



with the help of INVESTORS IN PEOPLE

in 12 months
our profit
grew by

172%

John Taylor, Managing Director, Geoplan Spatial Intelligence Limited.

CASE STUDY Geoplan Spatial Intelligence Limited

“ Investors in People gave us the framework we needed to be credible, to play at a world-class level and to offer consistent quality and service. With Investors in People, I’ve finally been able to develop the business I wanted. It helps you get your life back. You can go on holiday without having to have your mobile on 24 hours a day, because you have trust in your people.”

John Taylor, Managing Director, Geoplan Spatial Intelligence Limited.

What the organisation does, size and sector

Geoplan provides geographic information (maps and directories, databases, mapping software), consultancy and bespoke solutions for sales, marketing and other business needs across a range of sectors, from their base in Harrogate.

17 employees.

Investors in People Centre idg.

Awards

Investors in People Gold.
Investors in People Champion.

For more information on Investors in People, contact:

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Executive summary

- From being heavily dependent on its owner, leading to pressure and burnout behind the scenes, Geoplan transformed itself into a profitable company with a global client roster.
- With help from Investors in People, Geoplan successfully overcame a series of technological and market challenges, growing the business, boosting their performance and developing a self-managing structure. Along the way, they used a wide range of development tools - including £6,500 in used five-pound notes.
- In 2003, Geoplan was making a loss of nearly half a million pounds a year. In 2011, it made a profit of £400,000. The value of the average contract has risen from £20,000 to £150,000 - £200,000, and productivity has gone up from £56k per head in 2002 to £93k per head in 2011.
- MD John Taylor now has a business he can be proud of, and feels he’s got his life back along the way.



“With the right people, we found it easier to take control of our resource management and performance.

A lot of small business owners get dragged down by the fact that they never wanted to manage people in the first place, and it's not necessarily what they enjoy, or what they are good at.”

Sara McCartney, Finance Director.



The business issue

In 2000 Geoplan was in meltdown. As well as a growing number of market and technological challenges, the company was grappling with a structure that didn't work and in which all roads led back to managing director John Taylor. Finance Director Sara McCartney explains: “John would go out and win new business, which created a buzz of excitement. But this was quickly overtaken by a feeling of dread about how we were going to deliver on that promise.”

John and Sara realised that they had to find a better way of working. This meant finding a way of decentralising the business to get away from a line management structure that put John – and everyone else – under huge pressure. They also recognised that they needed to invest in developing their people if they were going to succeed.

What did Investors in People contribute?

Initially Geoplan used a facilitator to help John share his vision and mission for the company, something he found difficult: “It felt like being in a padded cell, kicking it around until it all came out.” But ultimately, Investors in People gave the team a “Geoplan way of working.”

Next, Geoplan used Investors in People to help them develop a new 'matrix' structure for the company. This meant that the business became increasingly self-managed and anyone – rather than just John – could lead a project. John credits the leadership and management criteria in the Investors in People framework with helping him to realise that everyone could be a leader at some point in their role. But now Geoplan's staff had to step up to that challenge. Sara: “We've worked very hard to develop an Investors in People framework that helps people to understand their own competences. That knowledge has given them confidence that they know their stuff and can deliver to global businesses.”

“We also did a huge amount of work around activity-based costing. Our people didn't really believe they could directly influence profitability. We had to get people to understand the value that we gain out of every hour is dependent upon their output. It cost us £6,500 every day just to keep the business going, whether we made money or not. So we got £6,500 out of the bank in five-pound notes and took it to one of our business development days, so that everyone could see for themselves. Now people focus on outputs and the value they add to the business. Effective planning and organisation, team work and prioritisation has delivered a significant increase in performance.”

Impact

When Geoplan began working with Investors in People, it was making a loss of nearly half a million pounds a year. In 2011, it made a profit of £400,000. Productivity per head has gone up by more than a third (£55.8k in 2002 to £93k per head in 2011). Geoplan puts its improved results down to the increased confidence and ability of their people, who now form project teams to win new business and work much more closely with clients. They win and retain more customers, and their improved performance has enabled them to move from 'data assembly' work to large, bespoke jobs where Geoplan can add value. This consultancy approach is also more profitable, and the average value of a contract has risen from “about £20k” to £150-200k.



Geoplan puts its improved results
down to the increased confidence and ability
of their people

“ Instead of 300 customers waiting to hear from me, we have 17 people who can consistently represent Geoplan, because of Investors in People. We’ve grown the business because of that. ”

John Taylor, Managing Director,
Geoplan Spatial Intelligence
Limited.

Involving all staff in management and strategy has also enabled Geoplan to cope with rapid technological change in their sector. This meant Geoplan had to change from being a desktop-based business used by specialists, to online systems used by a wide range of business customers and sectors. This change has also enabled them to expand from being a UK business to working with global clients such as TNT and KFC owners Yum! Brands. John says that Investors in People also helps Geoplan “to explain to a billion-pound business why they should work with you rather than a big company.”

Geoplan found that their new framework for development helped to reduce recruitment costs, and they were able to get new people up and running more quickly. Sara: “We assessed our Recruitment and Selection processes. If someone left, we stopped assuming we needed someone to replace them. We got much better at assessing people’s ‘fit’ and mental horsepower, knowing we could train people if these factors were right. With the right people, we found it easier to take control of our resource management and performance. A lot of small business owners get dragged down by the fact that they never wanted to manage people in the first place, and it’s not necessarily what they enjoy, or what they are good at.”

John Taylor: “Instead of 300 customers waiting to hear from me, we have 17 people who can consistently represent Geoplan, because of Investors in People. We’ve grown the business because of that.”