

CASE STUDY: THE SMITH FAMILY

How a period of rapid growth in the family business inspired a small leadership team to seek out the new skills they needed...by learning and improving together (with a little help from me!)

Being an expert in your field, having years of experience, and shipping great work are all essential aspects of running a business, of course. But if you want to build a truly exceptional company, you'll have to add another ingredient to the mix: exceptional leadership skills.

Learning to Lead

Lincoln Smith is the founder and president of a successful family business in Invercargill, New Zealand, which he runs with the help of his sons, Arne and Eddie.

Together they're a strong and caring leadership team, but when the organization hit a period of considerable growth, the trio realized that there was room for improvement in how they show up as leaders to set strategic direction and develop a culture of learning.

As Senior Manager, Arne, explains:

"I knew I needed to grow as a leader. Our organization is not the small size it used to be. More staff means more responsibility on us as leaders to provide the necessary support."

If you're a business owner or senior executive, you might have also experienced a growing gap between the company's managers, and the rest of the team and employees. You may have seen that team members don't have the information (or the confidence) they need to troubleshoot problems independently. They constantly turn to the company's leaders for direction.

However, as much as the Smith family knew they needed to transform their leadership skills, they were unsure how to tackle this gap between the senior management and their employees.

Fortunately, Eddie heard me speak at an online event and realized my Leading to Learn Accelerator program would provide the direction they were looking for. He reached out to me immediately, and encouraged his father and brother to join too.

As Lincoln says:

"I felt the responsibility of leading a growing company and how to ensure that we bring everyone along; how to engender the same values in every team member, so we become a unified whole. I joined up only on Eddie's recommendation, not knowing anything about it, but I wasn't disappointed."

Eddie remarked that before the course...

"I was in a space where the business was growing rapidly, and I was spending a lot of time in the business just keeping it going day to day. I realized that I was holding the company back by not shifting to a coaching role and empowering my people to take over their decisions instead of me doing it all."

So, determined to invest in their leadership skills, all three of them decided to embark on the course...together.

Actionable advice for immediate impact.

Before starting the course, the Smiths were a little uncertain about how it would go, so they were pleasantly surprised by how easy it was to follow. Arne says:

"The structure of the course was very well set out and flowed from one topic of learning to the next. In each of the sessions, there were many action items and moments of enlightenment for your own learning.

Katie asks very good questions -- she helps you to dive deeper into the questions that you have in your own mind. Her tailored responses in the weekly check-ins would make you feel individually coached.

The sheer amount of value and actionable, applicable advice that was given in ways that you could immediately find in relation to the day-to-day happenings of your responsibilities was excellent.

Coming from a family business and not coming up in a corporate environment -- a self-taught manager so to speak -- this was so good."

A renewed approach to leadership.

Following the Accelerator, their leadership approach has been transformed, and the Smith family are more confident than ever that they have the skills and know-how to help the business transition through this growth period with ease.

Arne is thrilled to have learned how to form his own leadership credo, a baseline for him to work from as he learns how to move forward as a more intentional leader. He is better at asking questions and spending time reflecting on his actions.

Arne states that he firmly believes:

"The development of our people is THE most important thing we can be doing."

His brother, Eddie, feels similarly:

"I feel like I've done some growing over the sixty days!"

Eddie describes a process of change that has helped him understand how he comes across as a leader and taught him how to push back when people require direction, asking questions instead of always being the one to come up with the answers.

For Eddie, the key to an improved approach to leadership lies with one of the cornerstone processes of my learning programs: forming a habit of intention-setting at the start of the day, and ending the day with a period of reflection. He knows that these practices, and small, incremental changes will help him move forward as an increasingly effective leader.

The power of learning together.

Eddie says that it has been invaluable to go through the Accelerator program together as a leadership team:

"As a leadership team we feel more confident that we can set the direction and provide support to accomplish the organization's goals. I think that this course helped us to formulate our vision for the company on our own rather than trying to get an expert to help us.

I was in a position where I was struggling to see how I could accomplish more in a day and how to transition from a manager to a leader. This course helps you craft your own leadership flight path and leads you on a journey of self discovery that is very enlightening.

Being able to share the challenges of your leadership development with Katie and the other course participants is extremely helpful. You don't have to struggle on your own!

Katie is an excellent coach, asks great questions to make you think and is always positive and smiling!"

For company President Lincoln, the course has been just as enlightening, particularly Mr. Yoshino's lessons in failure, which I detail in my book, Learning to Lead, Leading to Learn.

He admits that experiencing failure, particularly when you've managed to get pretty far in life without major setbacks, can be hard to take.

Examining yourself, being honest, and coming out of the other side with a valuable lesson is a tricky process. He was especially interested in learning about Mr. Yoshino's history with Toyota and his positive attitude towards failure, as well as his tenets of respect for people and continuous improvement.

Committing to a continuous process of learning.

In fact, continuous learning is something all three members of the Smith family are now committed to. Having already started to feel the benefits of the lessons they've learned over the sixty days of the program, they know that becoming the leaders they truly want to be, is going to be a lifelong process. As Lincoln says:

"It has been a very enlightening course, but to really make it stick, we're going to spend the next weeks, and months, continually putting it all into practice so we can form those habits".

They know that when they do, they'll finally be able to bridge that gap between themselves and their team members, so they can empower those around them and even begin to take them on their own leadership journey.

If you feel like you're struggling with your own form of leadership gap and want to learn the skills you need to become a more capable and confident leader, whether individually or as part of a leadership team, you'll find more information on the [Leading to Learn Accelerator Course here.](#)

Collaborate With Katie

Feel like this could be your team? Collaborate with Katie to meet the needs of your organization and your team. From delivering learning experiences such as custom keynote addresses and interactive workshops to empowering your leaders through coaching and group programs, Katie looks forward to inspiring, energizing, and supporting your team to lead with intention!

Explore her course options, including the [Leading to Learn Accelerator here](#), and start on your journey of intentional leadership with Katie today.

