

LEADING WITH INSIGHT

#LEADALUMNI

#INSPIRE BELIEF

VALUES-LED LEADERSHIP AND BUSINESS GROWTH

CASE STUDY:

**COSGROVE
& CREW**

In 2014, friends Zac Cosgrove and Luke Drew founded Cosgrove & Drew Engineering Services Ltd with the intention of becoming the partner and employer of choice within their industry for Mechanical Engineering Projects.



Both had a background of working 'on the tools' but wanted to create opportunity for ambitious, like-minded people to create change within their industry and allow all to strive for success and to do things differently. Cosgrove & Drew was predominantly a large project pipework contractor carrying out the installation of building services, plumbing, heating, and gas to such sites as hospitals, schools, military bases, and offices with an average contract value of £500k.

In 2014 they had two employees with a turnover of £80k - fast forward to 2026 they now have 55 employees together with offices in Bristol, Oxford, and London and a turnover of £10m with a plan to grow to £24m.



“During the first six years of trading, the thought of a business plan, financial reporting or any other basic business function was never considered,” admits Luke. “It wasn’t until 2019 when we were introduced to QuoLux™ that our mission really started.”

Quality Delivered Safely

"We have always had a site-wide mantra of 'Quality Delivered Safely'," explains Zac, "and one of the first steps we took having joined the LEAD™ programme was to work with every employee from apprentices through to our directors to develop our core values and behaviour framework which we call our "6C" framework.



"We recognised that establishing values or behaviours would drive the entire business ethos at all levels as we know that research confirms that employees who identify strongly with company values demonstrate higher levels of engagement and job satisfaction, which in turn leads to increased productivity and overall performance. By involving the whole team we were able to ensure that our behaviour framework is both relevant and effective."

"We were introduced to the "6Cs of Leadership" by Professor Steve Kempster at his 'Leadership Practice' masterclass and using the six characteristics

Character	Care	Courage
Conviction	Composure	Competence

we identified behaviours for each that are expected from all Cosgrove & Drew employees, as well as those behaviours which demonstrate excellence.

For example, under the heading of **Character** we **expect** all employees to be:

- Reliable, trustworthy and honest
- Professional at all times
- Focused on their role, the job in hand and on the Company
- Show a “can-do” and resilient attitude
- Be friendly, helpful and approachable
- Demonstrate enthusiasm and passion in their role and be hard working
- Be realistic but take responsibility and keep promises

Excellence would be

- Is always forward thinking
- Proactive and take ownership for resolving things
- Always looking to improve and change things for the better
- Committed to their role, the job and the Company
- Be a role model and lead by example



Market Segmentation

The next step for Zac and Luke was to look at the strategy and business plan in order to help them to achieve their key objective of £24m by 2027.

Having attended a LEAD™ masterclass with one of the world's leading experts on strategic marketing, Professor Malcolm McDonald, they recognised that focusing on their core market of primary customers and the critical success factors (the value that is required by each of the key target markets), would allow them to formulate and communicate their unique value proposition.

Having identified their competitive advantages and having a clear understanding of the market, they then set about creating a business plan for strategic and sustainable growth over the next 5 years.

“

*The overall purpose of strategic marketing,
and its principal focus is the
identification and creation of
sustainable competitive advantage.*

Professor Malcolm McDonald

“One outcome from the introduction of Market Segmentation and understanding why people buy from us is that it has allowed us to create a road map of what our journey for the next 5 years looks like,” explains Luke. “Setting Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure business and sales operations which feed into our live dashboard, which in turn is visible to everyone within the business, aligns everyone with expectations and actual results.

“We have now created a bespoke dashboard for the business which our CRM and Finance systems automatically feed into for real time reporting. This dashboard is available for all to see and is a go-to report for our Senior Leadership Team and Board Meetings.”

In 2021 following their work on segmenting the business, Zac and Luke identified the need to increase their share in the maintenance sector and so set up a new dedicated Maintenance & Small Works (M&SW) division.

Over a six-month period a total of twelve apprentices, engineers and managers joined the new maintenance team and they have invested in vans, tools, training, marketing and more to support the strategic growth moving forward.



Investment for growth

As Luke explains, “We have invested in up-skilling our in-house engineers and apprentices to aid in the energy transition and vision of a ‘Net Zero Bristol 2030’. This has involved specialist training for renewable energy such as ground source heat pumps, air source heat pumps, solar PV, electrical charging points and more.”

The division continues to grow with the recent addition of a new Facilities maintenance team focused on student accommodation, and they have also employed a Technical Director with responsibility for leading the teams.

A key factor in driving the new maintenance division has been the involvement of Bob Holt OBE who came on board as Chairman in 2022.



With a career spanning more than five decades, Bob has taken senior positions within some of the UK's most successful companies. He is perhaps most widely known for his pivotal role in the rise of Mears Group PLC, building the then little-known Gloucestershire contractor up from a £12m business with 83 staff, through floatation on the stock market in 1996, to a £1bn group with over 12,000 staff, operating in the care and housing maintenance sectors.



Commenting on his new role, Bob Holt said, "This is a fantastic opportunity to support Luke and Zac in driving the company forward and to focus on expansion. Prior to the pandemic, the business built significant reserves. Post-pandemic, it is well prepared for the huge growth and development potential in the evolving energy transition market. With a well-trained and committed work force, the opportunity is vast, and I'm looking to help double the business over the next two years and then double again."

Investment in People

“We have been on a deliberate and essential journey to develop our people and our practices, and to create a working environment where people can thrive,” Zac explains. “As part of our people and performance programme, we started working towards Investors in People Accreditation in 2020, and were very proud to achieve accreditation during our very first assessment.”

“As well as undertaking training ourselves via QuoLux™, there is a development plan in place for every single member of our 80 strong team, including additional training for all of our Managers.”



In 2020, four of their managers joined the QuoLux™ LEADlight programme, which is designed to help 'middle leaders' to develop their skills and awareness; to improve their performance and get better results from their teams; and to prepare themselves for senior management responsibilities.

During the programme, the four managers focused on individual work-based projects which were designed to improve employee engagement in Cosgrove & Drew. For example, Neil who had recently been appointed as a manager in the new M&SW team looked at the leadership styles and behaviour needed to successfully lead the team and the structure required to deliver Zac and Luke's strategy.



SkillBuild

A study by McKinsey identified what it refers to as **'The Great Attrition'** - a record number of employees looking to leave their jobs due to the pandemic changing what people expect from their employers. 40% of employees said they were likely to leave in the next 3-6 months, with over 50% of employees leaving because they don't feel valued by their manager or because they don't feel a sense of belonging at work.

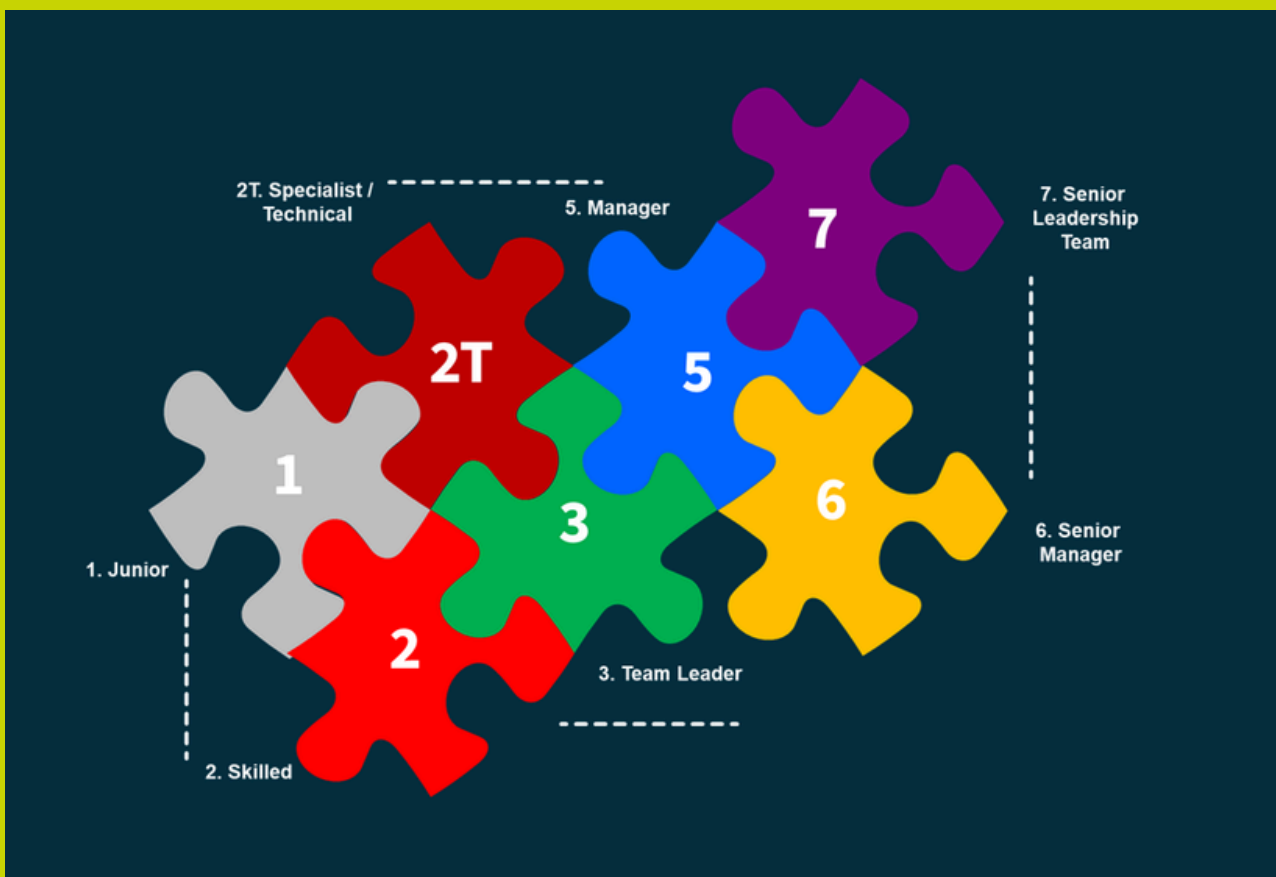
One of the questions raised by McKinsey is whether organisations offer their employees career paths and development opportunities. Benjamin Franklin once said that

“an investment in knowledge pays the best interest”

and by encouraging employees to seek to improve themselves through acquiring knowledge and developing their skills, businesses can not only improve individual performance but can also increase their motivation, enhance job satisfaction (with 94% of employees saying they would stay at a company longer if it invested in their career development) and have a direct impact on performance and profitability.

“We have always encouraged continuous improvement on both a personal and organisational level, which we see as one of the biggest drivers for our growth to date,” explains Luke. “We have worked with QuoLux™ to modify and adapt their SkillBuild Framework to create a bespoke online system for our business which allows all our employees to see their career and development opportunities within Cosgrove & Drew, map out their future and plan their potential career progression.

We mapped out seven different levels across the business from apprentices (Level 1), skilled workers (Level 2 / 2T), team leaders (Level 3), managers (Level 5), senior managers (Level 6) through to the senior leadership team at Level 7.”



“We recognised that there is a lot of difference between someone who has just started in a role, say as a manager, compared to someone who has been in that role for some time. We therefore created four different ‘bands’ for each level (e.g. Level 1 - Band 1, Level 1 - Band 2, Level 1 - Band 3, Level 1 - Band 4) and identified the skills needed to demonstrate progression through each of the different levels. We looked at the technical skills as well as the personal development / team-working / leadership skills required at each band allowing individuals to see a possible career path from starting out as an apprentice (Level 1 – Band 1) through to a becoming a member of our Senior Leadership Team at Level 7.



“Our SkillBuild framework is an interactive system through which people can upload evidence of their skills, show how they're progressing and working towards the next step in their career. The framework is then used during 1-2-1 meetings and our regular appraisals to discuss training needs, career progression opportunities as well as allowing managers and supervisors to share feedback and give recognition.”

Continuous Learning

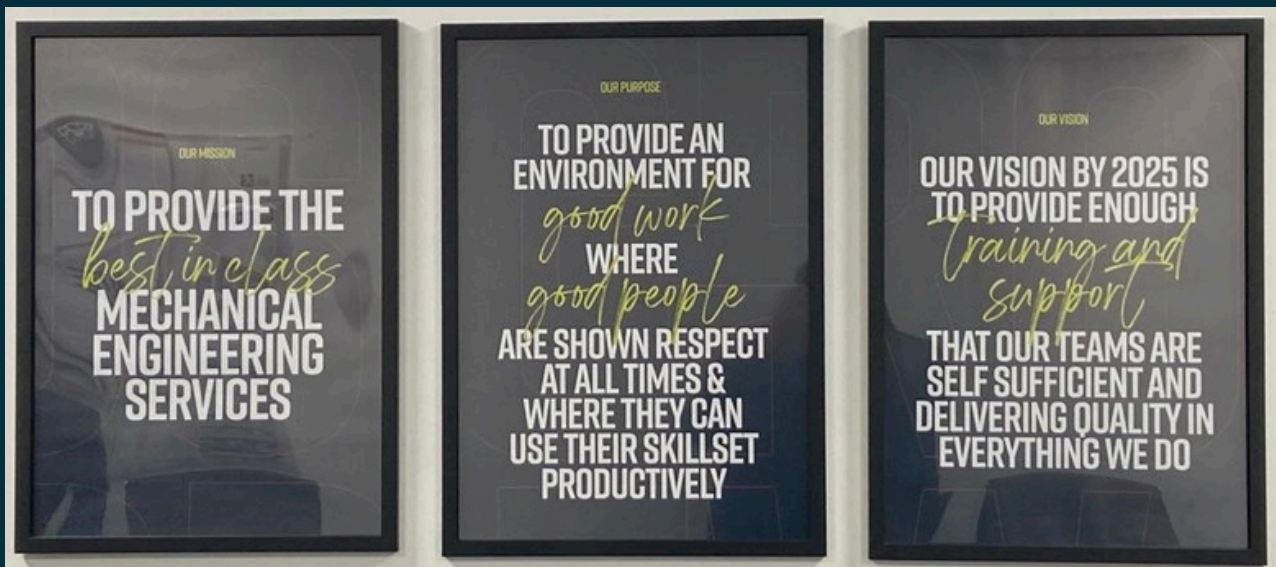
“It is important to encourage an open mindset in our employees, building critical thinking and decision making, and rewarding continuous learning,” acknowledges Zac. “In turn, as leaders, we recognise the need to lead by example and have continued to look for opportunities to learn and develop ourselves.

"Having completed the LEAD™ programme in 2021, Luke and I embarked on a work-based learning programme of study at the University of Gloucestershire through their partnership with QuoLux™ and we were proud to achieve our Postgraduate Certificate in Leading Business which is a third of the way towards an MBA.”



Keen to continue learning and developing, Zac and Luke went on to join the QuoLux™ GOLD™ programme which focuses on strategy and business planning, allowing them to learn how to create, implement and review strategy in their own and other businesses by experiencing ‘being’ a Non-Executive Director (NED) in other organisations and ‘having’ a NED in their own company.

Zac and Luke both recognise that they need to bring their team with them on this journey of change and an important step has been ensuring that they all understand and buy into what the business is trying to achieve. During their time on GOLD™, they spent time clarifying the overall mission and vision and they are now clearer than ever on the direction of the business.



In June 2022 they brought the whole team together to share the Mission, Purpose and Vision and outline the company goals, strategy and plans for the future. Over 30 of the team joined the senior leadership team at the event which Zac describes as surpassing all their expectations with positive feedback and engagement from the whole team.



The Future

The construction industry as a whole is facing a challenging environment, but the steps taken by the joint managing directors over the last few years have put the business in a strong position as they look to the future. Going forward, they have the benefit of the guidance of an experienced Chairman, they are giving their teams the tools, support and opportunity to develop their skills, expand their responsibilities, and bring their best selves to work, and most importantly of all, they are walking the walk by looking to continuously improve themselves, their teams and their organisation.



From QuoLux™

We would like to thank Cosgrove & Drew Engineering for their continuing support and it has been a privilege to work with them since Zac and Luke joined our LEAD™ programme in 2019. Since then four of their managers have completed our LEADlight programme for 'middle leaders' and two of their senior leadership team have followed them onto LEAD™.

Zac has now completed our GAIN™ programme on Innovation and Competitive Advantage, and based on his learning and its practical application from our LEAD™-GOLD™-GAIN™ programmes, he successfully completed a work-based project and obtained his MBA in 2025. Luke is also currently undertaking our GAIN™ programme and will be working towards his MBA at the end of it.



Jo Draper, Stewart Barnes and Rachael Ramos, Directors of QuoLux™

To read more about Cosgrove & Drew Engineering, please go to their website [here](#). To talk to one of the QuoLux™ team about how LEAD™ could help you and your organisation, please get in touch [here](#).