

Case Study



“My coach has enabled me to control my business”

The Animal Health Company manufactures natural health products for dogs and other animals. It is based in Essex, employs seven people, and was formed by Paul Westcott and his father in 1990. Paul had been struggling with the business over a two year period from 2008. As he said “We’d gone from profit to loss. I realised we needed to do something.”

Paul began looking for someone to help him and came across a business coach from ActionCOACH in 2010. Paul saw immediately that the coach could provide him with the help and guidance he needed. As Paul said “I was approaching a desperate situation and my coach was saying all the right things.” So Paul signed up to on-going coaching and they began meeting every week. The meetings were very open and all aspects of the business were discussed in detail.

One of the first areas that his coach encouraged Paul to get to grips with was his costs. They reviewed all their suppliers to ensure they were buying at the best rates. They hadn’t previously done this. As Paul said “I assumed the order person was looking at costs. But they were just buying from the people we always bought from.” They also underwent a lengthy process of analysing the costs on everything. This covered all areas from utilities to the tape used on boxes. His coach encouraged Paul to look at every detail. As Paul remarked “We got it down to fractions of pence!”

This level of detail provided Paul with the visibility he needed to control his cost base. In turn this led to a much clearer picture of where he was making profits and where he was not. So he was able to drop products that were not profitable and focus on the high profit products.

The importance of analysing all the key numbers in a business is a vital element to the ActionCOACH approach. So his coach helped Paul to look at all of the other key performance indicators in his business. They developed a ‘dashboard’ featuring all the KPI’s from leads and orders through to margins and hence profits. This was entirely new to Paul but he fully embraced it and now updates it weekly. His dashboard gives him the visibility to see what is happening with the business at any time. This has proven incredibly useful when controlling cashflow. As Paul said “I can see if a problem may appear in advance and deal with it early on. I just had a bank statement before.”

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The Animal Health Company
Committed to animal care

They also looked closely at the target markets for each product. Paul found out that he had a very wide target audience. This knowledge has meant that he can match products to the audience better. Additionally he has used the knowledge to refine his marketing. For example he can match his audience and product with the media he uses for advertising.

Paul also attends his coaches GrowthCLUB events where he meets other business owners. So he gets the opportunity to hear about other businesses issues and they can all share solutions and knowledge. As Paul remarked “Everyone is in the same boat but in different sectors so we can all share our knowledge and help each other.”

The results of coaching have been clear. In the first year it was all about gaining control of the business and turning its fortunes around. With his coach’s help Paul managed to turn a £50,000 loss into a £50,000 profit. This was achieved without an increase in sales and as Paul said “I got control of the business, created some profit, and then could look at how we moved forward.”

Gaining control of the business gave Paul the confidence and security he needed to plan for the future. ActionCOACH then helped Paul to focus on growing the business. This included developing new products. Understanding his audience and a clear grasp on the costs has enabled Paul to develop a number of new and profitable products. For example he introduced hemp oil based products and is launching a dog food range. Plus he is planning on entering new markets such as Russia. Coaching has enabled him to do this. As he said “Launching the new products and going into new markets is a sign of my increased confidence. Plus coaching has given me a new way of thinking that allows me to come up with lots of new ideas.”

Paul sees the change in his thinking as a major benefit gained from coaching. He feels that it has opened his eyes to the bigger picture and enabled him to think differently. He knows he is a better businessman now and feels very positive about the future. He is in full control of a profitable business and is set to reach all his targets. As he said “We were like a car stuck in traffic not going anywhere before coaching. Now we are zooming up the motorway! I’d recommend business coaching to anyone.”

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