

The TopDog Programme for Chief Executives – Mike Anderson

The Problem



- As Managing Director of The Evening Standard, Mike Anderson had found himself at the sharp end of his business for a number of years. There was little opportunity to step back, reflect and get some alternative perspective
- Mike wanted some stimulus – to see how other businesses dealt with similar difficult issues, to see how some truly leading companies gain their competitive advantage and to see how other leaders operated

The Process

Mike booked a slot on TopDog USA 2001 – a week’s study tour of some of the most innovative businesses in the States. During the intensive week Mike experienced:

- half-day visits to Ritz-Carlton, SouthWest Airlines, Stanford Research Institute (SRI), The Container Store and Cisco Systems amongst others. During each visit the Top Dog team met with the senior team of each business for in-depth discussion
- a joint learning opportunity with the 17 other CEOs and board members on the trip with him – a new peer group network of senior colleagues to continue discussions with post the tour

The Solution

Mike got an incredible amount of stimulus and inspiration from the trip:

“For me the stimulus fell into two areas: spending time in other companies with people in very senior positions and hearing about it warts and all; and away from the visits it was also stimulating spending time with the other delegates – the peer group.”

After the trip the report that followed up has also become a well used item in Mike’s office:

“I’m still pulling stuff out of it and using it now. It’s full of years and years of experience in bite sized pieces. It’s not all relevant at the time but it becomes relevant. I’m moving to a more mature business now and so there’s a whole load of different stuff I’ll be using and looking at.”

The Results

Mike says there are many examples of the TopDog effect in his business, for instance: “we had a set of nine truths that we were all about. I could suddenly put my hand on other examples to bring these truths to life”

Critically, Mike cites two key learnings he took away from the TopDog experience:

1. personally for him, it stopped being “me” and became “we”
2. discipline and rigour in implementation - Mike and his team have also adopted a whole new ethos and energy around making sure the important things happen

“Think of it as Harvard in a week....the opportunity to spend that amount of time with that many influential people just doesn’t come along. You will gain competitive advantage in whatever you’re doing, both internally and externally.”

[Mike Anderson, MD Designate News Group Newspapers](#)

