



GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS

As coaches, we want to make our participants the best they can possibly be. But do we always apply the same dedication to ourselves? Mike Dale meets one man on a mission to help coaching organisations flourish.

If you run one of the 20,000 coaching companies in the UK, you'll be highly trained, appropriately qualified and passionate about developing the people you coach. But could you do more?

Do you have a vision or a business plan? Do you develop your coaches? Could you take on more staff? Expand the sports you offer? Coach more people? Apply for more funding? Could you franchise?

Business management is arguably a neglected area in

HOW A TYPICAL COACHING BUSINESS MAY GROW

- 1 Coach delivering sessions him/herself (owner operated)
- 2 Employing part-time while still delivering (hybrid)
- 3 Delivering less, employing more coaches locally (Management Business)
- 4 Setting up permanent base to house the operation and deliver services
- 5 Franchising or growing on regional or national basis
- 6 Setting up a management team or board to run the business more professionally
- 7 Looking at new products and services, diversifying or looking at new funding sources
- 8 Sponsorship or national marketing relationships
- 9 Launching diverse national projects
- 10 Expansion internationally
- 11 Purchase or mergers with other organisations



'The important thing is that coaches build the business they want to build, not follow someone else's blueprint. They need a vision and I help to get it out of their head and onto a page.'

Mark Rasche

traditional forms of coach education. Mark Rasche, founder of Sport and Activity Professionals, is determined to fill that knowledge gap.

After studying PE, Sports Science and Social Psychology at Loughborough University, Rasche was a football coach in England, Australia, America and Malaysia. He then went into sales and marketing, before helping to turn Brazilian Soccer Schools and Socratots into global brands with over 200 franchises around the world.

Having gone solo as a mentor and consultant, he now uses his mix of coaching, business and marketing acumen to help sports organisations, charities or social enterprises maximise their potential.

'Coaches typically work in their business, not on their business. Some just don't take themselves seriously enough,' he says. 'I know myself that coaching is exhausting, but staff, HR, pensions, marketing, training, recruiting and

sourcing funding won't look after themselves.

'I'll sit down with clients and ask, "Where do you want your organisation to be in five years? What's your Everest point?" We set a big goal, make a plan, write it down and break it down into achievable steps.

'Sportsmen always have a plan. No-one gets to the Olympics by saying, "I'm just going to swim and see what happens!" Coaches need a plan too.

'I try to teach them to enjoy the process. Together we're >>



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aiming for a destination, but it may take five to 10 years to achieve, so they have to enjoy the journey.

'It's not necessarily all about profit. It's about building the business you want, either quantitatively or qualitatively. Some coaches want to expand from 500 kids to 1000, others simply want to cut their working hours from seven days a week to five.'

Rasche believes, perhaps controversially, that his model for helping coaching businesses grow should be adopted by more governing bodies of sport.

'A lot of governing bodies' development officers are so stretched that they can't spend too long in any one club or school, so it's hard to embed

long-term sustainable growth,' he says. 'If they could franchise themselves or outsource this work so coaches can make a living from it, it could have a massive impact on participation, either generally or in specific, targeted demographics or age groups.'

Many of Sport and Activity Professionals' clients are companies, charities or social enterprises that work with children. These types of organisations have grown rapidly in response to societal changes that have altered kids' physical activity habits. Many draw funding from the primary sports premium or elsewhere.

'I believe Sport England could even start to bypass the governing bodies if some continue to under-perform on

participation, and concentrate on more organisations like Street Games that achieve amazing results,' claims Rasche. 'After all, they now measure participation in younger children and that's who most of these independent organisations focus on.'

He concludes: 'I'm really passionate about getting more kids into physical activity. Whether it's competitive sport or something like Street Dance, there's something for every child, they just don't always get a chance to find it.'

'By working with a diverse range of sports, activities and coaches, I feel I'm affecting loads of kids' lives and, corny as it sounds, helping many coaches in the sector achieve things they never thought possible.' **CE**



TOP TIPS

with Mark Rasche

- Understand it's a long-term goal. Set an idea of where you want your organisation to be in five to 10 years on a quantitative and qualitative basis. Have a vision and an idea of what your organisation can achieve in this time frame.
- Be ambitious. Many don't realise what's possible or what others have achieved, so don't make your vision too conservative.
- Break your vision down into year-long or goal-based SMART steps. Then, in cricketing parlance, knock it off in singles, working towards your big goal.
- Breaking this big goal down into a goal-setting staircase works for athletes, and can work for your business too.
- You can only grow through your team, so recruit well and invest time, money and effort into training and developing your people to be better.
- Take advice from people who can help you. I find it odd that sports coaches don't use a business coach. They often think the business side will just sort itself if you've got a good product/service, but the execution of the service and the business model are equally important in achieving the optimum.
- Work hard at improving yourself. Your organisation can't grow until the person running it does.
- Believe in yourself. Psychology underpins all of this. With that belief, you can achieve anything.

CASE STUDY



Health • Education • Coaching

'Sport Works began life in 2009 as a sports coaching organisation working mostly with schools and local authorities. We have worked very hard to develop the business from a "one-man band" enterprise to where we are now, with 15 coaches and tutors in the north east of England and 11 franchises throughout the rest of the country.

However, this growth has not happened overnight and we have needed to continually evolve and improve the business model. A key part of our approach is surrounding ourselves with experts who can help us achieve our aspirations, and Mark Rasche has done just that.

Mark brings an enormous amount of experience in business development and strategy and has helped us develop an exciting three-year growth plan which will see us enter new markets and increase our market presence across the UK.'

Neil Cameron, Managing Director, Sport Works

ACTION AREAS

- Business planning - building the organisation you want
- Growing the organisation (locally, regionally or nationally) or franchising
- Sourcing funding to work with different demographic groups, disadvantaged sections of society or disability/SEN groups
- Strategic plan, goal-setting
- Vision
- Values
- Marketing - make a plan and calendar
- New revenue streams
- Staff - roles and responsibilities, KPIs and developing the right culture
- Time management and task prioritisation
- Assessing ideas, being creative (using Edward De Bono's Six Thinking Hats)
- Training - goal setting and negotiation.

