

Case Study

Cannon Hall Case Study



“It’s a much more enjoyable and rewarding business”

Cannon Hall is a garden centre in Barnsley, South Yorkshire. The business has been in existence for over 30 years and is currently owned and run by John Crabb. He wanted to develop and grow the business but realised he needed some help and guidance to achieve his goals. John knew he needed to develop the team and increase sales.

Towards the end of 2008 John met a business coach from ActionCOACH. The coach invited him along to one of his GrowthCLUB events so he could get an idea of the benefits of coaching. John felt that the structured approach, that is a hallmark of ActionCOACH, would work for his business. As he said “I liked the structure and right from the outset I realised the more I went into the ActionCOACH programme the less I knew and the more we needed it.”

The first thing that his coach helped John with was to set a clear vision for the business. This identified what he wanted the business to look like in the future. Most importantly it enabled them to work backwards and develop a clear path to achieving the goals.

A key area that John needed some help with was developing the team. Like many business owners John found it difficult to let go and delegate effectively to other team members. His coach helped John identify tasks and roles that could be performed by others and encouraged him to give his staff more responsibility. John saw the benefits quickly “I’ve seen the team strengthen much more than I thought possible. In June 2009 we had a meeting where it became apparent to me the staff were a lot more capable than I’d imagined them to be. I’m not sure I would ever have got to that point without coaching. I wouldn’t have been brave enough.”

His coach introduced John to DISC profiling which creates clear character profiles on all team members and enables them to understand each other better. As John remarked “It’s helped me to identify individual’s strengths and weaknesses and most importantly my own!” This clarity has given John the confidence to allow other team members to take more decisions and use their initiative. The result is a team that is much more committed to the business because they feel more ownership. Which has driven growth, as John said “They have come up with new ideas that helped the business grow, which helps them grow, which in turn helps the business grow.”

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The empowerment of the team has taken a number of forms including a structured career progression for team members. John has appointed a Garden Centre Manager who has proved very capable. Also the growth in the business means that when he needs to employ new staff he looks at bringing them in at the bottom level and promotes existing staff. As he said “Team members have more self confidence. So they could put down the brooms and start creating a bit of business to bring more customers in.”

Another major impact coaching has had on the business is helping John to breakdown the business into individual pieces and monitor each. This utilises the ActionCOACH ‘5 ways’ model that looks at the key performance indicators in the business and ensures measurement of each. This has enabled John to understand which areas needed most work and which ones would generate most profit growth. As John remarked, “For example, we looked at costs and stock control in detail. This has benefited the business in a big way.”

An important aspect of having a business coach is that John has got an objective person to talk to and bounce ideas off. As he said “It’s great to have someone to talk to who hasn’t got any vested interest or pre-conceived notions about how the business should run or what individuals should do within it.”

An example of this is when John first took over the business he had a couple of people who he thought were vital to the business. His coach enabled John to see the business as a whole and understand it’s more important that everyone buys into the culture. As John said “We now have some common values and beliefs and everyone shares a common target for the business. Because of this we are going forwards much more quickly.”

Overall the changes that his coach has helped John to implement have meant that his time is much more focused on the strategic direction and growth of the business. He spends a lot more time working on the business and not in it. This has driven growth and a made the business stronger. As John said “We’ve got clearer views, not only on where we are going, but how to get there. People are enjoying what they are doing and it’s rewarding for everybody.”

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