



# External support from TAB helped Lee Johnson deal with challenges brought on by business growth

**IT'S BEEN ADVANCED ELECTRICAL SERVICES (AES) FROM BOY-TO-MAN FOR LEE JOHNSON –** apprentice at the age of 18 to owner of the business 18 years later.

Lee showed early signs of being capable of not just being a good electrician but also of running the business. Given the opportunity to take the helm whilst Graham Spooner (the then owner) went away for 3 weeks, Lee really made his mark. The business wasn't just ticking over when Graham returned, it was thriving and very busy.

This time 'in charge' made Lee realise that he wanted more for himself and was passionate about becoming his own boss. The timing of this worked well, as Graham was starting to consider his exit from AES. Over a number of years Lee gradually bought into the business, took over as MD in 2010, with the final purchase being completed in April 2017.

"It was not always an easy ride becoming the boss. Many of the people at AES, like me, had been with the company for a long time so I really had to gain their respect and prove I was the best person for the job," explained Lee.

Although AES is not a family business in the strict sense, working with family members (wife and brother) can be difficult, especially when both brothers are headstrong! "The key for us," said Lee, "was to be very specific about our roles to ensure there was no treading on toes."

With regards to Lee's wife, it was agreed early on that Lee was the boss at work, but his wife took on that mantle at home!

So what has changed for Lee and AES in the years he has been in charge? Lee is very much on top of the financials. He explains that he doesn't want any nasty surprises and actually he enjoys the numbers. All systems, controls and general organisation in the company are much tighter, which has had positive impact on profitability.

In December 2014, Lee came across The Alternative Board (TAB). He had previously experienced a business coach which he didn't enjoy, but felt he could benefit from some external support.

***"I had reservations about the principles of a peer board, especially about the people round the table, but I realised almost straight away what an impressive group of people they were."***

"My TAB Board have helped me with many challenges brought on by business growth." One of the most important issues they helped Lee with was to realise that the business couldn't grow if it was just reliant on him. He was at the stage where he couldn't take time out of the business, but now he has a great team in place who are more than capable of running things in his absence. "The fact that the business isn't solely reliant on me is totally liberating," he shared. "I'm now enjoying holidays and experiences with my wife and daughter which are so important to us all."

Lee acknowledges that there are still lots of opportunities to explore and is looking for more growth for AES. It's important to him to provide a happy working environment where his team feel secure. Testament to that, one of his team said, "Why would I work anywhere else when I can work at AES."

