



Phil Shipperlee of Performative is a founder member of Academy Group 1, formed in 1997.

SME business leaders only have access to a limited set of people within their own organisations for advice and guidance or to bounce ideas off. Sourcing a non-executive director is not always the best route for a small to medium sized growing business. The Academy fills this crucial gap from a commercial as well as personal perspective.

As an Academy member, I really value being able to share my own experiences with members drawn from all sectors of commerce and industry. The diversity and impartiality of the members ensures the free sharing of ideas and support. This means that I know I can get valuable and objective advice born of experience.

The Academy is also useful in helping to identify and deal with `blind spots` which may be holding businesses back. As CEO of a growing business I find that my membership provides access to a `richness` of advice that would normally only be accessible to a much larger organisation. In this way, business problems can be seen objectively through the `eyes` of others. This process also acts as a valuable benchmark.

The quality and depth of experience and knowledge sharing centres on a monthly meeting with a morning session devoted to a guest speaker and afternoon discussion on specific issues raised by members. This structure provides a further opportunity to gain a wealth of expertise and experience from other members as well as experts in the field.

Access to the Academy's extranet is another useful way to learn from other leaders. The extranet means that my local group extends into a national network for knowledge sharing and networking. This combination complements and works well with the monthly one-to-one coaching sessions which are a key value-add as far as I'm concerned.

"Instead of looking for support and advice, I am now in a position to give it,"

"Being able to help someone else as a result of your own experiences is extremely fulfilling. But it is also a learning process for me, as, through the process of providing support, I discover a little more about myself, and my business."