



James Fisher and Sons plc

Stuart's
Story

**Delivered by Managing Director,
Gavin Oattes, and Director Alice Beveridge.**

**Case Study of our leadership development
programme and participant,
Stuart Yellowlees, Chief Operating Officer
at James Fisher & Sons plc.**

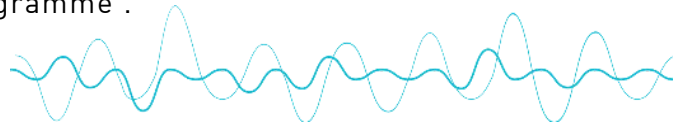
Case Study
September 2017 - February 2018

CHANGE IS...

Type “change is...” into Google and its attempts at mind reading produce ‘change is gonna come’ and ‘change is good’ as its top two suggestions. Number three on the list is quite telling.

“**Change is the only constant.**” Yes, we know it’s a cliché. We know it’s overused. But here’s the thing, like most clichés - it happens to be true.

Seismic shifts in the economic, technological, political and cultural landscape means that most organisations are constantly adjusting the way they work. Sometimes the change is organic, but in most large and complex organisations the evolution is planned through a very strategic ‘change programme’.

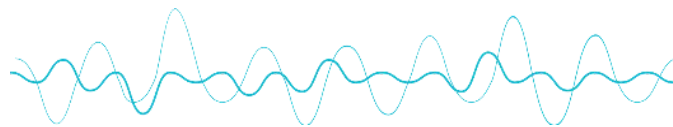


JAMES FISHER AND SONS PLC

James Fisher and Sons plc are on their own change journey. And, with over 20 individual companies under the James Fisher banner, it is, by its nature, a complex organisation. The sector that unites them is ‘marine services’, but that’s about the only way that they were united.

Like many multi-company groups, each individual business operates in its own silo. They are very successfully ploughing their own furrough.

There was a recognition from the senior leadership team that there was no consistency across how each of the businesses operated. That meant that the culture, processes and leadership styles varied dramatically across the group. That’s not unusual, many companies are in the same boat, but operating in silos means they’re not leveraging the power of the group. Being a group dominated by engineers it’s not surprising that the initial areas of focus was on improving technology and processes.



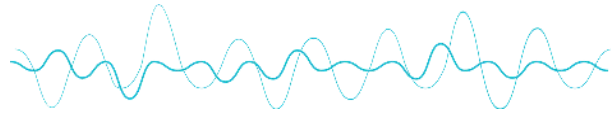
“We were going through a massive period of change and growth in the business. We’d gone from being a niche design business to being a prime contracting entity. Making that change started where we were comfortable. We focussed on technology and process improvement exercises, but we couldn’t overcome the final hurdle - we needed to focus on our approach to managing and supporting our people.”

Stuart Yellowlees - Chief Operating Officer, James Fisher Nuclear



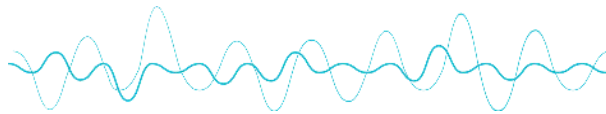
STUART'S TREE OF KNOWLEDGE STORY

Stuart has been part of the leadership team of **James Fisher Nuclear** since January 2015. With 9 direct reports and responsibility of supporting a 360 strong workforce, it's clear that **people play a significant role in Stuart's working life and in the success of the business**. With a renewed commitment from the leadership to support the people management and support across the entire group, we were engaged to deliver a custom development programme. The **programme brought together a number of senior leaders across a number of different James Fisher businesses. Stuart was one of those.**






SHEEP DIPPED

Stuart's worked in the engineering sector for over 20 years with the last 13 of those being in senior leadership roles. As a result, it's fair to say that this was not his first experience of being part of a leadership development programme. He sums it up much better than I can - **"I've been sheep-dipped many times using many different methodologies and models of leadership**. Understandably, when I first heard about the opportunity to take part in the Tree of Knowledge programme, there was **an initial feeling of cynicism**. But that went away quickly when I was told that **'this one's a bit different.'**"



FROM PROCESS TO PEOPLE

We worked closely with the team at James Fisher to understand the work they'd already completed with their change process. We then **listened to the people related challenges and developed a tailored programme that would work for them**. The programme Stuart and his colleagues worked through had **three distinct elements**.

-  Workshop
-  Active Learning Set (Group Coaching)
-  1:1 Coaching

This was delivered over 4 days. 2 days initially in September 2017 and 2 days in January 2018. **We've found that having at least four weeks between the sessions gives time for the learning to bed in, and means that the programme delegates have the opportunity to put what they've learned into practice.**

This blended approach gives us the opportunity to get the balance right between the theory and the practice. Our approach is weighted very heavily to the latter. **We want people to learn by doing. We want people to engage and have fun while learning. And, we want what we do to be remembered and have a lasting impact.**



THE FEEDBACK

On the workshops...

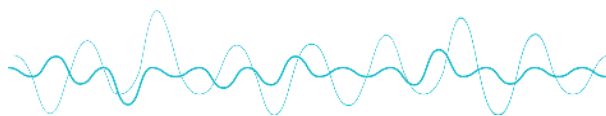
"They were different, but in a positive way. It wasn't just the exercises that were different, it was the way that Tree of Knowledge broke things down to be really simple. They managed to simplify fairly complex theories. And, because of the practical nature of the workshops and the dynamic delivery, the lessons really sunk in."

On Action Learning Sets...

"I referred to this as 'group therapy'. In a small group we shared a specific issue that was grounded in a real business problem that one of us was having. It put the theory into practice by getting us to help the person with the problem think for themselves by coaching not telling. It forced us to use what we'd been taught and made me mentally take ownership of the training."

On 1:1 Coaching...

"The 1:1 coaching was hugely beneficially. I worked with Gavin, he's very inspiring and the way he thinks really works for me. He helped me appreciate what I'd already achieved and made me reflect not just on me as a business leader but me as an individual. He showed the link between the two and set me on a path to get a better balance across both areas."



THE CHANGE

Everything we do at Tree of Knowledge is about supporting positive change. We're driven to make a difference and nothing makes us happier than seeing the ideas and lessons from our programmes being applied in the real world. And, of course we want that change to be long lasting, not short lived.

Stuart and his fellow James Fisher and Sons leaders are just at the start of their journey and there's a lot of hard work ahead for them. We'll let Stuart wrap up his story so far by getting him to share the initial impact the programme has had on him and, even more importantly, his team.

"The programme has played a really important role in supporting the change process we've been going through. It's already helped us massively. We're doing the difficult stuff by changing teams around and are committed to doing what's right. We're having more conversations as a team and the feedback has been hugely positive. They feel more engaged and positive despite all the changes they're experiencing. As a team and organisation it feels like we're growing up. We're exploring ways to keep the dialogue that started in our 'group therapy' sessions alive by creating more opportunities to network and exchange ideas across companies. That way we can share best practices and find route causes to similar problems we face.

'Putting people first' isn't a theory, it's something that we're putting into practice. And, on a personal level, what I've got from the programme is confidence. And much of that confidence has come from the concept of always trying to keep things simple, which was a constant theme throughout the Tree of Knowledge programme."



YOUR TREE OF KNOWLEDGE STORY...

Want to know more about Stuart's story?

Looking to begin your own Tree of Knowledge journey?

If this case study has sparked any thoughts or questions, please feel free to contact [Emma Hazley](#), our Business Development Manager, by emailing emma@treeof.com or calling our office on 01383 621648.



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