

Case Study



“ I can now confidently steer my business ”

Pakotex is a family run textile business based in Essex. It was started in 1995 and is now run by Rob Oultram who joined in 2003. Rob came out of a large corporate environment and joined his father’s company who “ran the business almost as a hobby.” It was this difference in the direction of the company that was a key challenge. Additionally Rob felt ill equipped to run all the areas of the business. His corporate experience didn’t cover marketing, sales and finance. As he said “I was bought in to steer the ship, but didn’t have all the tools required.”

Rob knew they needed some help to improve but struggled to get agreement. The result was that over time the company started “to go backwards, rather than forwards.”

Although Rob and his father had looked at employing a business coach previously they hadn’t been convinced with the people they came across. However, when they a coach from ActionCOACH they liked his approach and both agreed that he could help. As Rob remarked “We saw it as an investment not a cost.”

One of the first areas tackled during their weekly meetings was to develop a clear plan for the medium and long term. They set about writing a clear vision and mission for themselves personally and the business. They were then able to break this down and work backwards to develop shorter term plans with specific actions. This immediately had an impact on Rob as he began focusing on the strategic side of the business. “I immediately saw the value in looking at the strategy rather than just processing orders.”

A result of this strategic planning was the realisation that their business was very dependent on revenues they had little control over. They are an agent for a cotton wool supplier and sell textiles into manufacturers who could ‘pull the plug’ at any time. So they developed a plan to “take more charge of our own destiny.”

In addition to changing the strategic direction of the business their coach helped them refine all their current business practices. For example he helped them to take more control over the finances. Although they measured the finances well before coaching they “didn’t get any actions out of them.” This meant that they weren’t using the information to actively manage the business. So their coach showed them how to track and measure the finances in a way that led to greater business control.

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Their coach also helped them with marketing and sales. He showed them how to approach marketing and even gave Rob pointers on how to design adverts. However, Rob is keen to point out that their coach didn't tell him what to do but simply "presented a different opinion and viewpoint so I could make the best decision."

Another example is when he helped Rob to develop sales scripts for calling prospects which had an immediate benefit. As Rob said "We got more face to meetings with buyers which, traditionally, is always hard to do."

They also worked together on Rob's time management and looked at how they could free up his time to work on the business strategy. They analysed where he spent his time and found roles he could delegate. His coach also helped him create a 'default diary' that Rob now uses "religiously". The result of this has been Rob doesn't go into the office as often and spends more time working "on the business and not just in it."

The major affect that Rob feels the coaching has had on the business is the focus on the strategic side. After lots of planning there came the realisation that the business needed to change. So he has been working on developing a new side to the business. His coach gave Rob the spark of the idea but it was his own 'eureka moment' when he thought "Yes I can do this!" He feels that the coaching has given him the confidence to take this step and develop the new business.

Also having the "Outside perspective" that coaching brings has enabled Rob to feel supported and more capable of succeeding. As he said "I need someone to bounce off and provide consensus. Plus if I hit a bit of a wall my coach comes up with ideas to get over the wall."

Although Rob is at an early stage with the new business he feels very confident about the future. He says he feels "More entrepreneurial and it's a more creative, exciting and inspiring business now." He is managing his time well and has had a major change of mind-set. As he said "I am looking at life differently. I've had a very positive experience. I'm confidently steering the ship on a different course with the tools I need to do it."

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