

CASE STUDY

Hugh Davies & Co



INTRODUCTION

Hugh Davies & Co is a small but progressive company of Chartered Accountants, based in Salisbury, Wiltshire. Employing 11 people, the firm provides general accounting, management accounting, financial planning and forecasting, regulatory auditing and tax returns for business clients. The firm also supplies Sage accounting products and offers a wide range of expertise on Sage and other accounting software.

BACKGROUND

Hugh Davies, MD of Hugh Davies & Co., has used Coaching for many years and is a firm believer in its benefits. When his previous Coach moved away, Hugh was looking for someone who could continue to work with him, his partner and his senior management team. When J Mann Associates (JMA) joined the Chamber of Commerce, the 'new member' entry in the Chamber's newsletter caught his eye, and he suggested a meeting.

WHY USE COACHING?

'We had been using Coaching for some of the senior members of the team', says Hugh, 'and it had been a good experience for them. In a technical job like this, everyone is extremely good technically, but often has had no training in soft skills such as staff management, motivation, personal development and communication skills.' Hugh also underlines the importance of team working. 'Working as a team is very important in a small business', he stresses. 'It's difficult to get good training in teamwork, but Coaching is a really effective way of achieving it.'

WHY USE J MANN ASSOCIATES LTD?

"Jacqui Mann asks really good questions," says Hugh, "and that was one of the main reasons I decided to work with JMA. Good questions provide the real value of Coaching because it's not directive or prescriptive; it's about working through a process and helping people to find their own answers."

He feels that Jacqui is also highly professional, and tough. "I like a Coach to be tough, not too soft. If you have an issue about not doing very well, some Coaches will say 'You're doing fine'. Others will react with a more 'Pull your socks up' approach, which is what I prefer."

Although he himself prefers this tougher approach, he knows that Jacqui can adapt to whatever is required. "It is a personal choice, and Jacqui manages the Coaching in a way that best suits the individual. The questions however will be the same, and that's one of the key attributes of a good Coach".

WHAT SORT OF AREAS ARE WORKED ON?

Two people had recently joined the company – a new partner, and a new tax manager. Neither had experienced Coaching before, and Hugh felt that it was important that they were given the same opportunity for personal development as other senior members of staff. “They were, understandably, rather suspicious at first,” Hugh recalls. “However, because it really does open your eyes to the potential, they took it on board very quickly and are now enthusiastic about it.”

Issues are worked on in a constructive way; they are not regarded as ‘problems’, instead being seen as areas to be worked on. ‘It’s a very positive way of addressing issues’, confirms Hugh. “Instead of telling someone that they have a problem, or that they’re rubbish at something, the approach is one of ‘Here’s someone to help – let’s have a look at this and see what’s going on.’”

Areas Hugh Davies & Co works on with JMA include:

- how to deal with clients
- time management
- motivation
- leadership
- personal business goals
- longer term strategic goals

HOW DOES THE COACHING WORK?

Jacqui works with everyone on an individual basis, meeting them for an hour and half every 6 weeks. She and Hugh meet monthly for a review. Strict confidentiality is maintained, but there are certain areas that need a joint discussion. “Jacqui deals with the fine line between client confidentiality and business interest extremely well,” says Hugh. “It’s important to be able to do that, as the Coaching is, after all, all about improving the business.”

The experience of one of the senior team members demonstrates the type of attitude change that can result from Coaching. He felt he was reasonable at a number of things, and was happy with that. In his Coaching, he was asked “Is that where you want to be – reasonable?” To which he replied “Well no, I want to be good.”

Hugh feels that it would be difficult to achieve the same benefits from a training course. “Coaching is about looking inside and asking questions, and facilitates the opportunity for people to develop both personally and professionally, because often there is a crossover. If someone is angry then it will become a business issue, as it will affect how they react to people, and how people react to them. Coaching is about helping people to develop, and I’m not sure there’s any other way of doing it.”

SUMMARY

Hugh is clear about the role played by JMA’s Coaching in improving the business. “When I started using Coaching many years ago I had a lot of ‘aha!’ moments, because I hadn’t realised what effect my own behaviour was having. Coaching is about making you aware of what impact you’re having on others, and how your behaviour affects that of other people.”



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