

Case Study

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Standen & Sons Case Study



“ActionCOACH has turned around my business and given me my ambition back!”

Standen and Sons provide plumbing and heating services to customers across North Somerset. It was started in 1920 by the grandfather of the current owner Jim Standen. The last few years have been really tough for them and they saw turnover decreasing and low profits. As Jim said “We were not in very good shape. There were a number of problems and morale was low.” So when his new accountant suggested he went to a seminar run by a business coach from ActionCOACH Jim was interested. It proved to be a lot more than interesting “It really opened my eyes. It was so positive. My coach showed me that the sky’s the limit and you can achieve your dreams.” So Jim began having weekly coaching sessions at his coach’s office.

The first area they tackled was increasing revenues by working on the sales process. Jim was feeling really negative about this “Before coaching our conversion rate was abysmal. We didn’t want to do quotes because we didn’t win them.” So they mapped out every step of the process and worked on all elements of it. The quotes were changed to highlight the quality materials and service they gave as standard and importantly they were followed up effectively. The results came quickly “Our conversions are now at 75% which is a huge difference and the simple fact that we track it now makes you want to improve it.”

The tracking of the key numbers in the business was another change his coach encouraged Jim to make. It’s also a major element of the ActionCOACH approach. They developed a dashboard featuring all the key metrics in the business including leads, number of quotes, conversions and invoice values. They update it regularly so Jim always know where the business stands and is able to spot areas that need improvement. For example they have been working on margins by increasing the average sale per customer and reducing time on the job. “We are much better at defining the materials needed for a job so the plumber stays on site and doesn’t waste time going to the shop.”

His coach has also helped Jim to develop much more effective systems that have benefited cash flow. “Our cashflow was shocking before coaching. We couldn’t get bills out quickly because information was missing and jobs not finished.” So they worked on fixing the gaps and making sure that customers know exactly when to expect the bill and stopped giving credit. As Jim remarked “We make the process work the way we want it to. But customers are also better prepared to pay because it clearer. So it’s much more efficient and cash in the bank is much healthier!”

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Many of the changes they have made have been aimed at “making it easier for customers to buy from us.” For example the quotes are much simpler and clearer so customers know how much it will cost and when they need to pay. They also now send service reminders to customers via email and will call them to get the job booked in. Jim saw an immediate increase in revenues “Plus our customers know we want to work for them which they respond well to.”

Jim has also found that by implementing more efficient systems he has more time to drive the business forwards and look after his team. This has involved a number of changes especially on developing Jim personally. For example he has really taken on board the ActionCOACH concept of being ‘above and below the line’. “I was guilty of blaming others and I’ve changed that. Everyone has noticed and they know they can depend on me, I stick to my promises.” He has passed these concepts onto everyone in the business and introduced a ‘courtesy system’ that lays out how everyone needs to treat each other. The effects have been clear “My team is much happier and I think I’ve become a better person. It feels brilliant!”

Coaching has also helped Jim improve his marketing activities. They now test and measure different marketing techniques so they know what works. Plus they have developed much more effective advertising. “We now have many more leads coming in.”

Jim also attends the group coaching events called ActionCLUB. This involves other business owners and he gets a lot out of it. “It’s a fellowship of other business owners who are all in the same boat. You get so many new ideas. I’ve never been to anything like it.”

The financial results of coaching have been clear. In the nine months since Jim started coaching he has seen “Conversion rates shoot up, revenues increase by 72% compared to last year and more cash in the bank!”

However, it’s not just on the financial side of things that Jim has seen big improvements. Personally he feels much more positive “I’m not worried anymore I see everything as a challenge not a chore. I’m happier and more relaxed and even though I can take more time away from the business I don’t want to. It’s become exciting again and ActionCOACH has given me my ambition back!”

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