



## LAWYER CHECKER ACHIEVES RAPID GROWTH

### The challenge

When Lawyer Checker was launched five years ago to protect money transmissions linked to property purchase, developing its talented young workforce to keep pace with rapid business growth was a key priority...

Chris Harris, managing director of Lawyer Checker, explains: "The huge sums of money associated with property transactions have encouraged criminals to use the internet to intercept emails and set up fake bank accounts to trick solicitors into diverting funds to them. As well as educating legal firms about the risks, I also wanted to bring a new product to the market that would enable solicitors to quickly check the risks associated with any particular bank account."

He adds: "As soon as the market started to adopt the product, we experienced rapid growth and it became essential to quickly hire the right people."

"The product was offering something unique and fresh, so the roles I was creating were a bit different. Job descriptions covered a wide range of responsibilities. I knew that if I could find people with raw potential and talent and create the right environment, I could motivate and support them to succeed, despite their relative inexperience."

"Having already worked for a business that grew from 12 to 560, I really learned the importance of great people management and significantly investing in the development of all employees to create a positive, motivated team with strong values."

### The solution

Lawyer Checker set about finding and hiring people who it believed had the ability to succeed. After giving them internal support to progress rapidly from entry level positions into more advanced and business-critical roles, they were then provided with specialist one-to-one coaching from Hunter Roberts, the people development consultancy, to accelerate their growth even further.

Chris himself is a strong advocate of the benefits of business coaching, citing his own success as a living example of the positive results it can produce.

"I began a coaching relationship with Susy Roberts of Hunter Roberts back in 2003," he says, "and I believe had I not invested time and money in coaching, I wouldn't be where I am today."

One of the first employees to benefit from coaching was Jenny Owen, 27, who joined Lawyer Checker after completing a law degree and postgraduate legal studies at the College of Law in Chester. Although she started off running legal searches, her role quickly developed to become much more strategic.

Chris explains: "When Jenny started, there were just three of us in the office: we were literally one team, all in one room, and everyone was involved in everything. When we started to achieve rapid growth, I wanted to help Jenny develop her ability to manage people across the business, and arranged for her to have regular coaching sessions with Susy Roberts."

Jenny says: "Without Susy, I wouldn't have been able to progress to commercial director within just four years. She helped me to grow into a strategic role by teaching me how to manage the interactions between the teams and any potential conflicts.

"When the business got bigger, there were lots of different characters and attitudes, working across different teams. Susy helped us identify which values were important to us as a business – things like communication, self-management and interacting with industry – and coached me to use those values as the basis of appraisals and to set goals with members of my team. Now everyone knows what's expected of them, conflicts are quickly resolved and everyone gets praised when they're doing a good job."

Similarly, when Jen Neary, 30, joined Lawyer Checker as Chris's PA, it wasn't long - 90 days to be precise - before he realised she was capable of much more than organising his diary and answering his phone.

He says: "I was very impressed to find out that Jen had studied for and obtained a serious IT qualification in her own time. I knew it was a difficult qualification to gain and at the time we needed someone to improve the IT infrastructure we had in place, so I offered the role to Jen, on the understanding that she would undertake further training in data science."

Jen leapt at the chance, saying: "I was delighted to get more involved in the IT side of things. I've always enjoyed self-study and learning and had a strong interest in IT, so really enjoyed being given the opportunity to move out of my role as a PA. Thanks to the support provided, and time allowed during working hours to complete my studies, I now hold several computing qualifications, oversee all our IT infrastructure and manage a small team of two developers."

Jen is now also benefiting from coaching, saying: "Coaching sessions from Hunter Roberts have helped me to understand how aspects of my personality that I previously considered to be negative, could actually be hugely positive when applied in the right context. I've been provided with really practical suggestions to overcome some issues I was having with my team and I am already seeing the positive results of these."

Issues Jen has been supported with include handling difficult situations with team members and giving performance feedback to underperformers.

Eloise Coyle, 23, joined Lawyer Checker as a data research administrator after completing a degree in Classics at Cambridge University. She is now part of the management team and leading projects that will shape the future of the company.

She says: “To help me grow into my new role, I was provided with 1:1 coaching from Susy Roberts. The sessions are really focused on what motivates me and how best I can work with other people in the company, for example, how to deal with the fact that not everyone is as analytical or focused as I am.

“Another issue we’ve worked on is the best way to go about holding difficult conversations with people who aren’t keeping up or making a conscious effort to prioritise. All of this is helping me to improve my communication skills so that I can better manage others to get to the next level of each project, as well as thinking about where I need to be in terms of my own development.”

She adds: “It’s incredible to think that this time last year I was inputting data, and now I am a manager, and leading on critical projects that will govern the direction of the business. Lawyer Checker is a great company to work for because it gives people opportunities if they want to take them, which keeps you really energised and constantly learning new skills. The professional coaching provided is very motivating, and equips you with the insights you need to progress.”

All coachees have been receiving half a day’s coaching each month and Chris says the work will continue as long as it is beneficial to fast tracking their personal development and leadership capability.

Chris takes monitoring the benefits of the coaching sessions seriously, and holds regular reviews with the coaching consultancy to keep up to date on each coachees’ progress. He also schedules in a biannual three-way review, to include himself, Susy and the coachee.

The subject matter of the 1:1 sessions is confidential, however Chris sometimes contributes themes that he thinks could provide a useful focus. He also ensures Susy receives his weekly business update so she is fully aware of what is happening commercially at the time.

Chris says: “Coaching from Hunter Roberts is a very important tool to ensuring my young and talented managers reach their potential and as the business grows we don’t hit pain barriers because we are all talking the same management language and share a set way of doing things.”

He concludes: “The coaching provided by both Hunter Roberts and myself has helped the business to grow from three to 30 people in five years. It’s given individuals confidence and encouraged the whole management team to have a can do, focused attitude towards growth.”