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## Martin Harrison, Management Consultant and Trainer Case Studies

Martin Harrison MA, MBA, CEng, FIMechE has been a management consultant for over 24 years and has assisted over 500 businesses, social enterprises and charities.

Martin specialises in helping these businesses to grow, develop, and improve their efficiency and profit, by concentrating on their leadership, management, competitiveness and customer service; and on the processes that the business uses in its day to day operations.

Martin spends half his time in the UK helping small businesses and the other half of his time using his skills and experience to support businesses and development programs in less prosperous areas of the world, through consultancy, mentoring and training. He has developed an expertise in helping hospitals in less developed countries to modernise.

### Recent overseas projects

Worked as a mentor to help the local management to **modernise a 300 bed hospital** in rural eastern Uganda. The hospital is run as a private not for profit social enterprise and is the main effective hospital for a 50km radius serving over 1 million people of whom over 70% live on under £1 per person per day. The project was run on a 2 months in country / 3 months in the UK basis.

The main activities included helping the hospital management move from a command and control culture to a management team culture, management succession plan, defined strategic direction, computerising the accounts, new cost and charging model, and a viable grant and contract application process. The main outcomes are a reduction in staff turnover from 25% to 2% per annum, realistic monthly management accounts and an increase in the number of doctors from 4 to 8.

During this project I also carried out **strategic reviews** for another 150 bed hospital specialising in maternity, a new health clinic, a nurses training school, an agricultural college, and a large orphanage. The next visit will include carrying out a strategic review of a **medium sized development NGO** who run programs for orphanages, water, vocational training and social issues across the local region.

Managed the completion of the **Cleaner Production project** which was sponsored by the World Bank in Bangladesh. The project aim was to significantly reduce the water and utility consumption and the environmental impact in 6 major textile factories with an average of 4,000 workers and to develop a methodology which could be used in the textile industry across Bangladesh.

Carried out a strategic and financial review for a **medium sized NGO** (350 staff) who run 18 programs for schools, orphanages, hospitals, health clinics, and social issues across Bangladesh. This resulted in a detailed action plan which, when implemented, will place the NGO on a strong foundation for the future.

### **Strategic Business Planning and Cashflow Forecasts Projects**

The business provided high level **technical consultancy** advice on a worldwide market and had a turnover of £250k with 5 staff. They had the opportunity to set up 2 overseas joint ventures which between them should bring back over £1 million of work to North Wales, providing employment for over 10 new staff on high salaries. I assisted the owner manager with strategic and business planning as well as defining the cost models and financial arrangements for the joint ventures.

The **environmental manufacturing business** had set up an operation in the midlands and wanted to set up an equivalent operation in North Wales to convert low level waste plastics, which would otherwise go to landfill, into usable products. The capital investment was £1 million, mainly in equipment costs and the first year turnover was anticipated to be £1.5 million with 20 new jobs. I assisted the owner managers with business planning and cashflow forecasts which were used to raise the loans and to obtain an RSA grant.

The managers had helped another company to develop a £25 million turnover and, due to changes in ownership and strategic direction, they now wanted to set up their own **scientific laboratory business** and do the same for themselves. However they needed to invest over £1 million in new equipment etc as well as recruit 27 staff and achieve a turnover of over £1.4 million by the second year in order to be financially viable. I assisted the owner managers with strategic planning for the new business as well as a detailed business plan and cashflow forecasts which were used to raise the loans and to obtain an RSA grant.

### **Publications**

In order to encapsulate his experiences and knowledge, Martin has published a comprehensive handbook, 'Small Business Handbook - How to review your business to achieve stable growth and profits' This handbook is over 580 pages long and is aimed at advising independent owner managers how to manage a small business with under 50 staff.

### **Business Recovery and Restarts Projects**

A **high tech manufacturing business** with over £10 million turnover went into liquidation and the managers decided that they wanted to restart the more profitable sections. I assisted them to define what products and services to offer, what financial investments were required and how they were packaged. I also gave general business management advice on how to profitably run a smaller business which offers **world class technology**. Four years later, the business had a turnover of £2.5 million and I advised them on the financial implications of expanding to £5 million.

The **specialist construction business** was set up in 1995 but had severe financial difficulties in 2005. The owner decided to trade out of the situation (rather than phoenix the business). I provided advice and assistance to him to enable the business to do this, including sales and marketing, financial cashflows, business plans and operational financial management. The business was profitable and solvent until the 2008 recession.

The **food manufacturing business** was established 1999 years ago and achieved a turnover of £500k with 9 staff. But the business was not profitable and was struggling with marketing and finances. Our involvement was to assist the owners to sell half the business to one of their main customers who invested significantly in the business and subsequently took the sales up to £1.5 million within 2 years.

## **Business Growth Projects**

The owner manager had grown the **vehicle repair business** from zero to £1.4 million with 18 staff in 2½ years, making good profits. But there was no management team and the owner had never managed a business bigger than this before. The strategic plan was to double the turnover to £2.8 million over the next 3 years with 28 staff, and our involvement was to give the owner management advice and assistance to enable him to achieve this.

The owner manager ran a **successful food shop** and wanted to set up a factory to manufacture some of his own products and to sell them via the supermarkets etc. I assisted the owner manager over 10 years as he invested over £500,000 in buildings and equipment, and built profitable sales to over £2 million.

I provided general business management advice to a **utilities contractor** over 8 years as it grew from £1.4 million to over £10 million turnover. I then helped the original owner manager to set up succession planning and to sell the business.

The **plant hire** business had a turnover of £1.7 million with 14 staff. The strategic plan was to set up a new business to provide additional services to the same customer base with anticipated turnover of £1 million within 3 years with 10 staff, after an investment of over £1 million in equipment and buildings. My involvement is to give the owners the management advice and assistance to enable them to achieve this.

## **Charities and Social Enterprises**

The business was a **social enterprise and registered charity** with a turnover of £300k and 8 staff. The project was to assist the business with strategic and business planning so that they became financially self sufficient within 3 years.

The business was a **new social enterprise** which had achieved a turnover of £120k with 11 staff in its first year of operation. The project was to advise the business on where to go from here and what was missing after the first year of operation. This included defining in writing its social objectives, how to become a registered charity, financial management and KPI's, and a general business review.

## **Mentoring projects**

This specialist **design, manufacture and install business** had a 3 year mentoring project. During this time the turnover grew from £800k to £1.2 million and the profitability significantly increased. The business has also moved from being a local company with small projects worth £5k to being a national company with typical projects worth £100k each. The added value per member of staff increased significantly.

This **specialist construction company** had a 2 year mentoring project. During this time the turnover grew from £2.6 million to over £5 million. However while profitability increased significantly in the first year, it dropped back in the second year due to poor margin control (and too fast growth). The objectives for the next year were to increase profitability, keeping the same turnover. The key issues with this business were management succession to the 'children' and implementing the management team and systems to manage a £5 million turnover business. Staff numbers stayed about the same as they used subcontractors with a core of experienced staff.

This company was a **contract packer to the food industry** with a turnover of £2 million and 20 staff. Mentoring started after the assets and goodwill of the previous business were bought off the liquidator. The first few months were tough as we discovered that various items of equipment were 'owned' by various third parties who were threatening to remove them and hence stop production. To resolve these issues the business was put into liquidation again and the assets and goodwill bought back. After two years the business achieved break even and started to make a profit. The mentoring issues were to support the management team during this difficult and uncertain period.

This company **manufactures specialist building products** and was bought from the liquidator when the turnover was £1 million. Two years later the business had a turnover of £3.5 million (just above break even) and wanted to increase to £5.5 million over the next 3 years. The key issue was to support and advise the management team as they tackled the issues brought about by this expansion, including a factory move.

### **Management Systems**

The **specialist groundworks construction company** had a turnover of around £8 million and employed 45 staff. The project was to review all of their management systems and to assist them to implement an integrated system which complied with the requirements of ISO 9001 Quality Assurance, ISO 14001 Environmental and OHSAS 18001 Health and Safety and to achieve full BSI accreditations.