

Case Study



“*A Shorter Week and a Bigger Business Thanks to ActionCOACH*”

Jenny Todd, owner of No Nonsense Business Support, turned to ActionCOACH when she realised that what she badly needed was some support herself! She was putting in an 80-hour week and couldn't see how the situation was going to ease.

Jenny first launched No Nonsense Business Support in 2004, offering bookkeeping and accountancy services to sole traders, partnerships and limited companies in the Southampton, Romsey and Winchester area.

When she started the business she already had a strong client base from her previous bookkeeping business to draw on. As a result, from day one things moved swiftly for Jenny, so much so that between 2004 and 2009, Jenny felt she was working 24/7. She was so busy covering every aspect of the business that she just didn't have time to plan or think.

“It was not a problem doing the bookkeeping and accounts work,” explains Jenny, “it was the rate at which the business was suddenly growing that gave me the challenges; it just took off and I had no control. I had to sub-contract staff in for the general bookkeeping work just to give me some space to catch-up with myself.”

With four part-time staff helping her, the workload eased in one respect, but it also brought a fresh set of problems as Jenny explains, “Although I needed help, I knew very little about delegation, employee motivation and training. I didn't know how to get the best out of my team or my business. So I turned to ActionCOACH.

“I already knew my coach quite well and had always been very interested in what they did at ActionCOACH, so I was curious to see what he could do for me.”

So what was the challenge? “Everything!” Jenny says. “I wanted to get my office functioning properly, with all the processes and operations it needed, from customer service and admin through to planning for the future.

Her business coach talked to Jenny in practical terms about office systems and procedures - exactly what her burgeoning firm needed. “The main first step when I think about it, was the introduction of a Key Performance Indicator system (KPI),” she adds.

This records the performance of the business on critical measures such as customer numbers, new business enquiries, time spent on client work, average order value and additional sales. With these key measurements taking place Jenny can now clearly evaluate the success of a particular activity and the time spent on the job. Jenny explains how this kind of evaluation helps:

“We have many clients to look after, so it's quite a task keeping track of who is doing what and how long staff are spending on a particular job. With the KPIs in place I now know what we are all doing and how well it is being done. It identifies who needs extra training, and in what area, and it identifies any recurring time-sapping client issues.

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In addition to having these measures, her Action Coach has also helped Jenny systemise the business. “With every task we do there is a procedure to follow, so we can all pick up each other’s workloads if needed. This is particularly important with a team including part time staff.”

This greater control of the workflow has also helped Jenny come up with an all- important unique selling point for her business, which separates her from her competitors:

“We can now confidently guarantee all work will be completed in 3 months, otherwise there is no charge. That’s a powerful and memorable statement to make. It really helps us win new business.”

Importantly for someone who was working 24/7 and who is a real stickler for detail, the controls and systems also mean that Jenny can now actually go on holiday confident that all the crucial things will be dealt with. “I can’t tell you what a relief it is,” she comments.

But for Jenny, perhaps even more important than the systemised approach, has been the ability to plan for the future – and to have the plan broken down into weeks, so that she stays on track. Every week Jenny sets herself four goals she wants to achieve in the following week.

“It’s fantastic. It really does make you accountable for everything you are doing and keeps you very focused. Without it the weeks would go by and I would find myself at the end of the month without things being further forward.”

Jenny also values the external viewpoint that her coach brings. She speaks to him every Monday to go through the goals and discuss any burning issues she may have. For example, she found herself in an awkward position with one member of staff and turned to him for help – “I had a staff wobbly” she explained, “their attitude towards the work was not great, nor professional.”

“Firstly, my coach calmed me down and talked me through the steps I needed to take. He helped me approach the subject and resolve the issue. Being able to speak to him ensured I didn’t go in guns blazing.

“The huge problem when you are running your own business is that it can be very isolating. Being able to talk to someone, who understands is fantastic. It stops you from being so inward looking and dare I say it - sensitive. It keeps you objective and looking to the future.”

Her business coach also identified several areas for improvement. For instance, he noticed that when a customer paid there was an opportunity to send a response card accompanied with a ‘thank you’ for paying on time. The response card meant Jenny could discover areas where she needed to improve, but she could also ask for referrals.

“This was such a simple idea but a great one. The personal touch of the thank you card is greatly appreciated and about 90% of the response cards come back with referrals. “I also network a lot and come back with hundreds of business cards to follow up, but these get pushed down the list of things to do, and then it is too late. Consequently, my coach helped me put together a super template email – it’s fantastic, so easy to use and to send out. It really sets the right tone and is pitched just right. If I had put this ‘follow-up’ email together myself it wouldn’t be half as successful, and would certainly be deleted by most people.”

All of this has resulted in masses of new business. The customer base has leapt from 190 to 245 and turnover has increased by 31%, and yet at the same time, Jenny achieved for herself that all-important shorter working week.

“Thanks to Action Coach, I now have reduced my 80 hour working week to 55 and yet the business has been growing steadily. I feel so calm and in control. I know where my business is heading and have a 3-year and a 5-year plan in place so I am completely focused.