



CASE STUDY

Red Fox Fine Foods: Navigating the Business of Hospitality

Husband and wife team Kerry and Ryan Lamb moved to the Hampshire village of Broughton in 2012 to reopen and restore the local Tally Ho! pub to its former glory. Having met working in Shaftesbury, the couple combined Kerry's front of house and sales experience in health clubs and pubs with Ryan's expertise as a classically trained chef for their new venture. They immediately set to work not only in transforming the Tally Ho! into an idyllic British country pub, but into building a community hub for village.

"We wanted the pub to be the heart of the village," explained Kerry. And that meant getting the residents involved from the start. "We came to the village with Ryan's trade in mind, we had planned to open as a fine dining establishment, but when we invited the locals to come in and meet up, everyone said they just wanted their pub back, not a 'poncy' restaurant, so we had to have a rethink."

The couple took the input on board and opened the pub with a traditional menu - with a bit of Ryan's flare. "We now have fine dining nights and other special events to try new things - and have started to sell restaurant quality food to enjoy at home through our Red Fox Fine Foods brand," said Kerry.

The Tally Ho! is now very much the hub of the village community. In addition to their fine dining evening, they provide a meeting place for the cribbage club and drama group - and its regulars range from former FA chairman, Greg Dyke to residents from the local council estates. "We love that the Tally Ho! is a great leveller for everyone in the community."

With the pub up and running smoothly, Kerry started to feel a bit stuck after a few years.

"I was good at performing, at getting people to the pub and taking care of them, but I didn't understand the finance side of things or the bigger picture looking outside the day-to-day. I didn't have any support for long term planning or growing the business."

Kerry Lamb



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TAKING A BUSINESS APPROACH

After meeting through a mutual opportunity, Kerry started working with local executive and business coach, Natalie Simms.

"I didn't know anything about business coaching at the start," admitted Kerry, "but when I met Natalie, she could immediately see the potential of what we could do to grow our business. We've always made money, but she helped us to see that it's about managing the money. We needed to learn more about the business side of things. Natalie has helped us to do that – and held us to account to ensure we stay on a path toward growth."

Through their one-to-one coaching sessions, Natalie has worked with Kerry to help her to plan, set goals, understand their finances and manage their cashflow using tried and tested techniques from ActionCOACH. By working through the steps and gaining a better understanding of how their business worked Kerry has been able to have the confidence to make decisions for the business and look ahead to the long term.

"I hated saying no to customers – whether it was letting them run up unpaid bar tabs or not collecting deposits for events booking, I thought being nice was the best way to run the business; to gain trust. I didn't realise how much it was affecting the business and our cashflow.

"Working with Natalie has helped me to gain a wider perspective on the business, to look beyond the day-to-day. She has taught me how to have a business viewpoint and that saying 'no' can be a good thing."

Kerry Lamb

It turns out customers are happy to pay deposits to reserve space for special occasions - and they understand that if they don't pay their tab on time, there might not be a pub to come back to."

SURVIVING COVID

In addition to building their understanding and confidence, working with Natalie has helped Kerry and Ryan react to – and survive – the unthinkable.

"When COVID hit and we had to close, we struggled to find hope, we felt out of control – so much was out of our hands.

"Working with Natalie helped us to refocus, re-energise and move our business forward. She kept us on track, held us to account and helped keep us focussed on our goals."

Kerry Lamb

"She helped me to realise that hard as it is, this was a temporary situation and we needed to think not only about surviving, but where we wanted to be when the pandemic was over."

Like everyone, lockdown has been a difficult time for Kerry and Ryan, but thanks to support from Natalie and the local ActionCOACH team, they have been able to manage their cashflow and keep the pub – and their staff team of 13 – with 5 of them keeping things running throughout lockdown.

They restructured their menu and service to provide a quality takeaway experience consistent with the quality the Tally Ho! and Red Fox Fine Foods had come to represent.



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“The takeaways proved very popular and allowed us to stay in touch with our local customers throughout both lockdowns,” said Kerry. “But they were chomping at the bit to get back to the pub once the rules were relaxed!”

So much so that the Tally Ho! experienced a record number of bookings and takings a week after reopening for outside diners in April 2021.

“After working with Natalie, I now feel I can hold my own in business meetings. With a strong plan in place, I feel we are being taken seriously and have now taken steps to secure the funds we need to grow the business – something we would not have been able to achieve on our own,” said Kerry.

NEXT STEPS: A PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

With funding now in place, Kerry and Ryan will be transitioning from running the Tally Ho! to owning their own pub. They have purchased the larger Greyhound pub located in the centre of the village. The new venue’s larger kitchen space will allow Ryan to utilise his classic training to introduce a fine dining restaurant alongside their much-loved traditional country pub. In addition to more tables inside, guests will have more outside space, car parking and the bedrooms mean it will help attract more visitors to the village and community for overnight stays.

Kerry concluded: “Investing in this opportunity is a dream come true for us - we will not only be able to grow our business and save on costs long term, but to put down more permanent roots in the village and community that we’ve made our home. We can’t thank Natalie and her team enough for their help and support in making this happen.”

How Red Fox Fine Foods has benefitted from one-to-one business coaching

- Working with Natalie has helped Kerry and Ryan react to – and survive – the pandemic.
- Thanks to Natalie, they have been able to manage their cashflow and keep the pub – and their staff team of 13 – 5 of whom kept things running throughout lockdown. They restructured their menu and service to provide a quality takeaway experience. The Tally Ho! experienced a record number of bookings and takings a week after reopening for outside diners in April 2021.
- “Working with Natalie helped us to re-focus, re-energise and move our business forward. She kept us on track, held us to account and helped keep us focused on our goals.”

Kerry Lamb

- In addition to keeping things running during COVID, they have been hard at work with Natalie throughout, developing a business plan for future growth and investment. The business plan looks at potential revenue streams for the future, encouraging the team to look beyond their current limitations as tenants renting The Tally Ho! and to explore the opportunity to own and run their own pub with larger premises, rooms for guests and exponentially greater opportunity for revenue growth
- With funding now in place, Kerry and Ryan will be transitioning from running the Tally Ho! to owning their own pub. They have purchased the larger Greyhound pub located in the centre of the village.

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About Natalie Simms

Natalie 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.

