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How a business coach drives success

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ANY athlete will tell you: raw talent is not enough. The key to success at the highest level is the quality of the coaching a person receives.

It's a realisation which has propelled Scottish tennis star Andy Murray on his meteoric rise up the world rankings, and it is a lesson which can equally well be applied to Scotland's business community.

Increasingly, smart and successful business owners are turning to a business coach to help them take their companies to the next level. In exactly the same manner as a sporting coach, a business coach pushes his or her clients to achieve optimum performance, providing support when they are exhausted and teaching them to execute plays that their competition does not anticipate.

A good business coach will have undertaken extensive training in all areas of business management, and is able to use that background and perspective to assess how a business owner is working, and what changes could be made to turn their company into a world-beater.

It's not difficult for business owners to see when they need help.

In most instances, the people that a business coach works with are those who are prepared to acknowledge their own limitations. In many cases, they are extremely good "technicians", experts at the things their company makes, provides or markets.

But all technicians eventually reach a point where, to take their business to the next level, they need to introduce other thoughts, ideas and approaches.

The talents which make someone a great athlete or a successful business person will not be sufficient to see them through every stage of their career.

It's a cruel fact of nature that if something is not growing, then potentially it's dying. That applies just as much to businesses as to plants and animals - if a company chooses to stand still, then given the pace of change in business today, it may well be dead within six months.

Enabling business owners to handle that kind of change situation is exactly where a business coach can help.

Business coaching is in no way a "quick fix" approach.

Generally, the relationship between a business coach and their client will last between one and two years. After that time, the business owner will have acquired the business skills and knowledge and the attitudinal changes that will enable them to move on under their own steam.

Business coaching offers the greatest benefits to owners of small and medium-sized companies, where the business coach and the owner can work together to affect change at the owner level.

This in turn filters down throughout the company, resulting in a change in culture and methodology, and bringing in new ways of treating customers and improving business performance.

There are hundreds of golfers who have the same level of talent and skill as Tiger Woods. The difference between him and them is the coach who takes his motivation, his course management, his attitude towards winning to a level above that which anyone else is capable of.

The lesson for Scotland's business owners is clear: to make your business as good as it could be, follow the lead of world-beating athletes and seek expert help from a business coach.

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