Case Study //

How coaching and the SHIFT skill saved 500k

Complete

Coaching benefited one business owner $500,000

Simon Beard, CEO and Founder of Australian streetwear retailer Culture Kings, talks about his experience of coaching with Complete.

When Simon first began his Complete coaching programme, he had taken just six years to build his business of 150 people, including 50 new employees in the previous year alone. His ambition was to double revenues and expand internationally. He had always been interested in his own development through investing time in reading, podcasts, seminars but he realised that he needed to more to transform himself and be a more effective leader of a growing business.

The rapid growth of his company and the pressure that this brought made him realise that he needed to show up differently if he was to effectively cope with the increasing demands of leadership. He wanted to accelerate his own development, deal better with mistakes and manage his impact on others.

"I'd experienced other coaches," says Beard, "but Complete's understanding of leadership is at that next level. I came across their approach through Dr Alan Watkins' TEDx talk and through reading his books; 4D Leadership and Coherence. I liked the science underpinning the work and using the bio-feedback to prove that I was making objective progress and could improve with the support of my coach."

The Complete Leadership Development Programme teaches leaders to first manage their energy levels and emotional state. It also creates a step change in the quality of leaders' thinking, generates a much greater level of confidence and allows executives to develop a more compelling leadership style. Ultimately, leaders develop a much greater ability to connect with those around them and lead in a way that is more powerfully authentic.

One thing that is unique about this programme is that it starts with a scientific assessment of a leader's physiology during a normal working day, using non-invasive heart monitoring technology. This approach enables an objective identification any obstacles that are inhibiting performance. This data also enables us to completely customise the coaching programme for the coachee to deliver a real change in their ability as well as providing objective proof of that change by the end of the programme.

Simon continues, "The program was really practical. There were lots of different tools and skills and my coach explained how to apply them at work. For example, I remember a time I used the SHIFT skill and it literally saved me about $500,000."

The SHIFT skill is a technique for emotional regulation that, with practice, enables a leader to move from an undesired emotional state to a more productive state. It develops a leader's ability to change how they feel in the heat of the moment through changing their biology to enable improved brain function.

The key to the emotional shift is noticing the undesired emotion as it arises and then consciously changing your physiology and switching to a more productive emotional state. This goes way beyond simple cognitive behavioural approaches such as cognitive restructuring, reappraisal or 'thinking positive'. It involves a fundamental energetic and emotional transformation. It enables a leader to authentically embody a new powerful positive emotional state rather than just thinking about one.

Simon describes one particular occasion when he used this technique to great effect:

"It was half an hour before the warehouse was due to close and I had trucks rock up with an unexpected delivery of two premium brands. They were unloading all these pallets and I wasn't sure they were going to be able to fit inside. I could feel my cortisol taking over, I panicked, and I remember thinking, this is millions of dollars' worth of stock, I can't have it sitting outside. Crazy stuff was going through my head, I called my landlord; there was more warehouse space available but at a premium. I was moments away from saying yes in my state of panic, but it felt like a mistake. I just stopped and did the simple SHIFT skill that I'd learnt during my coaching sessions. I got my breathing back in check by breathing rhythmically and evenly through my heart and then switched emotions. In that moment, I could think clearly.

"Once I had that clarity, I knew what we needed to do. We had two forty-foot containers that were being used for online returns, if we could empty them, we would have the space we needed. I'd had an idea for an all-star sale weekend for a while. Within three weeks I'd booked a venue and mobilised the staff. We had a basketball tournament, food trucks and DJs. People queued around the block to get in, we moved $250,000 worth of returned stock in one weekend. Rather than cannibalise our other stores, the exposure boosted our store sales there too.

The difference in my decision in that moment was worth half a million dollars. I went from being $250,000 down to $250,000 up. This was all due to being able to stop in the moment and get myself back in control."

Simon's coaching conversations continued beyond his own emotional state control to explore his impact on others. He had previously found that from time to time his desire to create change in others would provoke rather than inspire them. In particular he wanted his team to develop a more commercial and pragmatic way of working rather than just following process. He explored how he could be more appreciative and more patient to create the space for people to engage in their own development. Changing his own emotional state and listening more deeply enabled him to be more present in terms of what was going on for others and he started to coach them more effectively.

Simon continues, "My business is rapidly expanding, and I can't get to everyone and have a one-to-one conversation like I used to. I built a multi-million-dollar retail business from a market stall. You would think your emotional set point would go through the roof with success like that but mine didn't change one bit. It was only when I invested time and money in my development that I begin to realise that it's not money that changes how you feel.

"Making more and more money and building the business from nothing to being hugely successful wasn't what brought me fulfilment, I just had more problems, more stress, and the number of things to deal with amplified. It was through my own personal development and coaching that I realised how important it is that you run the business and not let the business run you. I use what I've learnt in my coaching programme throughout our business. How I have changed extends to the emotional atmosphere in our stores, or the vibe as I call it, and it has increased the emotional awareness in our staff.

For example, in our morning meetings we start with appreciation and have high energy games to get us into a great emotional state for the day."

The team at Complete recognises that when leaders get swamped by the daily demands of their business, they become one-dimensional, focused on an endless to-do list of tasks and targets. Real leadership starts with who you are and how you are being, not what you are doing.

Simon put this into context: "My goal shifted from making more money, to moving my emotional set-point. I decided that I wanted to look at myself in 10 years' time and have more than just money. I wanted to be even more passionate, determined, grateful, appreciative and authentic than I am now. That's become the purpose of our company too; to shift the emotional set point of our customers, our teammates and ourselves. I think getting control of your emotional setpoint is the new superpower. If I can train that into my kids, then there's nothing I'd have to worry about for them in life.

Once I had connected to a deeper level of purpose through my coaching programme, I was skipping to work in the morning. You get up at 4.20 and you feel that excitement. It's had a positive effect on my energy levels. I realised how much of a drain negative emotions had been having on me. It's like driving your car around with the brakes on. Once I realised that, I found a new level of energy, even in the midst of the inevitable problems associated with building a $100 million-dollar retail business"

Simon has taken full responsibility for practicing the techniques taught to him by his Complete coach and applying them to workplace situations. As a result, he is far more aware of his emotional state and its impact on himself and others, which has enabled him to make a conscious choice to change his state if he wants to.

This enhanced 'tuning' of his emotions has enabled Simon to appear far less reactive and more able to select a response to get closer to his desired outcome. Simon also found that he was coping better with the increasing demands of his leadership role, because he was more appreciative of his own capability and able to let go of an overly intense focus on results. He was starting to notice that, paradoxically, holding his goals more lightly made them easier to achieve.

The last word is Simon's, "I've spent a lot of time and money on my development over my career, and in my opinion Complete really is the highest standard. It's elevated my level of thinking and made a massive impact on my ability to be a leader, a coach, a sales trainer, a parent and even a husband."

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