

Case Study



*“ Spending Less
Time yet
Earning More
Money with
ActionCOACH ”*

When Ian Knight, owner of Knight Architectural Design, found himself working 70 hours a week he knew something needed to change.

Ian established Knight Architectural Design in 2000. The firm covers every aspect of architecture from conception to completion. Over 10 years Ian had built up a black book of clients, and by 2009 his business was split into four sectors: domestic, commercial retail, industrial and lastly legislative – covering legislation and planning.

Ian comments: “I had always been busy, but by then I was manic; I had 70 frequent clients and in a typical year 140 projects, some lasting months, some a day. I found it very hard to manage and plan my time, so I ended up working ridiculously long hours.”

In April 2010, Ian discovered ActionCOACH. “I was reading a FSB newsletter, and there was an advertisement by ActionCOACH – 6 Steps to Improving Your Business. So I went along to a seminar and was very impressed,” comments Ian.

But it wasn't until a few days after the Hampshire seminar that Ian met his business coach from ActionCOACH. “It was by accident, I was reading an article my coach had written, about working on your business not in it, and everything rang true to me.”

Ian arranged a one-to-one meeting with the Action Coach to discuss the problems he was facing in his business and quickly decided to appoint him. Ian hasn't looked back since.

Ian's challenge was a classic one, he wanted his income to increase and yet his hours to reduce. He needed to get back to working Monday to Friday 8am – 6pm and for his turnover to grow from £50,000 to £65,000 per annum.

His business coach quickly got to work. Indeed within 7 months Ian's turnover was on target to hit the £65,000 mark and some serious steps had been taken to overhaul his time management.

For instance, on looking at Ian's business he could see that menial tasks, such as, admin - sending out invoices - were holding him back from completing projects, while delays in issuing the invoices were affecting cash flow. This is a common problem in owner-managed businesses. So his coach encouraged Ian to take on an apprentice, who can look after the admin but who will eventually be trained up to work on projects and help with the legislative side of the rapidly expanding firm.

“Although, I had to take time out to help train the young lad, I wouldn't give it a second thought now, the investment over the short-term will result in a big long-term gain. I know my hours will eventually reduce as he begins to pick up more of my work load, and for now he has relieved me of those tedious admin tasks, which are so important to cash flow,” comments Ian.

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A further common problem with time-stretched business owners is they spend too much time on less profitable customers. To address this, his coach helped Ian assess which areas of the business were growing most rapidly and where Ian was spending the majority of his time. This has really helped Ian work out the direction for his business. As a result, he has refined his business into two core areas - corporate work and legislative.

“Analysing the business, made me realise that my core, regular clients are in the corporate sector and I need to move away from small, perhaps domestic jobs, as these aren’t so cost effective – they suck up a lot of my time and don’t deliver much revenue.

“It also helped me discover my niche – legislative work - providing solicitors and commercial agents with architectural support”, comments Ian.

In addition, by encouraging him to check on his competitors and thereby understand his own USP. ActionCOACH helped Ian raise his fees, quite literally overnight by 10%. Ian explains. “We found out what our competitors charged and the sort of service they offered. I could see that I was 25%, sometimes 50% cheaper, so I was able to put my prices up.”

This exercise also reaffirmed for Ian the strong, trusting relationships he has with most of his clients as they didn’t blink an eye at his price increases.

By earning more from each job Ian can clearly achieve his income targets without working longer hours but his coach has also helped Ian devise more time effective ways to win new business. For instance Ian had never marketed his business before, having relied purely on referrals. However to celebrate his 10th business anniversary he decided to do a massive marketing campaign, which his business coach oversaw giving tips and suggestions.

“Basically, I sent out medicine bottles filled with Tic Tacs, with a strap line saying *‘If you have an architectural headache, take one of these and click on www.K-A-D.co.uk’*

“The response was fantastic - it woke up some of my very dormant clients and renewed working friendships, it was such a minimal cost for such a bonus.”

ActionCOACH also introduced Ian to three different networking groups – The Profit Club, BNI and finally Property Investors Network (PIN) which was something he has not considered before.

Ian comments, “All networking groups have served me very well and have been great for referrals, but PIN has really encouraged me to get into property investment, so networking within this sector is helping me meet clients I need.

“My coach has really shown me how networking is good for business, how it surrounds you, providing referrals and general advice in running a business”.

But perhaps most importantly, ActionCOACH has empowered Ian to put himself first. Ian explains: “I have always been a ‘yes’ man and my coach has increased my business confidence to say ‘no’. I now feel able to turn business away which I know will waste my time.”

As part of this exercise ActionCOACH has helped Ian classify his clients as A – D. Ian continues, “D you ditch, those are your time wasters, and then you need all your C’s to become B’s and then A’s.

“We spent months analysing my clients; deciphering which ones were frequents and which were irregular clients. But it soon paid off; I have seen rapid improvement within the business since I have confined my efforts to true clients.”

Ian concludes: “ActionCOACH’s philosophy to work on, rather than in your business makes you think about the future, look at the direction you are going in and plan ahead. I feel so much more in control of events and I’m making more money too. It’s only very early days but already I’ve hit my income target and I know the measures I’m taking will help me massively cut my hours and get my life back. Lots of people say good things about ActionCOACH, and I promise you it’s all true.”

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