



TAB's planning process lets Opportunity Marketing's Ian Kirk take his business to where he wants it to be

AS A SEASONED MARKETING PROFESSIONAL WORKING WITH A WIDE RANGE of businesses, Ian Kirk of Opportunity Marketing began to notice that the smaller SME businesses were not well supported in the field of marketing. Most business owners are not marketers, and they seemed to be wasting marketing budget on areas that were not right for them.

In 2008, Ian decided he had something to offer these business and left employment to set up his marketing consultancy. The first six months were very tough and Ian acknowledges that he didn't anticipate how hard it would be to start a new business. Things started to pick up in the 2nd six months – he was winning lots of business and getting to the point where demand was exceeding time available.

"I realised that I needed some help to cope with the workload," Ian said, "and took on a graduate to help me." This sadly didn't work out as planned when it dawned on Ian that he actually realised how much he took for granted in terms of the marketing knowledge he had. Letting the graduate go was a hard decision for Ian, but to his credit, he found her a job with one of his consultancy clients.

Ian was now back to the drawing board and needed to decide if he really wanted to grow the business or remain a 'one-man band'. It was most certainly the former. He wanted to bring in experienced professionals who could replicate what he was doing with clients. What he didn't realise at the time, was that he was about to build a franchise. There was a lot for Ian to learn – a whole new industry in fact. He sought advice from a franchise consultant, got his model and processes in place, and recruited his first franchisee in 2013. Soon after, when things were going well for franchisee number 1, he took on his second one and so it went on.

Not long after launching his first franchisees, Ian discovered and joined The Alternative Board (TAB). He likes to get another view point and perspective, appreciating it can be too insular and lonely on your own. "The accountability I get from my TAB Board and facilitator makes me do the things I say I'm going to do – integrity is a key value for me," said Ian, "I am less likely to let things drift if I share my plans and intentions with someone."

"TAB's planning process has meant I break things into bite size chunks so I don't get over-whelmed, but more importantly, keeps me focused on the key goals to take the business to where I want it to be."

A pivotal moment for Ian at one of his TAB Board meetings was, whilst being challenged on an issue by his board, he had a major mind-shift from thinking about himself as a marketing consultant to the owner of a marketing franchise. This shift made him focus much more on the long term plans for his business and what he needed to do to reach his ultimate goal.

As for many business owners who are part of TAB, Ian has realised how important his personal life is for the success of his business. He now plans regular and quality time off to recharge his batteries.

The Opportunity Marketing franchise now boasts 12 franchisees, and Ian commented that, "I certainly wouldn't be as far forward with my business if it wasn't for TAB – perhaps 3 or 4 franchisees rather than 12."

