



James Akin-Smith

THE CEO COACH®

CASE STUDY

CLARENDON SPECIALITY FASTENERS



PAUL SANDERS
CEO



NICK TUCK
COMMERCIAL
DIRECTOR

AFTER WORKING WITH JAMES...



exponentially
increased turnover



expanded team
structure



acquiring
complementary
businesses

Clarendon Speciality Fasteners (CSF) was founded in 1982 to fill a niche in the engineering industry: to supply seals and fasteners and provide the highest level of service to customers.

They have built a reputation for their specialist knowledge and technical support, with particular emphasis on aerospace fasteners and associated products. Their products have been carefully selected to meet the wide diversity of customer requirements, as well as meeting international standards and specifications.

In 2001, CSF was acquired by Diploma PLC, since then it has grown organically as well as strategically by acquiring complementary businesses incorporating Amfast (2012) and Speciality Fasteners

(2014). Both acquisitions helped broaden the product portfolio offering, further consolidate and strengthen market position whilst developing more opportunities for a technical distributor in their chosen markets of Aerospace, Defence, Motorsport and Industrial. Its success has seen the company enjoy exceptional growth with locations in the UK, Germany, Thailand and USA. In 2019, Clarendon Speciality Fasteners was awarded the Queen's Award for Enterprise for Excellence in International Trade.

The Challenge

Paul Sanders first joined the company as Sales Manager in 2002 and so has been a part of, and a witness to, the growth and changes that CSF has experienced over the last two decades. Paul worked his way up through the company, taking over as Managing Director in March 2021. Conversely, his colleague Nick Tuck, Commercial Director, is relatively new to the company, joining in November 2020.

What they both have in common is taking on the two biggest, most responsible roles in the Company

at a time when the business community generally was dealing with the effects of the Covid pandemic and subsequent cost-of-living crisis. Clarendon Speciality Fasteners is an exceptionally fast-growing business with a strategy of growth by business acquisition – most recently CR Systems Dec 2019; and, under Paul's leadership, Aircraft Hardware West (AHW) Sept 2021 – and employing several hundred staff worldwide. Both men needed to grow into their roles, develop their identities and deal with challenges that they hadn't had to face before.

“I really enjoy working with these two bright and capable guys. They listen, think and process all that we discuss during our coaching. They are a good team together and it’s been a great pleasure to see how they’ve settled into and developed their roles. Under their leadership, Clarendon Speciality Fasteners has an exciting time ahead!” James

James’ Input and Developing Their Roles

Both new to their posts, Paul and Nick had to adjust not only to their new roles but to each other as well. They felt they needed to invest in their own leadership development. Paul met James on LinkedIn and started working with him in early 2022. Although Paul had been with the company for more than 20 years and knew the company inside out, it’s still a huge leap from Sales Director to Managing Director, responsible for an international, multi-million organisation with hundreds of staff. It requires a very different mindset. James acted as a soundboard, allowing Paul to explore ideas, giving an outside perspective on issues and helping him think like a CEO. Paul then introduced Nick into the coaching process with James so that Nick could be aligned to the progress being made and making sure they were both talking the same language. James works with both men individually and together through Zoom meetings and in person.

James acts as a trusted advisor, asking difficult, probing questions which challenges and focuses their thinking and encourages them to challenge each other’s thinking too. He provides a forum to discuss matters before they bring them to parent company, Diploma PLC.

Paul Sanders: “We always discuss a large range of topics regarding business priorities, with an informal agenda against business priorities, scaling up and [the sessions] also give us an opportunity to share any challenges we face within the current landscape. James challenges us to think big with mutual collaboration and also puts things into perspective.

Both Paul and Nick work as people managers as well as business leaders. James has helped them develop these very different aspects of their roles, focusing on their accountability and responsibility, helping elevate them and their teams to oversee new developmental strategies such as further global geographical expansion, quarterly milestone objectives on the road to their £100m goal whilst evolving their Target Operating Model (TOM) with careful succession planning and talent retention.

Nick Tuck: *“James has helped us think differently and challenge the pace of the business – it’s been a lot about the people. It’s given us balance and perspective. Now we even take some time out from the business!”*

Paul Sanders *“James challenges us to think big with mutual collaboration. He also puts things into perspective.”*

Outcomes

Under the leadership of Paul and Nick, Clarendon Speciality Fasteners PLC is really thriving - increasing turnover from £45million to £65million in the last 18 months and on course to reach £100million; acquiring new business AHW 09.21; and expanding the Senior Management Team with the appointment of Sarah Gregory as People and Culture Director in 2023. James has really helped Paul and Nick develop their roles, work well together, and build a successful team allowing them to grow the business.



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THE CEO COACH™

Providing clarity and instilling confidence for business leaders to unlock their potential and achieve business success enabling personal freedom.

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