



# There are three signs of a good coach: qualifications, experience and a proven framework

**EMBL met Stuart Ross – founder of High Growth – to discuss perceptions of business coaching and the Nottingham-based company's own growth plans.**

## **Tell us about your background before you became a coach**

"I was sponsored through university then started out as a fashion buyer with Arcadia Group, which at that time owned Topman, Debenhams and Dorothy Perkins. I was then headhunted to join Alliance Boots where, amongst other things, I launched the company on the web and in Japan, and subsequently became MD of a division at British Land.

"That's when I decided to follow my passion – helping people and businesses to be successful.

"I have always been good at creating high-performance teams, and I started to think 'how do you get the best out of individuals? How can I use my skills to help others?' That's how High Growth was born".

## **You work with high growth companies, but what are your own growth plans?**

"The plan and vision is to help a million businesses by 2020, through coaching and our online High Growth Academy. It's all about getting knowledge out there. We'll continue to focus on the UK and the U.S, but we're moving into Europe as well. At present I'd say we've helped about 50,000 businesses, through coaching, events and our online Academy.

"I'm also about to launch an app called Myzento. Many of the MDs I work with often want a quick answer to a question, and Google can be overwhelming with search results. Myzento fills this gap, because we have a team of experts on hand to answer people's questions online instantly. So the expertise is at people's fingertips".

## **How do we account for negative perceptions of business coaching, and what does High Growth offer that other coaches don't?**

"Coaching definitely has a mixed reputation, and the reason is twofold. Coaching is often taken up as a profession by people who are in between jobs, and many have no form of accreditation. There are lots of bad coaches with no

qualifications.

"Conversely, what I do is guarantee results and add value to a company. There are three signs of a good coach: qualifications (such as ICF), experience and a proven framework. You need credible experience of working with high growth companies, and that's what we offer. You also need a solid and proven framework to work with companies who aspire to high growth.

"One thing I don't do is work with start-ups, unlike many coaches. One of the services we do offer under the High Growth banner, however, which is perhaps distinct in some ways, is non-executive support. Importantly, it is not a one size fits all approach to coaching. We will assess companies and provide the support tailored to their needs through coaching, non-exec support training and our online academy".

## **You openly list your values on the High Growth website – Integrity, Commitment, Action, Learning and Balance. To what extent do these values determine how the company operates?**

"Everybody has values – your vision is your destination and your values are how you live day to day. I expect people to hold me to my values. They are everything. They inform everything from the way we recruit to how we treat our clients and staff".

## **Finally, why Nottingham? Theoretically, High Growth could be based anywhere**

"I absolutely love Nottingham! It's a superb location in terms of where it sits geographically, and there's a great mix of companies here. People sometimes put themselves down and say 'we're not London-based' but the talent here is phenomenal, across many sectors.

"Additionally, Nottingham provides great support for growth businesses through the D2N2 Hub and our own recently launch East Midlands Scale up programme".