

LEADING WITH INSIGHT

#LEADALUMNI

#INSPIRE BELIEF

BELIEVE IN MORE: A CULTURE CHANGE

CASE STUDY - CREED FOODSERVICE

FAMILY BUSINESS



In 2007, Chris Creed discussed how he and the Creed Family addressed the issues of growth and succession within their family-run business by employing a team of non-family senior executives. The Creed Family created an Executive Board and a Family Board. Chris, together with the non-family executive directors, would run the company and would meet the shareholders on the family Board quarterly to discuss progress.

GROWTH & SUCCESS

This game changing structure allowed Chris to nurture a professional team within a pre-existing family hierarchy enabling non-family members to have real power in the company, thereby resolving an issue that is identified as a major stumbling block in the growth of family businesses.

And the changes have resulted in strong results; Creed Foodservice has grown by over 500%, and the award-winning company is recognised nationally for their expertise within their industry and as a Sunday Times Best Company to Work For. In 2022 they also celebrated 50 years in business!



LEAD™ PROGRAMME

The directors are not resting on their laurels. While Covid significantly challenged the industry they serve, the company plans to grow sales, recognising that they must change again, and change continuously. For many years they have been preparing all directors, managers and supervisors accordingly to lead the change process.

In 2012 Chris graduated from the ten-month long leadership and business growth programme, LEAD™, where he integrated much of his learning into the business, including business planning, employee engagement and the introduction of a lean team.



Such was the change in Chris, three of his brothers, Steve, Phil and Paul, asked to participate on the LEAD™ programme. The immediate step change in their contribution to the company was recognised and all were promoted onto the Executive Board from non-executive director roles. This is testament to family members wanting to take responsibility and work alongside non-family members on the Executive Board. Steve has subsequently become Managing Director of another family company.

THE DIRECTORS

Chris also identified the LEAD™ programme as a valuable tool in the development of all Creed Foodservice directors. Philip de Ternant was the first non-family member to go on the programme. Chris then stepped up to the role of Chief Executive Officer and promoted Philip to the role of Managing Director, and Chris is now Chairman, with Philip handing the Managing Director reins on to Miles Roberts (pictured below).

Altogether, 16 directors have participated on LEAD™.



The whole Board now has a common language and been exposed to the same techniques, tools and insights in how to lead a profitable growing business. This has allowed the leaders to increase the pace of change. A great example of this is the 'Plan on a Page' tool where all parts of the business can see the key actions that they must deliver on to meet the agreed goals.

VISIONARY

“Chris is the visionary,” explains Philip. “He could see that clients were looking for alternatives to the big players, but that there was little choice available to them.”

The foodservice industry is largely a matter of logistics, moving huge volumes of product around the UK with the added complexity of fragile and perishable goods which must arrive on time and in perfect condition. As well as being a wholesale distributor of ambient, chilled and frozen ingredients and prepared foods, Creed Foodservice also delivers fresh produce and a fresh butchery offering, all on one lorry, for next day’s use by caterers in the hospitality industry, as well as schools and the care sector.



CREATING VALUE

We're always looking for ways to add value to our clients," says Philip. "Creed Foodservice is not a 'box mover'; our offering cannot be simply about price. We take a partnership approach, understanding the initiatives and ambitions of our clients to consider how we can support their business.

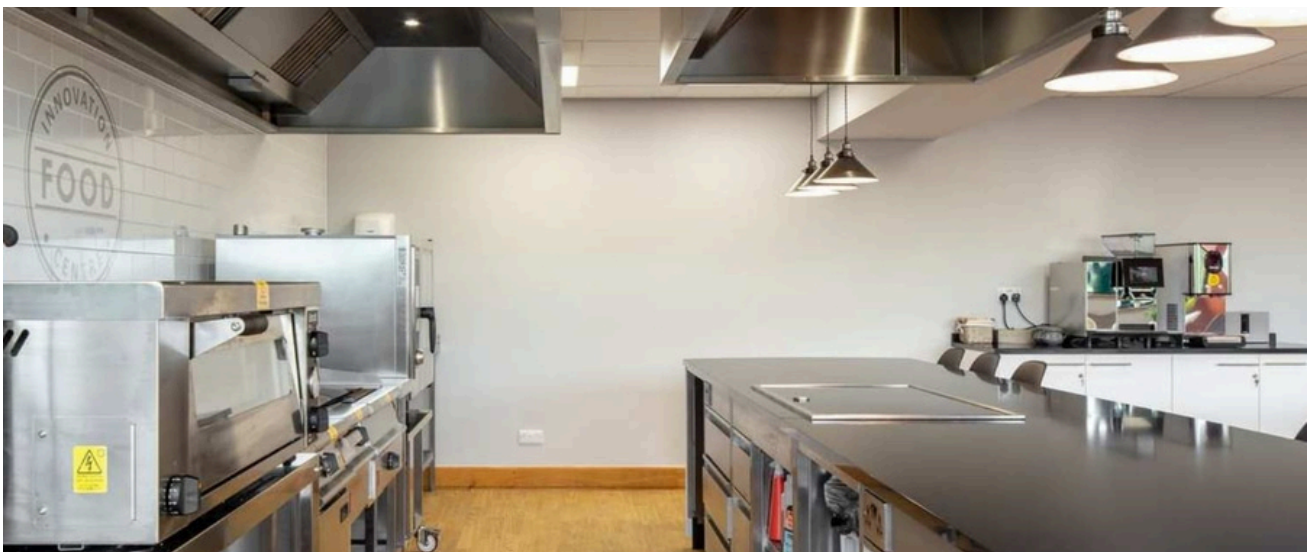


"The National Trust is a perfect example. We began working with them about ten years ago in just two regions, delivering produce to their cafés and restaurants. That has now grown to cover the whole country, 187 delivery points, delivering two or three times a week.

INNOVATION

“A number of years ago, the client highlighted a challenge; more than 40 different scone recipes were being used by their baking teams. No doubt these ‘homemade’ family favourites were delicious, but the importance of adhering to allergens legislation and ensuring consistency for the customer experience required a solution. Working together, we involved their staff in the process to establish a single recipe, for which we now supply all the ingredients.”

The story doesn't end there. “Central to the values of the National Trust is a commitment to use local produce. This includes the need that all eggs served in its freshly made products will have been laid on National Trust land. In addition, the cheese and butter delivered are from cows bred and grazed on National Trust land. This means that we store and then deliver these products from their farms to all their cafés and restaurants. It's important to them, so it's important to us.”



LEADING ROLES

On becoming Managing Director when Chris took on the role as Chief Executive, Philip established strong, effective, clearly defined roles among the directors, supported by a senior management team.



“Many of our staff are long-serving and they will have seen the difference in Chris; he’s realised what his role is as a figurehead and trusts the team he has put in place to deliver. He walks around the business and is great at engaging with people. In the past I don’t think Chris, or the family as a whole, understood how big their leadership shadow is. He creates a significant impact when he attends client meetings or the internal staff recognition events and briefings that we hold.”

CHALLENGING EACH OTHER

“Chris didn’t employ me as a ‘yes man’ and I’ve always been comfortable having difficult conversations. As a board, I’m encouraging others to have the confidence to enter ‘the zone of uncomfortable debate’ and to be critically challenging of each other, when needed.

“Having Phil Vickery MBE DL as a Non-Executive Director is really valuable, someone who isn’t in the business day-to-day can offer a useful perspective. He’s already asking the right questions of me.



“I’m more relentless now than ever before. I’m a detail person, always looking for improvements in the team and myself. Reflecting and sharing your learnings is good. As leaders, we can’t do everything ourselves; we have to trust, empower and let go, and I still work on letting go more.”

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Employee engagement is fundamental. Everything else follows from that,” notes Chris.

“This was what I came to understand from my time on LEAD™. It’s all about how we deal with people. We’ve all had to learn that, as a leadership team.

“There was no single lightbulb moment for me, it just all stacked up.

LEAD™ was the catalyst for me learning this really important lesson. I think about it a lot, actually.



CULTURE CHANGE

“Culture change has a massive impact on the business. We’ve simplified our values, which are ‘commercial, friendly, nurturing and proud’.

“The leaders have to drive it. I have to demonstrate it all the time and so does my senior team – otherwise it’s just a joke. It wouldn’t mean anything.

“Sometimes that’s inconvenient, to be honest. It takes thought and time and it’s easier to take short cuts when you’re busy. But you’ve got to do things properly. What does it say to everyone else if they think we’re not demonstrating the things we say are most valued by the business?”



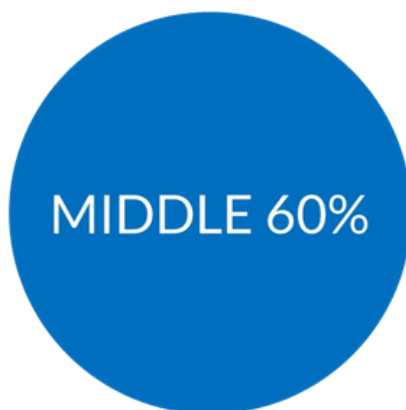
ACTIONS & CONSEQUENCES

Covid has tested the business but the firm is expecting to grow turnover this year. Embedding the values within systems is supporting this expansion.

**“When we’re recruiting,
interviews are all about attitude,
not what’s on the CV.”**

“And then we have an excellent induction programme that lasts a month – everyone does it, whether they’re a driver or a chef. The feedback from staff is great, they say that they really understand the business.”

So, does the 20-60-20 rule apply in Creed Foodservice? Are there still some doubters in the ‘bottom 20%’?



VALUES

“I was talking to staff before lockdown at one of our depots, and when we spoke about the values I could see some sceptical faces looking at me.

“I told them, this is serious. It’s who we are and how we run our business. People who share these values do great here, because they get it. But if you don’t think it’s important then probably this isn’t the right place for you. There have to be consequences for breaking the values.

“The key is to find the right people, and then support them so that they have every opportunity to do their best – to succeed.”

BELIEF & TRUST

"Our staff are excellent. We get great feedback from customers; huge £100m+ companies who notice and comment upon the friendly and professional attention they get.

"Recently, we were delivering in the middle of the night to a customer that was opening a new café in London. When the driver arrived the customer didn't have the right keys for the unit so they couldn't unload. Instead of returning to the depot, the driver stayed until the new keys could be fetched. The most important thing to him was to do his job well – to make sure his customer could open for business the next day.

"That's just one story but there are countless others of people going the extra mile, of giving more."



BELIEVE IN MORE

“When we asked staff about what the values mean to them and what they felt about Creed Foodservice, many people talked about ‘belief’. They believe in what they’re doing, they believe that the business is doing the right things and that we can achieve our goals.

“That’s why we’ve created a new strapline ‘**Believe in More**’. Creed Foodservice is full of people who are ambitious, who keep striving for more. Our ‘**Believe in More**’ ethos is all about thinking more, doing more and being more than just a foodservice provider.



“The next step for us is to introduce team recognition. I’m really proud of the improvements we’ve made, but there’s still much more to achieve. When we get ultimate trust we’ll know we’ve got there. It takes time. You can’t demand trust, you have to earn it.”

LEADING BY EXAMPLE

"I was reading an article about teams and leadership, and there was something that really rang a bell with me. It said that when we tell people to do their job, we get workers. When we trust people to do their job, we get leaders.

"LEAD™ was life changing for me. Our business wouldn't be anything like it is now without it.

"I'm very aware of the leadership shadow I cast and how that affects those around me."



REFLECTION

"I'm more reflective. I think about why something happened. In the past I'd have been much more reactive. The other day I discovered that some fresh food had to be thrown away because processes hadn't been followed, which I was annoyed and frustrated about.

"But then I thought, why did that happen? What else was going on in that situation, were we supporting them to be able to do the right thing, to do their job well?"

***"Gut instinct is useful as long as you give yourself
time to think for a moment."***

"I'm more open to seeing other perspectives now. We have to see criticism as an opportunity to improve, but that means not being defensive. I have to show my vulnerability too. I tell people they can challenge me. They need to know that it's safe to talk about the things that don't go to plan, or that they find difficult."

NEXT STEPS

The business has always recognised the importance of placing a strong emphasis on learning at all levels to not only increase organisational performance and productivity, but also improve employee engagement.

This year they launched Cohort 1 of their Creed Leadership Development Programme for over 30 of their managers created in partnership with QuoLux™.

Using our 'How-To' range of digital tools, their managers will be exploring different leadership topics each quarter and considering on what they can do differently as a result of their learning. In this way they can apply know-how in the workplace when it is needed most – in the moment when they are performing their role.



FROM CHRIS CREED...



“If people really want to be more successful and be open to different ways of doing things, then LEAD™ is a great way of doing that. If it was mandatory in business, what a great country we’d have.”

Chris Creed, CEO Creed Foodservice

FROM QUOLUX™ ...

Leading change is one of the most challenging leadership roles and leading culture change is amongst the most difficult. It is clear for all to see that Chris and Philip with their teams at Creed Foodservice are developing the organisation, effective leadership and management to embrace and deliver the desired change.



To read more about Creed Foodservice, 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](#).