

A changing need

Net Technical Solutions, offers an outsourced IT function for SMEs. They provide everything from support through to hardware, whilst also developing bespoke databases for a wide range of business requirements.

Alistair Mackenzie, Managing Director of Net Technical Solutions explains how they came to work with JFP Strategic Planning and how the working relationship has changed in the seven years they have known each other...

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I met JFP Strategic Planning around 2001 and did a planning exercise fairly early on. But it was a couple of years later, a bit of a failing on my part really, before I reached the decision to fully engage with JFP. **You need to be convinced that it's what you want to do and commit to it. Otherwise it just doesn't work.**

Initially, I knew that what was missing, was a regular and proper reporting structure. So it all started by JFP running our monthly board meetings. At that stage, the business just wasn't enjoyable for me as we weren't getting the results I wanted. This in turn brought with it added stresses and strains. It was really good to have someone who could step in and make it feel a little less lonely at the top.

I suppose I was looking for someone to offer a non-executive service to assist me with moving the business forward. However, over the years JFP have helped with various plans that have shaped the way we have done things. They have also helped with specific projects too, including looking at raising more funding and the financial side of the business. I see their involvement as more on a management and strategic level now, rather than assisting with the day-to-day issues. They have a lot of value to add at this top level.

I'm also not sure at the beginning if I would have expected JFP to still be involved as they are now, or whether I necessarily would have wanted to commit to that. **That's the great thing though, they will work with you to suit your needs and are very fair at adapting their level of involvement too.**

Over the years though, they have definitely helped the progress of the business, getting it to the position it is in today, as well as helping me develop my personal skills as a manager. In the past, I have found myself in positions where I have felt extremely uncomfortable and yet have trusted JFP's judgement and persevered. **There is a certain satisfaction when you know you have the right course of action to take.**

Recently they have been instrumental in us merging with another company. During this process, one of the things that has impressed me most about JFP, is that they have been able to offer clean, clear advice at all times. At no point did I see any evidence to suggest they were looking at their own interests either. It was really very refreshing. **They had a very clear view of the issues at hand and how to take control of the new business and the people involved.** Their grip of the finances was really good too, especially when it came to looking at the bigger picture.

How JFP have helped us, is probably very different to how they have helped other businesses. That is the very nature of what they do. They will look at an individual business' issues and assist accordingly. And it doesn't matter what your business background is either. Being outside of the business, like JFP, allows a much clearer picture of exactly what is happening. **The more I've worked with JFP, the more I've become aware of the strengths and skills they bring for the future.** ”

The Analogy

Small and medium sized enterprises are generally busy doing the thing they do best- plying their trade or profession. Change rarely arrives announced.

Evolution, not revolution, is the natural order. It is a creeping progressive thing.

It's a bit like the frog in the saucepan...

If you put a frog in saucepan of boiling water it leaps out in order to save it's own life.

However, if you put the same frog in a pan of cold water and heat it slowly, the frog will remain placid and simply boil to death.

Many businesses are not much smarter than the frog. When things change almost imperceptibly, day-by-day, what is the stimulus to act today when you didn't act yesterday?

There is always tomorrow.

