removals service, but that’s the point of Han With A Van. “What I get to do,” says Crawford, who also works as a

business coach, “is make people feel less alone in what can be a very lonely experience.”

Crawford, 28, had noticed a dearth of female-led removals services in the UK. “Women in removals shouldn’t be a niche,” she says. “We’re 51 per cent of the population. People should have a reliable, female-led option in any industry.”

The demand, she explains, comes down to peace of mind. “Some clients have had bad experiences with men, or with male movers. Others are visibly queer people who face snide comments or ‘othering’. Having someone you trust walk through the door is priceless.”

Crawford understands the vulnerability. At the age of 20, she escaped “a really abusive home”, leaving Bathgate in Scotland with only what she could carry, and boarding a



Doing the heavy lifting: Hannah Crawford, founder of London-based, female-led removals business Han With A Van

train to London. “I know what it feels like to have no one to help, leaving a difficult situation to do it all alone,” she says.

However, the business happened almost by accident. It began with a post on the ‘Girls Who Rent’ Facebook group, recounting a favour Crawford had done for a mate. The post went viral, racking up half-a-million views in a month. Bookings started pouring in.

Han With A Van isn’t only for women – Crawford will work with anyone as long as they follow her golden rule: “Don’t be a dick.” How do male and female clients differ? “Women who can’t afford my rates will say, ‘That’s outside my budget, but thank you.’ Whereas men are often like, ‘I can get a van for less,’ or ‘I don’t think you’ll actually be able to lift this.’” Her response? “Babe, you scrolled past 30 man-with-a-van services and clicked on me because you assumed I’d be cheaper, and now you’re asking if I can lift the thing?”

Crawford still gets told, “You’re a lot stronger than you look,” which she takes as a compliment. Training several times a week helps: “If you can deadlift 60 kilos, you have a much better chance of shifting a washing machine without hurting yourself.”

Beneath the humour is a clear philosophy. “Businesses are run by people, so they’re an extension of people,” says Crawford. “The idea you have to be hard-nosed is bonkers.”

Han With A Van is now building an infrastructure – vetted movers, admin support, eventually an app – to take that philosophy further. Can she see herself one day running a fleet of removals women from a desk? “No, my brain’s built for conversation, problem-solving, novelty, not routine admin.”

Crawford adds, “Growing up, being kind, understanding and compassionate was sort of the ultimate rebellion. Then it sort of became my superpower.”

Turns out it’s a pretty strong business model, too. hanwithavan.co.uk