



CASE STUDY

First1Right Plumbing and Heating: An Investment in Future Growth

Gary Bullen is founder and owner of First1Right Plumbing and Heating. Established in 2018, the company serves the greater Guildford area in Surrey, Hampshire and up as far as Southwest London. He and his small team provide top quality plumbing and heating services both inside and outside the home.

After emigrating from South Africa and working for more than ten years running a plumbing franchise in London, Gary and his wife decided to trade in city life to raise their children in Surrey. Gary had always known he wanted to run his own company and it was this move out of London that gave him the push he needed to leave the corporate model behind. It was time for him to take on the challenge and responsibilities of being his own boss and to provide good quality, trustworthy service to customers.

"The purpose of First1Right is to re-awaken trust in the industry. I founded the company to change the public's perspective of trades from negative to positive by consistently delivering quality work on time and on budget," explained Gary.

TAKING THE LEAP

At the start, business books and working with mentors helped Gary to learn the ropes of being an entrepreneur, but when it came to growing his business he knew he needed something more.

Nearly three years and one team member later, Gary was running a successful plumbing and heating business, but it became time to invest in someone who could support his vision and plans for growth, without compromising the purpose of his business.

"I'd never worked with a business coach previously, but everything I read and everyone I spoke to made the point that all the best athletes needed coaches to help them grow, compete and succeed and running a business was no different."

Gary Bullen

"I didn't know exactly what a business coach was, but I knew it was a route I needed to explore to help me move First1Right forward."

Gary connected with Natalie Simms and her ActionCOACH Winchester, Basingstoke & Farnborough team through his network of contacts and after their first meeting, he knew she would be the right person to help him take his business to the next level.

"Natalie had experience in running a business as well as coaching. She immediately recognised the strain I was under in trying to grow and run my business at the same time." Gary recalled. "Natalie understood the issues I was facing and sat down with me to help identify the best route to take to alleviate them without losing focus on the big picture."

"Investing in working with Natalie as my business coach was not so much taking a leap as it was a godsend."

Gary Bullen

BIG GOALS, SMALL STEPS

Staying true to his purpose to combat 'cowboys' in the trade and renew the public's trust, Gary has big ambitions for the company: to become Surrey's biggest and best multi-trade business. He aims to expand beyond plumbing and heating to include electricians, builders, tilers, carpenters, and other key trades – all under the First1Right company umbrella.

Working with Natalie with the support of ActionCOACH's methodology, they have laid out a plan to work towards this goal. As part of the initial 90-day growth plan for the business, one of the first steps was to hire a third team member to support the day-to-day running of the successful plumbing and heating business, freeing up some of Gary's time to focus on growing the company and finding the right team members.

"I knew I needed support and that hiring someone would help alleviate the time pressure on me, but I kept finding excuses not to do it. Natalie saw this immediately and helped me to turn the 'should' into a 'must'," recalled Gary.

"We agreed a plan and set a date for the new hire to start. It was exactly the push I needed to find the right person and hire them – and affirmed that taking the step in working with a business coach was exactly the right one."

Gary is now seeking a fourth engineer to support the team and has taken on what he hopes will be the first of two apprentices with a view to cultivating the talent and skills he needs within the business itself.

PART OF SOMETHING BIGGER

As well as meeting online with Natalie every Thursday to keep him on track, review his weekly goals and agree next steps, Gary also receives support and exchanges tips and best practices with other business owners by participating in quarterly GrowthCLUB meetings.



A recent GrowthCLUB planning session

Comprised of Natalie and her team's extensive network of local business leaders, GrowthCLUB not only provides peer-to-peer support for its members, but also helps the clients of ActionCOACH Winchester, Basingstoke & Farnborough to extend their own networks, forge connections with one another and generate new business opportunities.

With Natalie's encouragement, Gary has built business relationships with fellow GrowthCLUB members and service providers, turning to companies like Aldershot-based iQ Digital House for his marketing collateral needs, rather than relying on larger national chains.

"Working with Natalie using ActionCOACH's structure as a backbone is exactly what I need to help reach my business goals."

"I feel like I get a shortcut to strategies that work; I get to learn from someone who's lived it without having to make all the mistakes myself. That level of support goes beyond what books and mentors can offer."

Gary Bullen

"I am excited about where we're headed as a business. We wouldn't be where we are today if I didn't have a coaching session every week to remind me of the big picture I'm working toward and knowing what I need to have in place every Thursday to get there. Natalie is the perfect accountability partner, sitting on my shoulder asking for results. I can't recommend her enough."



How First1Right Plumbing has benefited from one-to-one business coaching

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Natalie Simms is a certified executive and business coach with first-hand experience as an entrepreneur and business leader – and an in-depth understanding of the challenges they face. As Managing Director of ActionCOACH Winchester Basingstoke and Farnborough, Natalie combines her passion for building businesses and communities with her in-depth experience, training and drive for success. Together with her team, she works closely with her clients to provide the skills, techniques, support and accountability they need to achieve their goals and to grow their businesses.