

Case Study

Shellon Engineering Case Study



“ We saw a doubling of profits almost immediately ”

Shellon Engineering provides equipment hire services to the construction industry. They operate from two depots in Halifax and Hebden Bridge and supply to companies across Yorkshire. It was started by David Fielden in 1984 and he is supported by his wife and son plus six other staff. Although David had some success with the business he found he was struggling in 2010. So they re-launched the business at this time and hoped this would enable them to drive renewed growth. However they soon found “We were making the same mistakes and didn’t know how to change it.”

So when they were contacted by a business coach from ActionCOACH they were interested in hearing what he had to say. After some additional research into ActionCOACH and its methods David felt that they would be able to help. “I realised we could improve with some proper business training.” So David and his Son Jason signed up to a three month ActionCLUB programme.

The ActionCLUB programme involves six day long sessions every two weeks and includes homework and phone based support from the coach. It is carried out with a small number of other business owners who share knowledge and experiences. David found the sessions “very uplifting” and remarked “They don’t waste your time. It’s all very relevant and useful. Plus my coach followed up and pushed us to get stuff done.”

A clear benefit of the group format for David and Jason was learning from the other attendees. They were all in completely different sectors but had similar problems that the ActionCOACH methods could be applied to. This was an “eye opener” for David as he had always thought that his business was “unique and special.” So the other business owners and the coaches provided different outlooks on the same issues and created a valuable, supportive community.

Early on in the ActionCLUB programme David and Jason realised the importance of creating plans. As David said “In 30 years of business I’d never created a business plan, done forecasts or even kept a diary.” So they sat down and began looking forward and defining what they wanted to achieve. This meant that they could work backwards and define the steps they needed to take to reach their goals.

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The first business function that they worked on at ActionCLUB was gaining mastery over their 'key performance indicators'. This involved understanding the numbers that affect profitability. They developed a 'dashboard' featuring the main numbers they needed to look at and although they are only at an early

stage of getting it right they have seen immediate benefits. For example they have improved credit control and therefore strengthened cash flow. Their bank balance is now "significantly in the black."

Their coach highlighted to them the importance of focusing on the numbers so they could be improved. This made them realise that they needed to increase margins and performed price checks against competitors. This resulted in identifying a low value product which they could increase prices on. This led to "an overnight increase in profits of £12,000!"

Another area they looked at was how they could streamline the business and implement efficient systems. Their coach showed them how this can also affect profitability. An example of implementing this advice was by looking at how they filed and printed information such as invoices and contracts. They cut out unnecessary printing, installed some new hardware and reduced physical filing requirements. This has had an immediate affect on the time required to process orders and David has worked out it will save the business around "£18,000 over the next year!" They are also developing a series of manuals and processes that will ensure the business runs more efficiently and will make it easier for new staff members to learn how to perform their roles.

The team has been another place that the ActionCLUB programme has had a positive effect. David himself said that he had become "quite negative" but after the training he feels "really positive and so do the staff." They have a clear 90 day plan on the office wall and he shares key numbers with everyone so they know exactly what is happening and what they need to do to improve. David believes he is a better business leader now. As he said "I enjoy passing the concepts onto the team. I can give them more direction and they then help come up with new ideas."

Although David and Jason have only recently finished ActionCLUB the ideas they implemented while taking part have shown immediate benefits. They have been putting some strong groundwork into place and are positive they will continue seeing benefits as the ideas and processes get embedded. Plus they are now planning on working with ActionCOACH on a one to one basis. As David said "We need to keep the momentum going. Our coach is great at questioning and pushing us to get things done. That's why we need him behind us moving forwards."

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