

Business Advisor Programme

Business Case: Laser Plumbing

Trade: Plumbing

Size: 10-20 employees



Background

Laser Plumbing in Kerikeri is owned and operated by Craig Maxwell-Crawshaw and has been providing plumbing services to residential and commercial clients in the Far North for 18 years. Operating under license as MC Plumbing Ltd, Craig and his team joined the Australasian Laser Plumbing & Electrical Group Franchise in 2007.

Three years ago Craig began working with Trevor, a trade consultant in a private agreement. Craig joined the study group for the Skills Business Advisor Programme 12 months ago with Trevor as the Skills trade-based Business Advisor.

The starting point

When Craig and Trevor started on this journey, Laser Plumbing was meandering along with little ambition & direction. Craig, an experienced business owner, was tired of running his own business – and becoming less and less engaged. Quite simply, he just wanted out. Stress was ruling his mindset and impacting on his decisions.

When Craig and Trevor began meeting, Craig agreed to work toward two things:

- Building better structure/process, and
- An exit plan



Craig's Experience

“Trevor has a background which helps him understand exactly what I am facing. His knowledge and past experiences make these sessions work, he's been there and done that understand the industry, understands people and is blunt with me.”

The partnership has offered numerous lightbulb moments that have been reinforced by the progress Laser Plumbing has made over this period. Craig's key learnings have been in understanding the importance of direction and leadership, staff and career progression, company culture and understanding the value of engaged staff, as well as the power of accountability.

Gradually over time, with the help of a structured approach being applied to the business Craig realised that, “My stress and negativity were impacting on the business and my staff. I blamed everyone else for most of my problems. Once I trusted, I listened. I realised that many issues started with me.”

After 12 months of partnering with Trevor, Laser Plumbing started to see results. This was where Craig admits, “I sat back and thought, Yes, we’ve made it”, as he began to relax and slip into old habits. Craig recognises that one of the most crucial things he has learnt is regarding “the importance of direction, and that being accountable is so important. It’s too easy to fall back into bad habits.”

Eighteen months into the partnership Craig lost two key staff members and realised he didn’t have his staff progression plan where it needed to be. He had started the process, but the departure of these staff members left a big gap in his business that took eight months to fill. The savior during this time was the fact he had the beginnings of an apprenticeship training plan, with two trainees already engaged. With some additional placements he was able to transition the business into a more sustainable model

Through the advice, Craig began to understand the importance of culture and the value of engaged staff. He realised that staff are not all motivated by the same thing and it was important to understand their individual drivers – staff are far more engaged when they feel valued. He also realised that he couldn’t sit back and “cruise”, as staff feel this and begin to do the same. Culture is driven from the top. You cant lead a team of people if you have no idea where your going.

The results

Laser Plumbing have just had their best year on record, and Craig and the business now:

- Understand the importance of direction and the value of leadership
- Understand the importance of having a plan, sticking to it, and making sure that progress is reviewed
- Have apprentices being trained up at varying stages of development and have a plan for staff progression and succession planning
- Better understand the value of good company culture and understanding individual drivers
- Have increased sales, net profit and substantial growth in equity

Craig is less stressed, more organised, has more personal time, and brimming with ambition for his business. Suppliers have also commented that staff are happier and easier to deal with and sales have improved substantially.

Concluding remarks

For Laser Plumbing, the results have been outstanding.

Craig explains that “having an external, experienced person to offer another view point and provide accountability has been invaluable.” Craig acknowledges that he has “really needed it”, and it has made a big difference to him and the business. Craig is now much more confident and happier in business.

