

Case Study

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Accountancy Advantage Case Study



“My turnover has increased 85% and we won major award!”

Accountancy Advantage are based in north London and run by Shahbaz Husain and his sister Oruj Defoite. They set the business up in 2010 after successful careers in large corporations with a desire “To do something special for smaller businesses”. Their experience meant they could help businesses with strategic advice and not just do the accounts once a year. However, as most start-up businesses find, they struggled to gain recognition in a competitive market place. As Shahbaz said “It’s a trust based business and we were an unknown. So getting clients to switch to us was very hard.”

As part of Shahbaz’s marketing plan he built relationships with strategic partners who could be a source of referrals. While doing this he met a business coach from ActionCOACH. They realised they could help each other and decided to run some joint seminars for business owners. They worked together on developing useful seminars for owner managed businesses and delivered the first one in 2011.

It was over this period that Shahbaz got to know his coach and realised she had some fantastic business knowledge. As he said “My respect for her grew, especially after the first seminar. She answered all the questions from attendees and clearly demonstrated she had the real experience they needed.”

After they had done a few seminars together Shahbaz realised that his ActionCOACH could also help him. So they began 1-2-1 coaching and meet every week to discuss his business, set goals and create action plans. The first area that they worked on was setting a clear vision for the business. Although Shahbaz had a business plan he “hadn’t read it since it was written”. So they revisited the plan and made sure everything else flowed from this.

One key result of refocusing on the vision for the business was supporting their desire to be “a force for good.” This meant that they offered their services to selected charities and social organisations at cost. This has given Shahbaz and his sister a great deal of satisfaction. As he said “It’s no longer just about the slog of the job. I’m enjoying it more.”

In order to really drive the business forwards Shahbaz knew they needed to focus on the sales process. A major issue was their lack of history or reputation amongst the business community. This resulted in the sales cycle taking at least nine months. So they worked on developing a process that garnered trust in a faster way with the objective of reducing this cycle to two months.

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Firstly they worked on tightly defining their target markets. They then looked at developing a clear unique selling point and some service guarantees. This really helped to clarify for Shahbaz what they did well and focused him on the three key messages that his potential clients were interested in. As he said “I now only talk about these three key things. Because it’s what my clients want to discuss.”

They then mapped out the sales process in detail, refined every step and developed a seven touch sales process. For example they introduced steps such as pre-appointment fact finding telephone calls and pre-meeting agenda emails. These enabled Shahbaz to be much more relevant for the potential clients when he went to see them and gave them a clear picture of the advantage of working with him. They also developed a new proposal format that “Is totally focused on the outcomes the clients want. Plus we always follow up regularly.”

The results of this redesigned sales process have been clear. Their two month conversion rate “Has shot through the roof!” Plus turnover in the business has increased by 85% in the few months Shahbaz has been coached. But he doesn’t expect it to stop there, as he said “I reckon we’ll see a 150% increase at year end!”

His coach also encouraged Shahbaz to measure his marketing. This has given him a much better picture of what actually drives good leads into his new improved sales process. Before coaching he would perform some marketing activity such as a leaflet drop or networking without monitoring return on investment.

Another important area that Shahbaz and his coach have worked on is increasing internal efficiencies. They looked at all the processes involved in servicing clients and identified bottlenecks. This was interesting for Shahbaz as he found out that “I was the major bottleneck!” They then worked out what could be delegated or outsourced to free up his time. This meant that he could then spend more time focusing on growing the business rather than just delivering work.

Apart from the clear financial gains Shahbaz has found that the coaching has had some unexpected, but welcome, outcomes. For example they won a coveted Practice Excellence award as ‘Best New Firm.’ Which they “Put down to the help and support we’ve had from ActionCOACH.” Plus he says “Some of the stress has gone and I’m enjoying it even more than I did before.” He knows he has a way to go yet but he feels much more confident about the future.

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