

# Case Study

## The Henley Leadership Programme



**Carl Smith**  
Operations Director,  
Metallform Holdings Ltd

*"It turned out to be one of the best things I've ever done"*

### Carl, how did you come to be on the Henley programme?

'The Leadership Programme was actually chosen for me by the main shareholder of our business. He and I had increasingly recognised that the expansion of the business was putting a lot of stress on me, and he felt this programme would give me some of the support and personal development I needed.

'I hadn't done any formal training for many years, but I knew I had to do something; I needed help to guide me back to normal behaviour and the confidence to delegate more responsibilities away from me. I felt as if I was taking on everyone else's problems, and had to clean up after them, but in hindsight, I probably encouraged it. Looking back, I can see that I had a very low tolerance level for failure.'

### So what were your perceptions of the programme and how did it compare to your expectations?

'I was very nervous! And I'd read up about the programme, and knew what a prestigious place Henley was, but if anything, this made me even more anxious! The pre-course work was interesting, but as the programme start date approached, I remember praying for something to happen that would prevent me from going. But I know now that that would, of course, have been a big mistake.

I just thought that I wouldn't be up to it, but it turned out to be one of the best things I've ever done.'

### What were the highlights and surprises for you?

'The surroundings, the accommodation, the catering – it all creates such a nice environment, and it meant I could relax. And the people on the course were fantastic. Initially, when I realised I was the only manufacturer in the group, I felt really intimidated, but we very quickly gelled, and I saw that everyone had problems, even if they weren't all the same as mine.

I soon realised that I needed to be honest about myself, and before long I found myself telling my whole life story to a group of strangers. So there was a lot of soul-searching.

And the quality of the lecturers was second-to-none. They were experienced people, who had walked the walk, so I could relate to them. It really was a great experience.'

### What impact has it had on you, both professionally and personally?

'I'm mentally stronger, and far more reflective, far calmer. Actually, I can't believe how different I am as a person! I'm more positive, and far more active. I had a medical as part of the programme, and nearly died when they told me I weighed 18 stone. Since then, I've lost five stone, and the physical change in me is a reflection of the mental one. It's been a transformational journey in lots of ways.

And my relationships with friends, family, colleagues – almost all of them have changed for the better. The programme gives you real insights into other people.'

### So what advice would you give to anyone considering such a programme?

'Henley is a fantastic place to learn. But be open and honest, and commit to the learning. Throw yourself in, and you'll never be quite the same again.'

*"It's been a transformational journey in lots of ways"*

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Before



After

### **So what advice would you give to anyone considering such a programme?**

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