



## **Blink-Photo acquires CIC Photographic in multi-million-pound deal**

A North West business that provides commercial photography for the homeware, food and fashion industries has bought an international creative agency as it moves towards a full service offering.

Blink-Photo Limited, based in Euxton Lane, Chorley and operating under parent company Blink Group Limited, has acquired CIC Creative (CIC) for a seven-figure sum.

Prior to the acquisition Blink Group Limited employed 50 staff members across Blink-Photo Limited and sister company Blink MCR Limited with a combined turnover of over £4 million.

The corporate finance team at MHA Moore and Smalley advised Blink-Photo Limited on the deal with funding provided by Allied Irish Bank (GB).

The purchase of CIC Creative will see 36 employees and a turnover of £2.2 million join the Blink Group. The team at CIC, led by managing director, Nicola Tayler, will stay in their current roles and will continue to operate as normal across its offices in Stoke and China.

CIC operates as a full service creative agency, providing CGI, branding, video production, product design and digital services to clients Victoria Plum, RKW, Morphy Richards, Wrights Food Group, Port Vale Football Club and MoBike.

Blink-Photo Limited was formed in 2006 and as one of the country's largest commercial photography studios it specialises in room set, location, food and model photography. Clients include N Brown Group, Sainsburys, House of Fraser and Booths.

Steven Livesey, director at Blink Group Limited, said: "We've been looking to diversify our services for a couple of years now so when CIC became available we jumped at the chance. It's a company that we have been aware of for a while and it's always produced incredible work.

"We're getting an exceptional ready-made team with a ready-made customer base from CIC. The specialisms of the two-company's complement each other well. This is an opportunity for us to grow our team of experts and establish ourselves in the market as a full-service offering.

"The acquisition also means that we're branching out internationally, which is very exciting for us and most importantly our clients. The studio in China will allow clients to become more efficient by producing photography and CGI at source, designing marketing collateral and selling items before they have arrived in the UK."

Jon Hills, commercial director at CIC, added: "Becoming part of Blink Group strengthens CIC in terms of our skills and facilities, it also offers a huge boost to our clients and what we can offer them. It's a pleasure to be working alongside Steven and Emma and we are looking forward to the future."

The deal was funded by the Manchester office of Allied Irish Bank (GB) who provided long term debt funding and invoice finance to Blink Group Limited. The team was led by relationship manager Danny Pennington and it has been retained to work as Blink Group Limited's long term financial provider.

Danny Pennington, said: "Steven and Emma have established a very successful business, the acquisition of CIC complements their business perfectly and boasts a number of high profile blue chip clients. I am delighted to be able to assist them with this very exciting stage of their business growth, allowing the thriving company to expand its presence in the North West and continue their success story."

The deal team at MHA Moore and Smalley was led by corporate finance senior manager Paul Bennett. The team assisted Blink throughout the transaction, providing financial modelling and due diligence, as well as helping to secure funding for the acquisition.

Paul Bennett, of MHA Moore and Smalley, said: "Blink Group Limited has been a client of ours since it formed twelve years ago and it's incredible to have watched it grow into a multi-million-pound international company. The deal will provide positive efficiencies for everyone involved, including the firm's customers enabling the enlarged group to offer a much wider range of services to the existing customers of both Blink and CIC and to new clients."

David Filmer of North West law firm Harrison Drury provided legal advice to Blink Group Limited throughout the acquisition process. Alex Chapman, Guy Pattison and Anton Stirrett of Bermans Solicitors acted on behalf of Allied Irish Bank (GB).

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