



## Moulding out a bright future



### Background

Jon Brooks, bought injection moulding company, Inoplas, six years ago with the intention of using his experience in private equity investments to grow the business. After several years, Jon found himself sucked in to the day-to-day operations of the business. At the age of 49, he had expected to be working hard but wanted to be concentrating on the strategy and acquisitions side of the business.

### Meeting ActionCOACH

"Inoplas was in a healthy position but I thought that with some extra energy and guidance it could grow really well. I had met business coach, James Akin-Smith networking before but this time we discussed how I was still in the same boat, entrenched in the daily grind of the business. Without further thought to our conversation, I went back to work and started to sort out our management team. A little later, I realised it was the conversation with James which had given me some perspective and the impetus to take action. So, in early 2017, I signed up for weekly business coaching sessions with James to see what else we could improve."

### First Improvements

Jon's experience in private equity investment means he has a well-rounded set of business skills. To buy a sleepy business, re-invigorate it and return it to strong growth requires a great team under strong leadership.

"I'd bought Inoplas because I wanted to apply the experiences gained from working in private equity for myself in my own business. I had started to recruit one of two new roles to help build the team we needed for the business to step up but James encouraged me to take a step back and review my plans. We looked at short term, five year and ten-year goals and how I would need to structure the business to achieve them. "By articulating a target, it gives you a framework to recognise what resources you need and, once you have your team in place,

it gives them targets to help inform decision making. James encouraged me to spend time with the management team to get agreement on our KPIs and targets so all of us are pulling in the same direction. I don't see myself as autocratic but if you're making decisions and acting on them without communicating properly with your team, then you look autocratic whether that was your intention or not."

### Ongoing Coaching

James has been a business growth coach since 2013, working with business owners to create a roadmap for growth and personal freedom. He encourages his clients to work ON rather than IN their businesses, making better decisions and taking good results to great. Chartered Accountant, Jon, found the perspective and inspiration he gained from business coaching invaluable, even with his substantial experience in private equity.

"In less than a year, turnover has increased by £500,000 and our five-year goal is to double turnover from our £2million start point. This will help fund investment in equipment, increase our potential outputs and efficiencies as well as position us well to begin acquiring complementary businesses. After six months of structured coaching, we changed to meetings of a more conversational style on where progress is being made and what is on my mind. James homes in on one particular area as our next project, whether that is recruitment or a system to improve.

"He's good at recognising where my blindspots are and how they could be affecting the business. He's particularly strong in sales and marketing, possibly my weakest area of business, but that doesn't mean we just plough ahead with that specific area. We've put plans in place to build capacity to cope with more orders before generating them through new sales and marketing strategies. The nature of our business means we have to actively process and maintain a lot of information and our departments must speak to each other both in person and through systems.

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James has encouraged me to recruit people in to roles much faster than I would have naturally chosen to do."

Making his team more self-sufficient is paying off. Business is booming and his forward order book has more than doubled in the last 12 months. So, what does he think about his decision to engage James as his business coach?

"We're growing reasonably quickly and I'm more comfortable with spending time out of the business because the team has become more resilient. I'm now able to do the things I had in mind when I first bought Inoplas - customer development, business strategy and acquisitions planning. Not only that but I've seen improvements in my personal life - I've got better at accepting invitations from friends, knowing the business has momentum without me for a short while.

### The Future

"Beyond the one-to-one coaching sessions, James is well connected in our regional business community which brings other benefits. I know I'll be able to harness the value of the useful introductions he's made as I develop Inoplas and other business interests in the years to come. James has given me the freedom to mould the future of my business and helped to offer a bright future to the people I employ and their families."

"We are now on track for this year's projected turnover of £5.2 million. My weekly coaching sessions will continue for the foreseeable future - James is part of the team! He works with our leadership team, will support our new operations manager and he'll be there when we eventually prepare for the business sale. If you are prepared to work hard and make things happen then working with an Action Coach can take your business to the next level."

