

in conversation with...

Guiding you through the Business Maze

JFP
STRATEGIC PLANNING
AND IMPLEMENTATION

Name: Christopher O'Neill
Occupation: Co-Founder & MD of Leapfrog International
Company Location: Datchet, Berkshire
Started: 1993
No. of Employees: 15 full time & approx. 40 seasonal freelancers
Overview: Event Management Company offering rewards, incentives, motivational activities and the delivery of company messages.
Objective: To work with all areas of the management team to formulate a strategic plan

TELL ME HOW DID YOU COME TO WORK WITH JFP?

We met JFP just over a year ago through Grant Thornton, who highly recommended their services. They were far more competitive in terms of cost and what they could offer really suited our needs.

AND WHAT WAS THAT?

Their experience, knowledge and wisdom and the fact that they were able to absolutely hone in to our needs. They have a real range of diverse skills and I think that their pure common sense approach and the fact that they have direct experience really helps. I also think spending time with the owners, shareholders and founders of our business, was of great value too. They were patient, understanding and they listened and then applied some very clever but simple techniques that have really helped us get our house in order.

WHAT IS IT ABOUT JFP THAT MAKES YOU BELIEVE IN THEM?

Well, I'm not a great lover of management consultants and I do think they are a waste of money half the time. We've been down that road before and it didn't work, as they just weren't prepared to work in the business, but JFP have some exceptional qualities in their commitment, direction and personalities. They've just got us to focus and we think that's important at this stage.

They are also very flexible and perhaps their greatest strength is that they reflect well to give a very strategic proposal or position that needs to be taken at each stage.

SO NOW THE PLAN IS IN PLACE, WHY CONTINUE WITH THEM?

I think that because we now have the board meeting with JFP every month it forces us to get together and talk about issues that are really important and that is essential, especially on a regular disciplined basis. They also document the meeting well, they listen, give direction and facilitate well and they are generally just good at giving us the discipline we need.

"I think JFP act as leaders who are able to give good direction as well as being a business friend, which every business needs. If you want more direction, clarity, purpose and direction then JFP are for you."

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WERE YOU SCEPTICAL BEFORE YOU MET THEM?

Yes I was, but the one thing that changed my mind was that they never put any pressure on us. They worked at our speed and to our requirements at any given time.

SO WOULD YOU SAY YOU VALUE THEIR OPINION?

Yes I do and that's important.

JFP NOT ONLY WORK DIRECTLY WITH YOU BUT ALSO WITH OTHER MEMBERS OF YOUR MANAGEMENT TEAM. DID YOU FIND ANY RESISTANCE FROM THEM?

No not at all. JFP had a very simple philosophy. They would meet with the managers here and if the managers didn't respond JFP wouldn't work with them until they had found a common ground. It was as simple as that and that's what they're like, they keep it simple.

AND EVERYONE HAS RESPONDED WELL TO THEM?

I think everyone has responded very well to them because they hold an unbiased view and have professional backgrounds. They also command respect and discipline, which is just what the guys need. They now have much more direction than they previously had, which they are definitely responding well to. I can also see that their personal development has been helped. So they are much better business people for it too.

Name: Simon Barratt

Occupation: General Manager, Leapfrog International

Length of current Employment: Since 2000

Objective: To work with JFP for personal and business development purposes

SO SIMON, TELL ME HOW JFP HAS SPECIFICALLY HELPED YOU?

JFP have been very good at the mentoring role for me and helped me take a real overview of the business, making sure that everything is being overseen properly. They've also guided me as to how to put a management team together, actually managing them and structuring operations.

I was always one for delegation, but JFP have helped me hone these skills. They've forced me to come out of a lot of activities, to make sure tasks are prioritised and delivery dates met. The whole structure is now much more effective and this has naturally had an impact on the whole business.

SO WHAT'S BEEN THE MAIN BENEFIT?

Most importantly for me personally, JFP have made me a stronger and more efficient manager. They've taught me how to maintain a balance between team spirit and management issues. In general terms, they have given us a much clearer direction. A lot more people now have taken ownership of tasks and responsibilities, so it's also a lot easier to manage the deliverables.

AND THE ADDED VALUE?

They have really expanded my skill set and things that I didn't initially embrace or engage in, they have given me the confidence to take them on, especially the financial side. JFP are very willing to help and when I've had problems they will always point me in the right direction.

We certainly also gain value from JFP chairing our board meetings, because one thing we have always lacked was meeting clarity, regularity and direction. We certainly find we get that from them now. They have also promoted communication within the company and created a more open and honest forum. This has been to everyone's benefit, including the greater good of the business. We are pleased to have them as part of our team!

