

CompTIA®



Spotlight on Success

June 2016

Perry Ashby



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Growing Talents and Reaping Rewards

Founded in 2002, Urban Network has transitioned with considerable success from break fix support to become a leading solutions provider.

In this edition of Spotlight on Success, we talk with Co-Founder and CEO Perry Ashby about the impact, cultural changes and positive results of growing talent within the business, and how this will be a catalyst for ongoing future success.

CompTIA: Can you provide readers with a quick overview of your business?

Perry: Urban Network was founded in 2002 and delivers traditional break/fix support and have grown into a fully Outsourced Solutions Provider.

We predominately focus on companies within the M25 and have grown organically year-on-year through the recommendations of existing clients.

CompTIA: Do you have a typical customer? and what do they look?

Perry: Typically, our customers have over 20 staff and have the mind-set of using technology as a facilitator within the business rather than just a cost to their business.

CompTIA: What has been the biggest achievement in the last few years?

Perry: We have been very successful in developing a client lifecycle process that ensures we are always communicating with our clients at every level, strategically and operationally, resulting in a significant reduction in attrition within our client base.

CompTIA: Have you invested in any particular areas to facilitate growth?

Perry: One key area for us was ensuring that we had the right talent to support growth, and the skill sets needed to move with the fast pace change in technology. This initiated our development programme of identifying, supporting and training new talent.

CompTIA: We know you have had success with apprentices – what interested you in going down this route?

Perry: We wanted to feel like we were doing more than a straight forward hire of a new technician, we wanted to offer an opportunity to a young person and give something back. Both my business partner and I benefitted from apprenticeships as part of our journey into business, and speaking personally I found the support, guidance and mentorship invaluable in shaping both my career and life. From the business perspective we knew we would be getting a motivated, mouldable keen young individual who was ready to commit to a career path within our industry. We would be able to shape them to work in the ‘Urban’ way, with our company ethos and ethic underpinning their development.

CompTIA: Did you have to change the business to accommodate these or did you find it a smooth transition?

Perry: This type of hire brings its own unique challenges and so we had to modify our usual process accordingly. We invested a lot of time in inducting them in to the business to make them productive swiftly, this gave them the confidence that they are an integral part of the team and contributing very early on. We were fortunate that our guys have always delivered on their own development, often leading their classes in their work and continue to be excellent technicians in training. The success we have seen inspired us to create our own continuation of their training with the Urban Analyst Trainee Programme, something that again we are incredibly proud of.

CompTIA: Do you feel that investing in talent and training is important and why?

Perry: The old saying that “A business is only as good as the people in it” rings true. We work very hard to develop a culture and workplace that reflects the passion and talent that we have. We want employees to feel part of who we are and invested in. Every team member has a roadmap of skills training and personal development created for them as soon as they join, this is reviewed every 3 months via our “Keeping in Touch (KiT)” programme. By investing in the team we have solidified bonds and hopefully have created a wealth of loyal talent to support the business into the future.

CompTIA: Do you think you have seen a positive return on your investment?

Perry: Undoubtedly. Being able to give young people an inspiring start to their chosen career, as was given to us many (many) years ago is return enough, but their enthusiasm and willingness to learn is infectious throughout the business.

CompTIA: Do you have any particular methods/processes for ongoing development?

Perry: We always look to provide broad technical knowledge across all of our business services as a baseline, and once engrained employees can request or be selected for more in-depth training around certain products or areas. We engage our staff regularly via the KiT programme to monitor and assess training needs and this has ensured we have the right skills at all times and talent that can plug holes during team absences, unforeseen or otherwise.

CompTIA: What advice would you give someone looking to increase the talent in their business or take on an apprentice?

Perry: would suggest before rushing ahead to sit back and think - do you actually have a requirement and more importantly the time? New raw talent needs time to grow and develop, you need to make time in the business to support their needs and make them feel at ease. With the right investment of time and training, it can be a very rewarding experience for both parties.

CompTIA: Do you think it is better to grow talent within the business or recruit new talent?

Perry: On a personal level I would love to grow the talent within our business, but that is not always possible. Having home grown talent that learn through the business gives you a much better measure of their skillsets and capabilities, which is more difficult to determine



What three tips would you offer someone thinking about taking on an apprentice?

1. Whatever time you think you need to put aside for them, double it! But the effort is worth it.
2. Remember they are young and will need your help in personal development in addition to professional development.
3. Be prepared before you employ, and be patient.



going externally, for example, someone can be great in interview but fails to deliver against their CV.

CompTIA: What in your view have been the business advantages to your investment in training and talent?

Perry: The business has been able to manage a greater workload and as we grow the talent the cost of recruitment and salary have been greatly reduced. We have created the right team with the exacting talent required to meet our future growth ambitions.

