



hadland care group

Care at every stage

Who can you turn to when you are at the top?

Cheryl Hadland owns 100 per cent of the Hadland Care Group, with over five separate businesses on more than 20 sites, and employing nearly 700 people. Even with a trusted team of directors, it can be lonely as a successful business owner and, so, Cheryl is an advocate of working with mentors.

“My group of businesses include Tops Day Nurseries, residential care homes and a training company. As the sole shareholder and a single professional woman, I like to take advice from experts when I have new ideas for growth and development. After my last mentor retired, I agreed to work with business coach, James Akin-Smith, having met him through another local business woman in Dorset. In early 2017, my business was the biggest it had ever been and I really needed someone who had wider experience in larger companies and James fitted the bill.”

Initial Improvements

Cheryl first worked through a questionnaire for James which determined her personality type, her strengths and the areas ripe for development.

“I had a lot on my plate at this point but this work was invaluable. I needed to step back and gain perspective before I could move forward. The results of the Wealth Dynamics questionnaire were really interesting and made me think again about what I was good at and what changes I needed to make. I knew I had to restructure my teams to progress and expand and this gave me momentum to consider recruiting new blood to fill gaps including a financial director.

“In those early meetings, James introduced me to his 5 Ways model which helps you look at your business from

five separate but intrinsically linked areas, from gaining new customers through to repeat purchases and profit margins. This is something we have used repeatedly since then to drive improvements and efficiencies.”

A Regular Mentor

Cheryl takes more than just a business interest in the areas of senior care and childcare, she is a Trustee of Green Education to the Community Coalition and chairs Early Years Providers & Ofsted Big Conversation in the South. But she describes these as more of a recreational activity which have very little impact on her 50 hours a week, seven days a week work life – but only for 44 weeks a year as she goes scuba diving, skiing and spends time with family when not in a working week.

“Many people choose to work with a business coach to regain their work-life balance but that wasn’t my focus with James. I have no intention of slowing down but, if efficiencies allow me more time, I have other things I could focus on. After the initial work with James, our relationship very much shifted to one of mentoring where he acted more like a non-executive director.

“James joined our five-year planning meeting and met with all my directors. Where we come across gaps, he recommends books to read and he’s been so useful to bounce ideas around with. He’s had one-to-one sessions with some of my directors whether they have been with me 27 years or if they are new to the business and he joined a recent group away day for a couple of hours.”

James Akin-Smith Managing Director

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The Results

"Nearly 12 months in to working with James and we have new five-year business plans for Tops Day Nurseries and Aspire Training Team and we're about to move on to one for the care homes. We've looked at converting enquiries into bookings, increasing occupancy and have just started to test and measure some marketing activities. We'll have a new office by the end of March, and we're aiming to buy two small chains as part of our acquisition plans in 2018.

"I love scuba diving and underwater photography in beautiful areas like the Red Sea. James is very keen on encouraging his business owner clients to take some time for the fun things in life and his enthusiasm almost gives me permission to do things like take time off or draw some funding for personal reasons."

Looking to the Future

Cheryl was used to speaking to her previous mentor just once every few months and admits she found it difficult to transition to more regular meetings, albeit in not too formal a structure. So, what does she really think about working with James and has she found value from the investment in business coaching?

"We're constantly redefining our goals for the business but one thing we have been planning for a long time is the sale of one of our care homes. James has been helping with this including looking at ways to maximise its value prior to marketing the business for sale. That's why it's so important to work with a business coach and mentor who has been there, done it and got the t-shirt - James has a successful history in business including working through many of the hardships business owners face. He has the ability and authority to protect you from yourself if you are overreaching or give you the confidence to leap if you're not going far enough. He's an incredibly intelligent and creative

person who has been instrumental in our success during this time of change for Hadland Care Group. I respect his opinion, so when he tells me to watch out for burn out because he's been there himself, I pay attention."



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