Live Innovations: An Interview with MD Tom Harris

Friday 26 September, 2014

In order to understand a company's culture and growth potential it is essential to understand its leadership. Here in a candid interview with Live Innovations' business owner and Managing Director, Tom Harris, it is clear to see how the firm has grown from a small business to a highly sought after outsourcing solution in the competitive London market.

Interview: 25 September, 2014

Which Three Adjectives Describe Your Strengths?

Detail orientated, systematic and sociable.

What book do you think everyone should read?

How to Win Friends & ***Influence People*** by Dale Carnegie & Think and Grow Rich by Napoleon Hill.

What were the main challenges you faced early on in your business? And do you still encounter them to this day?

Belief in myself, trying to do things you have never done before takes an immense amount of courage and belief.

I overcame that by spending time with successful people in the industry that could guide me and relate to my experiences. Occasionally, belief in anything can waver, the key is to identify this, realise it's a normal part of being human, find people and do things that energise and revive the belief, and get that fire burning again.

What advice would you have given to yourself if you could only relay one piece of advice to your former self?

Success in anything you want to do, is the result of a process.

There's no such thing as an overnight success. I think success can come quickly or can come out of nowhere but it doesn't come from not working hard. All people go through years and years of work or "the process", and the people who don't quit during the formulative years are the ones who go on to achieve greatness, or become what seems to be an "overnight" success.

What were you doing the last time you looked at a clock and realized you had lost track of time?"

Public speaking. A few years ago I was so nervous, getting up in front of other people and teaching/motivating. Now people have to drag me off stage... I'm just kidding! But I really have to be conscious of that. I try to stick to the principle – Be bright, Be brief, Be gone... (I am known to break this rule).

Why haven't you been more successful*?*

At the start of my career, it was my attitude. I would get frustrated easily when things didn't go the way I planned. Sometimes life can be like that, unpredictable, it helps if you laugh more and smile especially when you don't feel like it, things usually work out better that way.

The second reason is understanding the concept of time. Time is a finite resource, once it goes, you can't get it back. In the past I have wasted time, investing in the wrong actions, or wrong people. We need to understand that time is precious, use it wisely, doing things that are important not things that "grab our attention" or worse, distractions that don't get us any closer to our goals.

What do you look for when hiring new staff or contractors?

Let me begin by stating what I DON'T look for….. And that's the "right" experience.

Don't get me wrong, there is nothing wrong with having experience on your CV, and we should all take pride in the way our CV looks.

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But, there is more to somebody than what their CV says.

Image is important, and I'm not talking about designer suits, I mean, how somebody carries themselves, body language says a lot about their inner thoughts. Small things, "soft skills" such as smiling, nodding, eye contact, these can really improve the way an interview can go and are often skills you can't teach somebody so I think they are extremely important.

After those basic skills I think it's more about "grit", persistence, determination or whatever you want to call it. A great attitude, is generally one of friendly determination. I read that great team members are, people who you can trust to "hold the rope". If you were hanging over a cliff, dangling at the end of a rope... Who would you want to be holding the other end?

These are generally the people I invest in, and I think they are the types of people that generally go far in life.

To what do you attribute your success?

I chalk all my success to having great mentors and role models. I had no experience in business, sales or marketing when I first started out. Thankfully I came into a business in which they encouraged development of their people. As I applied the information, my results improved, and I got to meet more and more successful people.

Whoever you surround yourself with is who you will likely become. Find people who have the things in life you want and replicate what they did.

What are your plans for the future?

Goals for the future, are to develop myself. Learning and growing is a constant process that really never stops. As I get better, my business improves.

For Live Innovations here in London, we aim to put offices in major cities across the UK. We have huge demand for our work now, not just in London but around the country.

My primary focus is finding the future leaders of our business and do the best I can to help them.

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