

Strategic  
**Advantage**

MENTORING YOU TOWARDS SUCCESS



# How to **make money** from construction.



Report by **Bob Evans**



### **All Rights reserved**

No part of this work book, or any training materials received as part of this coaching, may be duplicated, reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted or used in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, or otherwise, without the prior permission of The Strategic Advantage Ltd

Copyright © The Strategic Advantage Ltd 2010

Freedom Business Coaching Ltd has asserted the right under the Copyright, Design and Patents Act, 1988 to be identified as the author of this work.

# Executive Summary

## Who should Read This:

If you are in the construction industry and own a business or manage a business for a board or group of shareholders, then you should read this document.

## What You Will Learn:

You will learn how to improve your net profit by improving four business variables:

1. Number of enquiries received
2. Conversion of enquires into contracts
3. Average contract value
4. Gross margin

The compound effect of each improvement will transform your business. You will learn the strategies and ideas to improve each one and more.

## Why You Need to Learn This:

This report will help you in three ways:

1. Unlocking your personal potential, by giving you new ideas and new ways to think
2. Creating systems and teams to deliver your business objectives
3. Delivering your desired results by monitoring the progress using "Done For You Systems"

## Results:

The results that you will achieve after you have read and implemented the ideas and strategies will add value to your business and profit to your bottom line.

You are in charge of your destiny, no one else, you decide what you want your bottom line to be, the strategies in this report will help you achieve them

From measuring your results, you will be able to find new ways to improve them; this is the key to a predictable and sustainable business.

## The Principles

A business is people running processes and systems. You can consider any business as a money making machine that has inputs, processes and outputs.

The question is how do you get more out, by putting less in?

This may sound difficult, but the solution is very easy and simple. Let's look at a typical financial model of a construction company; the model represents a small contractor.

Variable	Result
<b>Number of enquires received</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Conversion of enquires into contracts</b>	<b>20%</b>
Number of projects won	10
<b>Average contract value</b>	<b>£100,000</b>
Total sales	£1,000,000
<b>Gross margin %</b>	<b>20%</b>
Gross margin value	£200,000
Overheads	£150,000
Net profit before tax	£50,000

There are a number of variables in this model that can be adjusted and improved which will make a difference to the bottom line, they are:

1. **Number of enquiries received**
2. **Conversion of enquires into contracts**
3. **Average contract value**
4. **Gross margin**

Using these variables let me show you some scenarios:



## Scenarios

	Variables	(A)	% Improvement	(B)	% Improvement	(C)
1	Number of enquiries	50	10%	55	0	50
2	Conversion	20%	10%	22%	100%	40%
3	Contract Value	£100,000	10%	£110,000	0	£100,000
4	Gross Margin	20%	10%	22%	0	20%
	Gross Margin	£200,000		£292,820		£400,000

You can see by improving the four variables by just 10% in scenario (B) the difference in net margin is 46.4%. Alternatively, by focusing on one variable in scenario (C) the improvement to the net profit goes from £50,000 to £250,000 if the overhead remained the same at £150,000. This is a 500% improvement.

You can play with this idea and come up with your own strategies that you feel comfortable with. To be successful you have to take action on them and measure your results. Change your approach if you don't get the results you want.

## An explanation of the variables

**Number of enquiries received** – the number of enquires you receive and submit tenders or quotations for.

**Conversion rate of enquires into contracts** – the number of tenders or quotations you convert into contracts. You calculate this number by dividing the number of enquiries you win by the number of enquires to have priced.

For example: number of enquires priced 50 / 10 number of enquires won = 20%

**Average contract value** – you calculate this number by dividing total turnover by the total number of contracts you have won.

For example: turnover of £1,000,000 / 10 contracts won = £100,000

**Gross margin** – you calculate gross margin by taking your cost of sales (the cost of producing the project, labour, plant, materials, and sub contracts) from turnover, then dividing this sum by turnover. The answer will be a percentage.

For example: turnover of £1,000,000 - £800,000 cost of sale = £200,000

Gross profit £200,000 / £1,000,000 turnover = 20%

### Note:

The scenarios above are made up; however you can model your own business to see how you can improve your profit using the principles.

Go to the resource page at [www.freedombusinesscoaching.com](http://www.freedombusinesscoaching.com) and download the excel file *Construction Variables.xlsx*

<b>Id</b>	<b>Variables</b>	<b>Existing Model</b>	<b>% Improvement</b>	<b>Planned Model</b>	<b>Difference</b>
1	Number of enquires	50	20%	60	10
	x				
2	Conversion Rate	20%	25%	25%	5%
	x				
4	Average Contract Value	£ 100,000.00	0%	£ 100,000.00	£ -
	x				
5	Gross Margin	20%	0%	20%	0%
	=				
6	Gross Profit	£ 200,000.00		£ 300,000.00	£ 100,000.00

This is an example of the excel file output. You can see by improving the number of enquires by 20% and the conversion by 25%, the result adds an extra £100,000 to the gross profit, if overheads remained the same. This figure goes directly to your bottom line.

## How to improve the variables

It's one thing learning the concept of improving your business variables and another actually achieving it. I have described some strategies and ideas below that will help you achieve this in practical ways that relate to the construction industry.

## Variable 1 Number of enquires received

### Strategy 1 – Understand the Market

#### MARKET REVIEW 2005-2009:

Total construction output declined by a strong 15% in nominal terms in 2009, taking output to £97.52 billion. This is in contrast to an increase of 15% recorded between 2005 and 2008, although annual growth slowed to just 1% in the latter year. The decline in 2009 is largely due to the economic downturn exerting a significant downward pressure on new construction output, in particular in the private housing, offices, retail and private industrial construction sectors. In contrast, growth was sustained during the economic downturn in the public non-residential construction sector, as the Labour government brought forward spending and fast tracked capital projects in a bid to kick start the economy.

In the new work sector, output fell by a significant 21% to £47.28 billion in 2009, consolidating a 4% decline recorded in the previous year. Prior to that, annual growth of between 4% and 10% was recorded in the years from 2005 to 2007. On the contrary, in the repair & maintenance sector, growth was maintained up to 2008, when a 7% increase took output to £54.94 billion. This is partly due to continued strong government expenditure in public housing and non-residential repair & maintenance activity. However, in 2009, repair & maintenance output also declined, albeit at a more moderate level than the new build sector, with a 9% decline taking the value of output to £50.24 billion. The decline during the latter year is largely due to reduced output in the private repair & maintenance sector in light of the adverse economic conditions and reduced house moving activity. The public repair & maintenance sector was also negatively affected by government cuts in the Decent Homes programme. Nonetheless, during 2009, total repair & maintenance output was higher than total new work for the first time in the review period.

#### **MARKET FORECAST 2010-2014:**

Total construction output (including new work and repair & maintenance) in Great Britain is expected to decline by 1% in real terms in 2010. The moderate decline reflects continued economic uncertainties, as well as initial government spending cuts. The UK construction market is expected to return to growth in 2011, albeit at a moderate 1%, although this is somewhat dependent on the level and pace of the economic recovery. Slightly stronger annual growth of between 2% and 3% is forecast in the following three years. In 2014, construction output in Great Britain is anticipated to reach £105.7 billion, equivalent to growth of 8% in real terms compared with 2009.

During the recession in 2008 and 2009, demand in the construction market was mainly generated from the public sector, as the Labour government increased investment in building projects in a bid to kick start the economy, while most private construction sectors recorded a significant downturn in activity. However this trend is likely to be reversed over the forecast period, as a result of the record high budget deficit, with the new government set to introduce significant spending cuts, which will undoubtedly affect construction projects in the public sector. In the private sector, construction output is expected to return to growth in the medium-term, although the timing of which is dependent on a stronger economic recovery, which remains fragile. The strongest growth potential in the private sector is expected to be in the house building sector, reflecting the continued housing shortage.

Source <http://www.mbdLtd.co.uk>

## Highlights

- ❖ Output increased by 15% between 2005 and 2008
- ❖ Output dropped by 15% in 2009 taking output to £97.5B
- ❖ Output to fall 2010 by 1%
- ❖ Output to grow 2011 by 1%
- ❖ Housing market to come back on line
- ❖ Output to grow to £105.7B - 2010 to 2014
- ❖ Public sector work will fall back
- ❖ Private sector work will increase to fill the gap

## **The problem isn't construction output it's not working "smart". What can you do to work smart?**

**Strategy 2 - Understand your market.** In my company we used to market to everyone and tell them we could do anything, the results we got were poor. The solution in our case was to focus on one market sector. Our financial goal was to increase turnover from £1.5m to £5m within 3 years, we simply looked at the market sector that could help us achieve it, knowing we could service that sector.

We focused on the power industry and specialised in constructing sub stations, nationwide. Our clients were Scottish Power, NGC, Siemens and the like.

### **Things to do:**

- 1. Find out which 20% of your customers give you 80% of your turnover and profit.**
- 2. Carry out market research, find out which markets are emerging, growing and have good profit potential.**

From the 80/20 analysis stop working for the 80% of your customers that give you 20% of your turnover and profits.

The time and effort you spend on the 80% of customers, spend on getting more of the 20% types.

If you are not comfortable in taking this radical change, then do it gradually, but do it, it works. Begin with dropping the last 10% or 20%, this will hardly make a dint in your sales, then when you have the confidence, carry on with the strategy.

Use the next strategy to find companies in the market sector you find that will allow you to achieve your financial objectives.

### **Strategy 3 – Use FAME or a similar marketing database**

There is a marketing tool called FAME. Large organisations use this tool to find customers they want to work for by using the technique of modeling and finding more of the same.

FAME has over **3,000,000 companies** in its database and allows you to find companies from various variables, for example:

- **Geographical area**
- **Sic codes or activity of operations**
- **Sales**
- **Balance sheet value**
- **Number of employees**
- **Profits**
- **Current ratio**
- **Liquid ratio**
- **Growing or declining**

Example, your most valuable company is in the chemical industry, employs 200 people, has a balance sheet worth of £10,000 and sales of £75,000,000, with profits over 10% per year. Using FAME you can find more just like this. Find out the names of the directors and work out a marketing strategy to create a relationship with them.

To learn more about fame go to [www.bvdinfo.com](http://www.bvdinfo.com)

**Strategy 4 - Get good at marketing** – One of the questions I ask clients when we first meet is: What business are you in? They then go into great detail telling me all about their business. Then I say, no you're in the business of marketing, because if you don't get good at it, you will fail, struggle and not reach your true potential. Getting good at marketing will improve the number and quality of your enquires. Marketing is about having the:-

- **Right product or service directed at the**
- **Right target audience at the**
- **Right price, with the**
- **Right quality at the**
- **Right time**

The first thing to do in marketing is to work out your strategy, then communicate your marketing message to attract leads and enquires to your business.

Strategic Marketing is made up of the five steps below:

1. **Demographics** – Find the right audience for any given product/service or range of products/services
2. **Psychographics** – Using the right language to connect with the target audience, each one will be different
3. **Positioning and Differentiation** – Answering the question, why should the customer buy from you?
4. **Look and feel** – How to attract the target audience to you
5. **Putting it all together** – Once you have analysed each market sector, put the communication together and communicate to the target.

Getting your marketing strategy right is the first step, and well worth the effort. This is how large successful organisations become large successful organisations.

#### **Things to do:**

Study strategic marketing and marketing communications, to create quality leads.

### **Strategy 5 – Join a Construction Power Networking Group**

Join or create your own construction power network group.

#### **How it works:**

**Construction professionals**, for example, architects, engineers, surveyors and the like, all work on projects, know about new projects, know construction clients, other construction professionals, main contractors and some sub contractors and suppliers.

**Main contractors** work on live projects, tender for new projects, and know construction professionals, some construction clients, sub contractors and suppliers.

**Sub contractors**, work on projects, know a few main contractors and other trade sub contractors, they also know about the projects they are pricing.

**Suppliers**, know main contractors, trade subcontractors, projects they supply to, and projects they are submitting prices to supply to.

These four groups of people all have project intelligence and know lots of people you would like to know. The problem is, no one is sharing the information.

If you were part of a power group and the group was being lead by a facilitator, and everyone was willing to share intelligence, imagine how many new leads you would generate and how easy it would be to be introduced to new people through a referral.



For this to work, there could only be one occupation or trade category in any power group, and everyone would have to be committed and trustworthy.

Trustworthiness and credibility could be developed over time, from regular meeting or by completing profiles, with track records, so each company can prove credibility.

If you like this idea and want to know more, please contact me, I have the process and systems all worked out and run one myself for my clients. My contact details are at the end of this report. I call my group TROJAN – one in all in

## Strategy 6 - Deliver Excellence

Word of mouth marketing is the most cost effective and efficient form of marketing. Having customers making recommendation about you to their colleagues, friends and other companies is priceless.

For your customers to refer you, they must believe in you, when they believe in you they will:

- **Buy from you**
- **Repeatedly buy from you**
- **Tell their friends to buy from you**

What do you have to do so your customers believe in you?

For your customers to believe in you, you must deliver excellence. Excellence in your:-

- **Delivery of projects on time, every time, to budget, to specification,**
- **Marketing and marketing materials**
- **Customer service**
- **Relationships**

The method of delivering excellence is customer focus. Every time your customer touches your organisation, whether it be the first phone call, receiving a quotation or an invoice, how you treat them, it has to be an excellent customer experience. You can test this by using contract review processes within your quality management system and carrying out perception surveys when collecting market research data.

For your customers to believe in you, your team has to believe in you, for your team to believe in you, you have to believe in you. The formula for this concept is:

- **I believe** – Your leadership
- **We believe** – Your Winning Team
- **They believe** – Your Customers

A great company is lead by a great leader, who has a vision, a mission and values that people will follow.

Everyone in your organisation must be a sales person, treating customers and everyone else as million pound customers. Be respectful, honest, have integrity, do what they say they will do, be committed, and passionate about your business.

Having the right people in your business who are passionate about it, is the key. They create positive energy. People who are not passionate about your business and who create negative energy are not good for your business. Developing a recruitment process and system to ensure you hire the right people is paramount.

Building a winning team that can achieve anything, makes business fun, and worth getting out of bed for in the morning.

Ask everyone in your team to write a sales letter. By doing this they will have to understand your customer, your products and services, the benefits of working with you and what your competitors are up to. Having this understanding will help them sell the business to customers at touch points.

### **Things to do**

Ask your team to write a sales letter to themselves about their dream holiday. What would the title be, where would they go, who would they take, what would they do? Make it colourful, with lots of emotion. What would the benefits be and what would they have to do to book the holiday, and finally why would they book the holiday with the company that sent the flyer?

Ask them to use the Direct Marketing Copy model of AIDA

**A**ttention – A head line that grabs attention

**I**nterest – The next paragraph has to be very interesting, so they read the rest of the copy

**D**esire – Write about the benefits; make this part compelling, colorful and emotional.

**A**ction – The call to action, what do they have to do next?

The idea is, if this sales copy dropped onto their door mat, they would be compelled to book the holiday because it's totally relevant to them.

Now ask your team to write a sales letter about your business using the same method. This they may find difficult as they may not really understand your customer, your products and services, your benefits and your competitors.

Having your team believe in your business and understanding it will help them deliver your promise.

If you deliver excellence, you will become known for it and will have no problems getting work from strategy 5.

## **Variable 2 Conversion of enquires into contracts**

**Strategy 7** - Get fussy about which jobs you price – At the end of my construction career, I would negotiate the majority of our work and refuse to price most opportunities that we were asked to tender for. I would only price work in competition if I knew I was going to win, or had a good chance of winning. This strategy improved our conversion to over 80%.

Many of you reading this will be thinking that it would not be possible for your business, this is a false belief. It is possible. It may take some time to get there, as you may have to implement systems and deploy marketing strategies to position your business.

Score Matrix – Score your opportunities for example:

- **What are your chances of winning the work?**
- **How many are pricing it?**
- **Have you worked for them before?**
- **Are you talking to the decision maker?**
- **How far away is the work?**

Only put the minimum effort into low scoring opportunities. Put all your efforts including a winning presentation into the jobs you want. Pursue them aggressively.

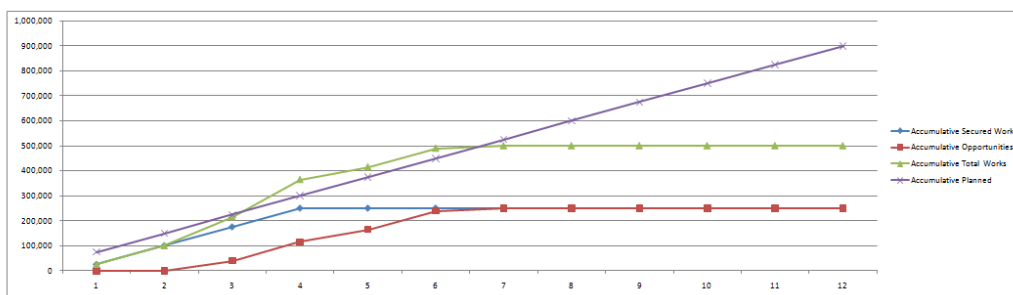
Go to the resource page at [www.freedombusinesscoaching.com](http://www.freedombusinesscoaching.com) and download the excel file *Opportunity Register.xlsx*. This file includes an opportunity score matrix that will help you decide which projects are worth tending for.

**Strategy 8 – Use an opportunity register and sales pipeline** The download file above is a “Done For You” opportunity register that will help you track, score and monitor your opportunities.

The file comes with instructions, and the best way to see how it works is by trying it out. If you are not good with excel, give me a call and I will guide you through the process, my contact details are at the end of this report.

The opportunity register tracks your workload, unsecured opportunities, combined workload and unsecured opportunities and your sales target. The example below shows the workload is nearly on target, and more enquires need to be converted for month 3 to keep the flow going.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Secured Workload	25,000	75,000	75,000	75,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Accumulative Secured Work	25,000	£100,000	£175,000	£250,000	£250,000	£250,000	£250,000	£250,000	£250,000	£250,000	£250,000	£250,000
Un-Secured Opportunities	0	0	40,000	75,000	50,000	75,000	10,000	0	0	0	0	0
Accumulative Opportunities	0	£0	£40,000	£115,000	£165,000	£240,000	£250,000	£250,000	£250,000	£250,000	£250,000	£250,000
Total Secured and Unsecured work	25,000	75,000	115,000	150,000	50,000	75,000	10,000	0	0	0	0	0
Accumulative Total Works	£75,000	£100,000	£215,000	£365,000	£415,000	£490,000	£500,000	£500,000	£500,000	£500,000	£500,000	£500,000
<b>Enter Your Planned Sales &gt;&gt;&gt;</b>												
Accumulative Planned	75,000	£150,000	£225,000	£300,000	£375,000	£450,000	£525,000	£600,000	£675,000	£750,000	£825,000	£900,000



Advanced knowledge and being able to track your future workload is a critical success factor in any business.

**Strategy 9 – Eliminate risk for the customer** Take away any reason why your potential customer may not place the order with you.

Proving you are a low risk in the delivery of the project will help you to win work from most professional construction clients, if you are a main contractor or a sub contractor working for a main contractor, your customer wants a hassle free life and to deliver excellence to their customer.

**Things to do:**

Create a company profile that will give the customer total confidence that they can trust you to deliver the project:

- 1. On time**
- 2. To Budget**
- 3. To the performance specification**
- 4. To full compliance with the H&S standards**
- 5. To full compliance with the environment standards**

All construction projects are project managed. Project management is about the control of the five elements above. Prove you can control these by your track record, case studies and testimonials and this will reduce your risk rating, scored by the customer. This may be a practical analysis of your tender/quotation or just a gut feeling, but it will make a difference.



Obtain or work towards obtaining the following accreditations:

- ISO 9001 quality management system
- OHSAS 18001 H&S management system
- ISO 14001 Environmental management system

Obtaining third party accreditation of the above management systems, and allowing your customer to audit them, will give you a good risk rating. This will in turn improve your chances of winning work. If you become like your customer, they will feel more at ease dealing with you.

Obtaining the above accreditations for a small business will not happen quickly, but by taking the first step of deciding to do it, developing a system inventory, then working on the most important systems first that will give you the greatest benefit, is a good beginning.

My recommendation would be to put a simple H&S management system in place such as HSG65, have a look at this web page for some detail.

[www.segurohealthandsafety.co.uk](http://www.segurohealthandsafety.co.uk)

Work on your quality management system, followed by the environmental management system and finish off with the full blown H&S management system to OHSAS 18801

I have included a simple Quality Management Inventory below for you to have a look at.

## INDEX

QP00	QUALITY POLICY
QP01	CONTRACT REVIEW
QP02	DESIGN CONTROL
QP03	DOCUMENT CONTROL
QP04	PURCHASING (MATERIALS)
QP05	PROCUREMENT AND CONTROL OF SUBCONTRACTORS
QP06	PURCHASER SUPPLIED MATERIAL (FREE ISSUE)
QP07	IDENTIFICATION & TRACEABILITY
QP08	QUALITY CONTROL PLANNING
QP09	INSPECTION & TESTING
QP10	CONTROL AND CALIBRATION OF EQUIPMENT
QP11	CONTROL OF NON-CONFORMANCE
QP12	CORRECTIVE ACTION
QP13	HANDLING & STORAGE OF MATERIALS
QP14	QUALITY RECORDS
QP15	AUDITS
QP16	TRAINING
QP17	SERVICING & MAINTENANCE
QP18	PREVENTIVE ACTION
QP19	LEAD GENERATION
QP20	LEAD CONVERSION
QP21	PROJECT DESIGN AND HANDOVER
QP22	PROJECT MANAGEMENT
QP23	PROJECT COMPLETION AND HANDOVER

Which process would make the biggest improvement to your business?

## Variable 3 Average contract value

### Strategy 10 – Create an event reporting system

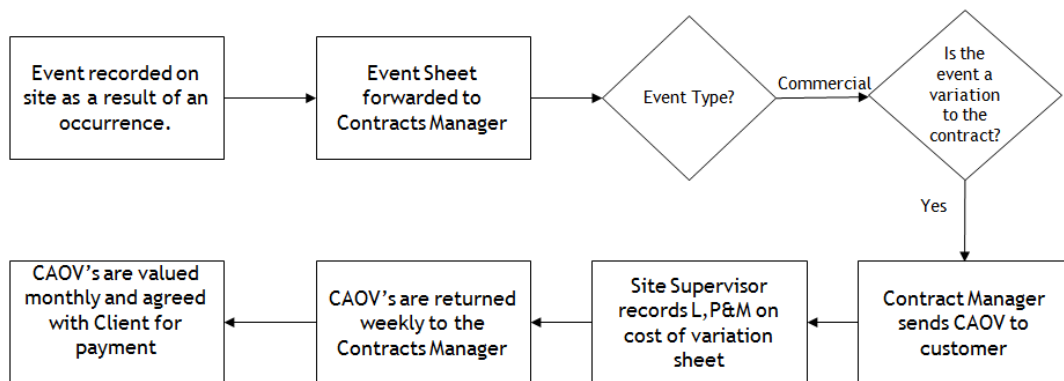
One of the ways contractors and sub contractors lose money on site, is the failure of collecting information on events that happen on site.

A construction site is prone to change, recording the change in accordance with the contract clauses is vital, if you want to be paid for the change.

Create an event reporting process and then systemise it, so it becomes an automated behavior for your site operatives.

An example of a typical process is below:

#### Event Reporting Process Flow Chart



A CAOV – is a Cost Advice of variation form that is completed on site and communicated as shown in the flow diagram.

*If you would like the complete system, contact me and I can email it to you. My contact details are at the end of this report.*

## Variable 4 Gross margin

### Strategy 11 – Implement Sustainability & Lean Construction principles into your business

To be in business in five years time, you cannot just be thinking about sustainable and lean construction, **you must be practicing it**, because if you don't you may not be in business. Put simply, your competitors will be winning work at a far lower cost base than you.

Sustainability and lean construction drives out waste and cost from the construction process, and improves profitability.

Below is a graphical representation of traditional thinking v LEAN thinking.

Reducing waste in what you do will make a difference to your competitive edge and your profits. This principle also applies to your sub contractors and suppliers. Working with companies who also embrace LEAN will make your business even more competitive and they also benefit from making more profit.

Below is an example of a typical construction project, you can see how a business that embraces LEAN will be more competitive.



LEAN is about the way you think. It you think you can't achieve these types of results then you are probably right, but if you think you can, then again you are probably right. Henry Ford said something similar when he was automating his factories. Then the Japanese took LEAN and continuous improvement to another level in the eighties and nineties.

It's now the time for the construction industry to embrace the same philosophy and not underestimate its value.

	Traditional			LEAN		
Profit	2.5%	£	25,000	7.5%	£	75,000
Waste	10.0%	£	100,000	5.0%	£	50,000
Head Off Overheads	2.5%	£	25,000	2.5%	£	25,000
Site preliminaries	7.0%	£	70,000	7.0%	£	70,000
Sub Contracts	45.0%	£	450,000	40.0%	£	400,000
Labour	15.0%	£	150,000	12.0%	£	120,000
Materials	15.0%	£	150,000	14.0%	£	140,000
Plant	3.0%	£	30,000	2.0%	£	20,000
	100.0%	£	1,000,000	90.0%	£	900,000

## What is Lean Construction?

- A way to do more & more with less & less – less effort, less equipment, less time & less space whilst providing customers with exactly what they want.
- Improving cost, time, quality and safety simultaneously without trade-off
- Lean construction principles basically involve, the elimination of waste, especially within the process, in a strategic and considered manner and by creating continuous flow

## Lean Construction

- A 'lean' system/ process/ organisation is one that is waste free
- Lean is not about size or number of people employed. A reduction in employees may cut costs and eliminate the waste of those employees, but does not decrease the proportion of waste to value adding within the organisation or process
- Most waste is through products waiting to be worked on by succeeding activities

## Types of waste

Waste can take on many forms within the building process. Below are some common examples:

- Building ahead of demand/time
- Waiting (people, material, information, for the next operation)
- Unnecessary transport (double handling)
- Inappropriate processing (larger machines, unnecessary steps, machines not quality capable, over design)
- Material stocks (early deliveries, storage space, deterioration)
- Unnecessary motions (ergonomics, bending, reaching)
- Building defective parts/sections
- Waste of untapped human potential

To learn more about LEAN Construction go to [www.constructingexcellence.org.uk](http://www.constructingexcellence.org.uk)

## Case studies

To read how large construction companies are adapting, take a look at some Skanska case studies. [www.skanska-sustainability-case-studies.com](http://www.skanska-sustainability-case-studies.com)

## Strategy 12 - Go LEAN Go GREEN

By going LEAN you will be going GREEN, because all the waste you take out of the construction process will reduce your project carbon footprint by default.

Recently a contractor won a major project because they had a carbon reduction strategy for the project. There was nothing between the two contractors with regards to price and delivery, except one put the effort into thinking green and the other didn't.



The government green agenda will grow; it's not going away and cannot be treated with lip service. My recommendation is to learn as much about this topic as you can.

### Things to do

1. Calculate your company's carbon footprint
2. Develop a policy and a strategy to reduce it
3. Calculate the carbon footprint of any project you wish to win and work out the strategy to reduce it. This probably sounds worse than the task, like everything else, once you learn how to do it, it becomes easy and you will become more competitive.
4. Go to the resource page at [www.freedombusinesscoaching.com](http://www.freedombusinesscoaching.com) and download the "carbon footprint calculator.xls" This has been developed by the Environment Agency and is the one they use to calculate their carbon footprint for projects they build.

The carbon calculator is an Excel spreadsheet that calculates the embodied carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) of materials plus CO<sub>2</sub> associated with their transportation. It also considers personal travel, site energy use and waste management

The carbon calculator will help you make decisions on the sustainability of your construction activities.

## Advanced Strategies

### Strategy 13 – Employ a mentor/non executive director who has done it successfully before

Employing a mentor or non executive director, with the experience of building a successful construction company in the past, will fast track you to where you want to be. They will have the knowledge, skills and tools to help you achieve your objectives faster.

### Strategy 14 – Time Management

How you spend your time, determines your success and results.

Focus on your **KEY SUCCESS ACTIVITIES**. What do you do that nobody else can do that will deliver the results that you want?

Stop doing what others can do for you. You are wasting your time. Employ someone who can do it for you for a fraction of the cost.

Start doing the type of work that makes a difference, for example:

- **Strategic business planning**
- **Strategic marketing**
- **Coaching** and supporting your team members
- **Communicate your vision** at every possible time to employees, customers and suppliers
- Prepare and measure your **company profile**, tender presentations and conversion rates. Drive conversion up.
- Determine **5 top key customers** and build a relationship and make friends with the person who matters.
- Learn about and implement **Sustainability and LEAN** principles, drive out waste, become competitive for the future.



#### Things to do

Go to the Master Class page at [www.freedombusinesscoaching.com](http://www.freedombusinesscoaching.com) and sign up for the **FREE time management e-course**. This is delivered by e-mail and includes two workbooks.

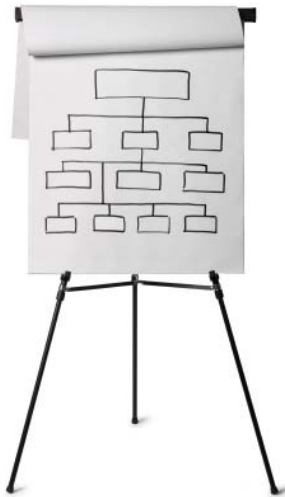
## Strategy 15 - Building a Winning Team

People want to be part of something. If they believe in the cause, the products and services, and the leadership, they will be motivated and passionate about your business. Money is not the be all and end all of what drives people.



### Function First - People Second

Look at your organisation and the functions you need to deliver your vision. Work out the roles and responsibilities for each function, then work out what personality type, skills, knowledge and qualities are required.



Once you have written each functional role out, look at your team. Who have you got in each function, are they the right person, have they got the right personality, skills, knowledge and qualities to deliver the function objectives?

### Motivation

To motivate someone find out by asking the question “what motivates you, what are your life goals, what do you want to do? Now try and help them achieve their goals and what they want to do, by fitting it in with your business objectives. The idea is to try and align people with the business, so everyone is working in the same direction.

People are motivated when:

1. They are doing what they like doing.
2. They get recognition for doing a job well.
3. They feel part of a team, being directed to achieve an objective.
4. They are rewarded for their efforts.
5. They know what’s going on within the business by good communication from the leadership team.

## Strategy 16 – Calculate Life Time Value

One of my strategies when I was growing my business and wanted to work for a particular client, was to ask them for a small contract to allow them to test us as a business. Successful large organisations are looking for small professional organisations to work with and partner with giving them a hassle free life and delivering excellence to their customers. If you can help and support them, they will employ you.

Once you have negotiated your first small project, you then over deliver on the promise and WOW them. During the project you get to know them and begin to build your relationship on trust and credibility.

Once you are established you then continue to deliver innovative products and services to them by asking them what they want. Never be complacent, they will move onto the next company and you will never know. The phone will stop ringing.

I had a relationship with one person in one organisation for over fifteen years. This person introduced me to other multi million pound, blue chip companies. The life time value of this relationship is well into the tens of millions of pounds.

My relationship was built on honesty, trust, and integrity. We always delivered on the promise; we trusted them as they trusted us.

### You can calculate life time values

Annual sales x Years of business + referrals

#### For example:

I had a term contract worth an average £600,000 over 12 years = £7,200,000

My contact, referred me to 3 other blue chip companies and we did an average £450,000 sales for each client per year = £1,350,000 we worked for these businesses for 4 years = £5,400,000

The total life time value for this one contact was £7,200,000 + £5,400,000 = £12,600,000

You can see the power of this strategy, select your targets carefully and become a relationship expert, train all your people to become relationship experts and deliver on your promise.

## Strategy 17 - Where are you?

I have prepared a check list for you to see where you are with regards to implementing the ideas within this report. Just tick the items below, then count them and read the description against your score.

<b>Id</b>	<b>Idea</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Tick</b>
1	<b>We have a vision</b>	You know where you are taking the business	
2	<b>We have a mission</b>	You know why you are in business	
3	<b>We know our values</b>	You know what you stand for	
4	<b>We have a financial plan</b>	Profit from £..... to £.....	
5	<b>We have a marketing strategy</b>	You understand your target audience	
6	<b>We have a communication plan</b>	You communicate directly to each market sector	
7	<b>We know how many tenders we do</b>	You keep a tender register	
8	<b>We know our conversion rate</b>	You calculate your conversion rate and try to improve it	
9	<b>We are a LEAN contractor/organisation</b>	You work and think to the LEAN principles or are beginning to do so	
10	<b>We know our average contract value</b>	You calculate your average sale value and try to improve it	
11	<b>We know our gross margin</b>	You calculate your gross margin and try to improve it	
12	<b>We employ the best people</b>	All your people are passionate about your business	
13	<b>We have an organisation chart</b>	You have written roles and responsibilities for each key function within the business	
14	<b>We deliver sales training to all</b>	All your people know how to exceed customer expectations	
15	<b>We are accredited to ISO 9001</b>	You have a quality management system in place	
16	<b>We are accredited to OHSAS 18001</b>	You have a H&S management system in place	
17	<b>We are accredited to ISO 14001</b>	You have a Environment management system in place	
18	<b>We have a good quality company profile</b>	You can show potential clients why they should work with you	

19	<b>We have a good quality tender presentation</b>	You prepare a tender presentation that eliminates all and every reason & risk why the client would not place the order with you	
20	<b>We have good quality case studies</b>	You have great testimonial from work you have done in the past, where the client wouldn't mind taking a call from a prospect.	
21	<b>We have great testimonials</b>	Ditto	
22	<b>We know our top profit customers</b>	You have carried out a 20/80 analysis	
23	<b>We exceed customer expectations</b>	You carry out contract reviews	
24	<b>We do repeat business with our customers</b>	You have loyal customers, who only come to you	
25	<b>Our customers refer us to others</b>	You have loyal customers to sing from the trees about your business	
26	<b>We know our customers life time value</b>	You understand the concept of life time value	
27	<b>We know our new customer acquisition cost</b>	You know how much a new customer costs you to find and become a loyal customer	
28	<b>We win 90% of the work we price</b>	You score your opportunities	
29	<b>We don't compete on price</b>	You negotiate or compete on position	
30	<b>We have capacity to grow</b>	You have an operational plan for growth	

## Score

Score	Rating	Description
0 to 15	<b>Poor</b>	Business for you may not be as easy as it could be. By implementing the ideas above, you will make it easier. You may need some help to kick start and move things forward fast.
16 to 20	<b>OK</b>	Good, you have a professional approach to your business, with more effort you can continue to improve your processes and systems to improve your profit
21 to 25	<b>Good</b>	Well done with some more work you will be maximizing your profit potential
26 to 30	<b>Very Good</b>	Well done you should be making good profits

## A Way Forward

You have now read a lot about various strategies of how you can improve profits and make more money from construction. The next thing to do is to take action and implement the strategies.

To help you do this take a few minutes to learn about a simple step by step system that will make the task easier and faster for you to implement.

There are five modules, and thirty five workbooks. You can buy modules one at a time, in any order or all five at the same time.

### Leadership – Clarity and Focus

- 1.1.1 Introduction to Leadership – *What's leadership?*
- 1.1.2 Personal Goals – *Getting into goal setting mode*
- 1.1.3 Personal Purpose and values – *What's it all about?*
- 1.1.4 Business Purpose – *Why am I in business?*
- 1.1.5 Entrepreneurial Mindset – *Have I got what it takes to be successful?*
- 1.1.6 Personal Effectiveness – *What should I be doing to be effective?*
- 1.1.7 Prioritising – *What should I focus on to achieve successful in business?*



### Planning – Where are we going?

- 1.2.1 Business Audit – *Where are we right now?*
- 1.2.2 Clarity and Focus – *What's our vision and mission?*
- 1.2.3 Setting Objectives – *What do we need to do to achieve our vision?*
- 1.2.4 The Five Step Business Plan – *A simple plan that works!*
- 1.2.5 Objective Achievement – *Achieving objectives when everyone is busy*
- 1.2.6 SWOT Analysis – *Playing to strengths*
- 1.2.7 The Elevator Pitch – *Making the marketing message easy to tell*



### Strategic Marketing – Focused marketing is a winning strategy

- 1.3.1 Introduction to Marketing Strategy – *How to farm rather than hunt*
- 1.3.2 Demographics – *Who are our target audience?*
- 1.3.3 Psychographics – *How we communicate with our target audience*
- 1.3.4 Positioning & Differentiation – *Why should clients buy from us?*
- 1.3.5 Look & Feel – *How we attract the right people and clients*
- 1.3.6 Your Strategic Marketing Plan – *Putting it all together*
- 1.3.7 Branding & Identity – *Who are we?*



## Process and Systems – Learn & apply LEAN Construction

- 1.4.1 Introduction to Business Systems – *What's it all about?*
- 1.4.2 Problem Solving – *The positive approach to business problems*
- 1.4.3 Systems Inventory – *Know your business*
- 1.4.4 Visualising Order – *Let's make it simple*
- 1.4.5 System Creation & Documentation – *Your communications toolbox*
- 1.4.6 Touch Points – *Customer focused processes and systems deliver more profit*



## Winning Teams – Improve productivity

- 1.5.1 Team Leadership – *Are you a team leader?*
- 1.5.2 Organisation – *Let's get organised*
- 1.5.3 Motivation – *How to motivate your team*
- 1.5.4 Behaviour – *Create positive behaviour in team members*
- 1.5.5 Personality Profiling – *Finding out how individuals tick*
- 1.5.6 Brilliant Teams – *Build a winning team that delivers for you*
- 1.5.7 Top Grading Recruitment – *Recruit only the best people*
- 1.5.8 Coaching – *How to coach for performance*



## What to do next

Use the information above and begin to deploy the ideas, or contact me, I can act as your business mentor or non executive director, helping you to grow your construction business.

Please give me a call my contact details are below:

**Telephone:** 0151 608 4447

**Mobile & Text:** 07896 246224

**E-mail:** [bob@thestrategicadvantage.co.uk](mailto:bob@thestrategicadvantage.co.uk)

## About The Author – Joiner to Entrepreneur

Who am I to mentor you on how to run and grow your business? I sometimes say to people, “I wish I had met me twenty years’ ago. I would have been wealthier a much quicker”. Let me explain and tell you a little about myself and what I have achieved in business over the years.



After leaving school I served my time as a joiner at a small construction company called J Angus Collin, based on the Wirral.

I left J Angus Collin at the age of 22 and went to work as an engineer for McAlpines, a much larger construction company. I was with them for twelve months and used my time there to understand the workings of a large construction company before returning to J Angus Collin as a surveyor. Now being office based I mastered estimating, quantity surveying, contract management and project management. At the age of 29, when two of the partners retired, I became a director and shareholder. As a director of the company I became involved in the running of it and between the age of 29 and 35 I studied accounting systems and general management. During this time I had great success in winning the largest projects and contributing the most profit and some people called it luck. But we make our own luck and I did this through hard work and tenacity; developing systems that enabled me to do more with my time. By 35 I was ready to run the business but with the board structure in place that wasn’t possible; it was then I decided to leave the world of employment and start my own business.

That was back in November 1990, two months before the 90’s recession. To start the business I joined forces with my now long time business partner and friend, Ari. Together we bought his father’s steel fabrication business and rented some factory and office space in North Wales. We had an overdraft of £30,000 and a cash loan of £10,000 from Bert, Ari’s father. The cash was gone before Christmas, but the venture had just started. We called our business Qufab Construction Ltd.

To give you an idea of the successes and challenges we faced in the early days of Qufab, I have included a table showing the actual sales and net profit history. The profit shown is before tax and after directors and staff bonuses and pension contributions. Our policy was to protect the business, then protect the business owner’s long term future by investing in pensions, and finally pay bonuses to directors and staff. We would take the management accounts, distribute 50% to pension and bonuses, then pay tax on the remainder, building the balance sheet with what was left over.

Year	Turnover	Net Profit	%	Phase
1991	£ 361,000	£ 3,500	1.0%	Struggle
1992	£ 480,000	£ 4,600	1.0%	
1993	£ 851,000	£ 12,100	1.4%	
1994	£ 789,000	-£ 51,500	-6.5%	
1995	£ 963,000	£ 134,400	14.0%	Secure
1996	£ 1,856,000	£ 102,500	5.5%	Stuck
1997	£ 1,506,000	£ 174,200	11.6%	
1998	£ 1,492,000	£ 43,700	2.9%	
1999	£ 1,604,000	£ 63,000	3.9%	
2000	£ 3,154,000	£ 280,700	8.9%	Growth
2001	£ 3,121,000	£ 89,400	2.9%	
2002	£ 3,981,000	£ 158,000	4.0%	
2003	£ 5,120,000	£ 500	0.0%	
2004	£ 6,541,000	£ 113,900	1.7%	Realise
2005	£ 3,253,000	£ 216,900	6.7%	
2006	£ 1,380,000	£ 274,000	19.9%	

For the purposes of this book, and to give you an overview of what happened I have broken the events down into phases.

There are five phases; startup, struggle, realization, growth and wealth creation. The FREEDOM model is based on these phases and my own experience of moving through them with Qufab. The following pages will help you appreciate how you can move smoothly through these phases, using the exercises and tools as they are described. The purpose of this book is to help you develop your understanding of where you are now and, more importantly, where you want to go – both personally, and as a business.

## Startup and Struggle 1991 to 1994

The first few years were hard work; we would squeeze every penny from every contract and work all hours of the day and night to make ends meet. Between 1991 and 1994 we doubled turnover but struggled to make any profit. In 1994, we nearly went under we were supporting another company at the time when the venture went pear-shaped. We pulled out with only £10,000 between us going into liquidation. In fact, I was speaking to a Liquidator every week to make sure we were not trading illegally. Then out of nowhere came our saviour, a contract from MANWEB, one of the region's major electricity supply company's, to build a substation in Bromborough. We fulfilled this to their needs and were rewarded with another contract in Chester and then another in Southport We had turned a corner!

Now in a much more financially sound position, we took the opportunity to review our premises and decided to relocate from our original site in North Wales to Bromborough. We purchased a disused power station switching building from

Manweb and converted it into offices and a workshop. We bought it for £30,000, borrowed £20,000 to buy it and paid off the loan within two months.

## **Secure 1995 to 1996**

The struggle was over. We had cash in the bank and this meant we could invest in systems and people. My belief system changed. Previously I thought business was struggle; I couldn't see how we were going to move the business forward but becoming cash rich made all the difference. The substation contracts were no fluke. I had been building a relationship with our client over many years and had negotiated a term contract with them. Our mission was always to deliver an excellent service, making our clients' lives simple and hassle free. This was the trait of our success. We would keep well ahead of technology, be part of our customers' back office and make working with us simple and easy. For example, if they had e-mail, we had e-mail. You can see from the sales and profit table on the previous page that turnover doubled again over this period; however, you will also notice that now we were also making a good profit. Success breeds success and we were now becoming established and working for a range of clients on projects such as building substations, factory units, marine civil works and a lot of structural work. We also had a shift in focus with civil engineering accounting for about 80% of our workload and steel fabrication about 20%.

## **Stuck – 1997 to 1999**

Following on from our success in the previous period, it was frustrating to realise that from 1997 to 1999 we had become stuck at a turnover of about £1.5m. Work from our main client, MANWEB became disjointed as they were restructuring as part of a merger with Scottish Power plc and we realised that we had just one big egg in the basket and that was not a good position to be in. So, we diversified into all sorts of different areas. We joined forces with a marina company to design and build marina systems around the world. A huge achievement was to build a marina in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Our part of the project was International Marketing, this came about from one of our previous ventures, from the struggle stage, where we were supporting a marina pontoon business. We were using our knowledge from this experience to support the business. With hindsight, this was not a good strategy, as it distracted me from where I should have been focusing my efforts.

It was this period and perhaps more significantly, the realization that we were stuck at a glass ceiling, that had the greatest impact on what was going to happen in the future. Let me explain. First, I joined a group called the Entrenet (Entrepreneur Network) which was created by Business Link Chester. They brought together 12 Business Owners/Managing Directors and we each paid £250 per month and Business Link provided funds to match our input. This created a

good sized fund that was spent on training. They brought in Will Holden, who introduced me to business psychology although he called it something else. I learned a lot from this experience and although the group drifted apart after 12 months, I now had what I needed to grow the business.

Will had brought to mind what business was really about. It was about personal purpose first, then business purpose. It was about the exit strategy and direction, not just a job, which was, in fact, my answer to one of his questions.

The second thing that happened during this period was my introduction to Liverpool University. I signed up to for two TCS (Teacher Company Scheme) programs, the first with Tim Whitehill, a Civil Engineering graduate and the second with Karen Gladwin, a Marketing graduate. TCS is a partnership agreement between the company, the university and the graduate. It helps transfer knowledge for the university to the company and practical experience knowledge from the company to the university.

The first project we identified as to create standardised substation structures for the power industry, and the second to develop a five year strategic marketing plan for the business.

Each programme was to cover a two year period. We had a professor for half a day helping the graduate with the project. The whole thing was a great success and a win, win, win. The business benefitted from the knowledge transfer from the university, the graduate benefitted from experience and additional training and qualifications, and the university benefitted because it had real business data to work from. The program was supported by Fiona Nightingale who did an excellent job of keeping the projects on track.



Both Tim and Karen worked for the company during this period. Eventually when they left, Tim went on to build his own construction business and Karen joined a construction company in Manchester and grew turnover from £7.5m to £18m. She later started her own Marketing business, focusing in the construction sector. It was a pleasure to support them on their way.

Photo left to right, Tim Whitehill, Fiona Nightingale, Bob Evans, and Karen Gladwin.

## **Growth 2000 to 2004**

After the marketing project was completed, we followed our strategy and off we went. The strategy was very simple. We had worked out that all we had to do to grow the company was to focus in one area and become experts in a niche. We focused on the construction of substations for the power industry. My job was to develop a strong relationship with four people; all of them heads of civil engineering in the manufacturing of switch gear for the power industry. The companies we selected were Siemens, Alstom, VATECH, and ABB.

We implemented the quality management system ISO 9001 and the H&S management system OHSAS 18001 to allow us to work more effectively and seamlessly with our clients.

To support the growth, we brought in the best people we could find from large construction companies. These people were highly trained in dealing with large projects. I made Tim Whitehill my deputy Managing Director and together we shaped the business.

## **Realise – 2005 to 2007**

During the latter part of 2003 and early 2004 we were having a few problems with some of our clients. Essentially, they wanted to go back to the traditional methods of sending tenders for all contractors to bid against. This naturally included Qufab. With little option to do otherwise, we complied and submitted our tender documents. However, we experienced a number of challenges, primarily due to the limited time our clients were spending on the preparation stage of the Invitation To Tender. The result being that we had limited information against which to prepare our submission and, although we submitted perfectly reasonable pricing schedules and maintained our “open book” policy, the final accounts would often exceed the original tender bid. This led to confrontation and discontent between us and our main clients.

It was about this time that a member of the Qufab team hit a live cable in a major substation. It was clearly an accident and thankfully nobody was injured and we were fully insured. However, the insurance claim mounted to a significant £250,000 and the insurance company was intent on minimizing their liability. Working in a highly regulated industry with health and safety regulations covering every aspect of our business we were sure we were fully covered, but the policies are carefully worded and every clause was invoked in this case. The result was that we recovered just £50,000 and were £200,000 out of pocket on the incident. Had it not been for our strong balance sheet, it would have wiped us out completely.

During the period November 2003 to February 2004 we were turning over £1m per month. In March 2004, the work was coming to an end and my gut feeling was to

cut and consolidate our position. The battle over final accounts was becoming tiresome and although many large construction companies do this every day, I decided that this was not the way for me. The business we were in was risky and we had made some money, but did I want to continue to run a business that could wipe out our entire wealth? I had a Sunday meeting with Ari and we decided to reduce our business risk.

The decisions we made were not easy but make them we did and we reduced our staff from 15 to 5. We negotiated terms, so everyone left in a friendly manner. We pulled the plug on the large manufacturers and went back to our original client to carry out their work.

The last Qufab project I worked on was the construction of a substation at Lister Drive in Liverpool with a value of £2,000,000. The substation was constructed over an old coal-fired Power Station and the ground works were quite substantial. The photo to the right was the hand over meeting in 2005



Left to right Joe Gahan SP Power Systems, Bob Evans Qufab, Ken Nichols Qufab, Ian Williams SP Power Systems.

Having completed our last contract, we carried on with our wind-down plans and finally stopped trading in 2007.

Over the years we had geared up our cash by purchasing a property portfolio. We now manage this together with our self administered pension fund to give us a living.

My job was done. I now could do whatever I wished to do. I decided to help others achieve business success by sharing my expertise and business knowledge.

While closing down the business, I took a year out leaving my colleagues to run it down. I had just completed a coaching course and was telling everyone I was a business coach, although inside, I felt a fraud. How could I charge for a conversation?

To help me get over this I decided to offer business coaching for free, for a period of three months. I soon had clients. Over the initial three month period I noticed my clients were achieving good results from my coaching. I also noticed they all had similar issues and I was repeating myself quite a lot.

Now, I do not like repeating myself, especially when a system can be developed. So I decided to write some workbooks that transferred my knowledge.

## **My Success**

Many people ask me “What it is that makes you successful, Bob?” This is a great question and I generally answer it by explaining what has helped me on my journey. I believe the success I have achieved comes from those parts of my personality and being; those things I live my life by daily, namely:

**Honesty** – Saying it as it is. There is no point going around the houses trying to put a point across that may offend. People want to be told the bad news as well as the good news. What they don’t want is no news. I believe in communicating everything to all; holding things back and hiding things serves no useful purpose in business.

**Integrity** – I do as I say I will do. Delivering the promise when you say you will deliver is your first key component to business success. If something negative happens, as it sometimes does, be honest with your customer/associate/supplier; tell them the truth, they will respect you for it.

**Fun** – What’s the point if you can’t have some fun. Fun makes the world go round and makes going to work enjoyable. If you are not having fun in work do something different. We spend most of our lives in work, make it a fun environment, and don’t take business too seriously.

**Support** – Your team is everything. You can’t be successful by yourself, you need a team, and a team needs leadership. Guidance, support and coaching your team is paramount to success.

**Trust** – Be truthful to yourself, don’t kid yourself. Work out what has to be done and make a plan. Trust the plan and your team to deliver it.

**Determination** – I am tenacious, like a dog with a bone. Try and take my bone from me, I dare you.

**Focus** – Know what you want, set the dial, measure your progress, do not get distracted.

**Discipline** – Without discipline you will fail. Self discipline for you and your team is key to your success. Make sure you employ self disciplined people; they will save you a fortune, in productivity and stress.

**Enthusiasm and Passion** – People who know me, say I am very enthusiastic, and passionate about what I do. Like many people, I don't actually see this; I am just me. It's good to have people point these things out to us; we all need somebody to point out the good, the bad and the ugly if we truly want to succeed.

I hope the above helps answer any questions you may have about my ingredients for success, please remember though, this is my personal take on it and there are many others out there with their own views.

Good luck with growing your business, if I can be of any help, please contact me my details are below. I offer a range of affordable services, all designed to help make you more profit.

## **Contact Details**

### **Strategic Advantage**

#### **UK Head Office**

Innovation House  
Power Road  
Bromborough  
Wirral  
CH62 3QT

Telephone: 07896 246 224

**E-mail:** [bob@thestrategicadvantage.co.uk](mailto:bob@thestrategicadvantage.co.uk)

**Web:** [www.thestrategicadvantage.co.uk](http://www.thestrategicadvantage.co.uk)

**Notes:**

**Notes:**



## **Strategic Advantage**

Innovation House

Power Road

Bromborough

Wirral

CH62 3QT

Telephone: 08456 022588

Email: [info@thestrategicadvantage.co.uk](mailto:info@thestrategicadvantage.co.uk)

Web: [www.thestrategicadvantage.co.uk](http://www.thestrategicadvantage.co.uk)