

BESPOKE HR SOLUTIONS FOR A FAST-GROWING SME

Getting to the HR knitty-gritty...

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Background

WoolOvers (www.woolovers.com) is a world class knitwear retailer, supplying over 1 million customers worldwide with men's and ladies' classic and contemporary knitwear. Established in 1989, they have enjoyed steady organic growth, but in the last 5 years the brand has grown dramatically via 8 international websites.

The Challenge

A combination of rapid international growth and post-Brexit cost pressures led the business to review its structure to ensure the business growth remained sustainable. This involved a collective consultation to redefine roles in line with a proposed new structure. Once the restructure had been successfully completed, the business needed to rebuild employee engagement and confidence. But there was a problem: WoolOvers didn't have experienced HR resource, an HR strategy or a people roadmap to follow.

Mike Lester, CEO, reflects on the challenges WoolOvers faced. “We didn't have a cohesive approach to HR. We'd do occasional employee initiatives, and although we had grown successfully, HR was quite disjointed and with no directional strategy. We are an ambitious business with plans to continue to grow globally. When Gemma came on board we needed help with a restructure and collective consultation. She quickly put in place a robust process that supported us through this. I asked her to stay on to put in place an HR strategy that would quickly identify what people priorities to focus on. Everything she identified was relevant to what we wanted to achieve – a relevant HR strategy that helped to build employee morale and embed the new structure to strengthen our growth position.”

We covered a lot in only two days per week across the six-month period following the restructure:

- Developed a clear and compelling HR strategy to build employee engagement
- Established a new performance management process
- Designed and implemented a new performance-related bonus scheme
- Delivered management skills training
- Coached senior leaders
- Strengthened employer brand to ensure recruitment is cost-effective
- Repositioned HR in the organisation
- Sourced, hired and onboarded a new HR Manager

The impact

The restructure was implemented successfully, and without any issues. And by focusing attention on the right HR activity, the business has delivered some high impact programmes, without significant cost. These have contributed to stronger employee morale, focus and productivity. Reflecting on the progress made, Mike now feels that the business is better equipped to succeed. “It was great to see exactly what we needed to do. I now feel comfortable we have the right HR resource in place for the stage we are at in the business. Gemma brought great ideas, practical solutions and most importantly, focus. There were so many things we could have been doing, and Gemma identified the key priorities to focus on, so we could direct resources accordingly for maximum impact.”