



TAB Member Stewart Desson credits peer support from TAB in bringing Lumina Learning from start-up to global

FOUNDER AND CEO OF LUMINA LEARNING, STEWART DESSON HAS BUILT a business which effectively integrates the multiple roles he has had in his career. Perhaps unusually for someone with a scientific and analytical background, Stewart's *raison d'être* is developing and inspiring people, and creating Lumina Learning enabled Stewart to combine both of his skillsets.

After more than a decade of working all over the world in corporate environments delivering leadership development and coaching, Stewart reached the point in his 40s where he wanted to start a business that helps transform people in order to transform organisations, also bringing in an analytical approach.

Lumina Learning innovates psychometrically, technologically and practically, helping organisations realise that people are different, and to produce high performing teams, they need supporting in different ways. A key part of Lumina Learning is that there are no stereotypes and people are 'dynamic' – changing with the environment in which they function. Stewart's PhD, undertaken whilst CEO, was a crucial part of his ability to deliver this message.

This year the business celebrates 10 years, and in that time it has gone from start-up to global, with full systems and processes. This is no mean feat in a well-established market with some long-standing and major competitors. The desire to 'go global' came quickly for Stewart and within 12 months of launch his international expansion started in Japan, on the basis that if they could make it work there, they could make it work anywhere. Given they are now in 30 countries, Stewart was right.

Although the team that Stewart has in place now looks very different from 10 years ago, they still have the same customer centric and innovating values.

“We practise what we preach, and put significant effort into our team's personal development – treating each of them as individuals and not using cooker-cutter plans.”

The challenges of the last 10 years have been varied, too. During growth, like many businesses, cashflow was the main issue. Now it's more about finding, training and retaining great people.

With the success that Stewart has enjoyed over the last 10 years, you might not think he'd have the need for the extra support and help that TAB offers, but he shared, “As a CEO, it is quite lonely to make tricky decisions in a business, especially those that may not be in everyone's interest. The idea of peer support, from people not invested in my business, to help me with those decisions was very appealing.”

“Sometimes the advice from my TAB Board can be challenging to hear but it's rare that I disagree with it when I reflect. Having Jo's energy in facilitating the meetings makes it all work and the accountability she brings makes me do what I need to do.”

Stewart admits that he is “ludicrously time poor” but has taken the decision that a CEO needs peer learning. “I book time in my diary for a number of important things, including my TAB meetings, and they are not allowed to move. Having one day a month to become a better leader and strengthen my backbone to make some hard decisions is time well spent.”

The future for Lumina Learning is to continue to innovate, differentiate and increase their market share.

The closing comment from Stewart when asked what he is most proud of was, “Having challenged the status quo academically and businesswise, and having built a global team that is empowered, passionate and growing.”

