

Start Up Stories - Chaddesley Sanford

#1 What was it like to hire your first employee?

It was both exciting and scary! Like any new business it represented a significant financial commitment at the time. Our approach to recruitment has changed significantly over the years. When we started out we really had to invest a lot of effort in persuading new starters to take a risk with such a small and unproven business but now we have two offices in great locations, a fantastic team culture and an exciting (and growing) portfolio of clients enabling us to offer outstanding experience and career development opportunities to all of our team – it's frankly an easy sell. You'll still always have a handful of candidates who want a big name on their CV but I strongly believe we can offer a much broader and more hands on experience.

- Matthew Gambold

#2 What do you feel biggest challenge small businesses face?

Small businesses have an advantage in that often their very reason for existence is to try and change the way things are done. However, the rate of change in business practices can be daunting and particularly when it comes to choosing the right technology to help run your business finances and admin. The role of the accountant is evolving as there is an expectation, rightly in our view, that we are the first point of call to advise on these technology developments.

- Edward Sanford



Edward Sanford
Chaddesley Sanford
Managing Director



Matthew Gambold
Chaddesley Sanford
Managing Director



#3 Did you dive right into the experience of being a business owner? Did you plan anything?

I dived right in! My upbringing gave me exposure to the business world as most of my family were self-employed. I did pull together a basic business plan to start with which was a useful point of reference as the business grew in the early stages but starting from scratch (I came from industry rather than practice and so didn't have a portfolio of clients to poach from a previous employer) a lot of what I did in terms of client acquisition in the early days was trial and error. These days I do make plans and lay out a to-do list on a daily basis but I'm much more comfortable getting stuck in to the work!

- Matthew Gambold

#4 Has your idea of what you wanted the business to look like come true?

Not exactly, but in a good way. I certainly never got to open the Swansea office that genuinely featured in that initial business plan. I've changed and adapted the way I manage the business through the years, focusing on quality of service and building a great team culture. I'm a great believer in "cutting the... rubbish". I hate seeing any organisation carrying out tasks inefficiently just because "that's how it's always been done" or hiding behind indecipherable jargon and processes. I've learned a great deal from concepts of Kaizen (continuous improvement) and the lean methodology created by Taiichi Ohno of Toyota and popularized by James Womac which encourages the elimination of any process that doesn't add value to the business.

- Matthew Gambold

#5 The team has grown fast in a short space of time, what advice would you have for first time employers?

I'm currently reading Shoe Dog, the incredible story of Phil Knight creating Nike and in that he quotes General Patton "Don't tell people how to do things, tell them what to do and let them surprise you with their results." Empowering your team with the autonomy to carry out their role and hopefully find innovative ways to approach problems is central to the environment we aim to foster here.

- Edward Sanford

#6 What's the one thing directors routinely get wrong?

I think from both personal experience as well as working with many entrepreneurs who start businesses from nothing the ability to let go and not seek to micro manage all tasks can be challenging. Thinking ahead as to what skills you will need as the business grows to resource certain tasks that you currently do is critical to ensuring you're able to continue to grow.

- Edward Sanford



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