

## CASE STUDY – MENTORING NEW DIRECTORS

Obsidian provided one-to-one mentoring for directors-designate before and after they joined the Board of Denny Bros, a family-owned business. The mentors were able to point these senior managers to differences in liabilities and behaviours to be expected of their new status; and alerted them to some issues which might be associated with joining an established and close-knit Board. This helped them to take on their new responsibilities with more confidence and understanding.

*“The assignment was well managed, both Directors benefited and both are now playing a meaningful part in directing the business during these currently uncertain times”,* said Barry Denny, Managing Director

### Our Client



Denny Brothers is a very successful printing business located in Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk. With the exception of a short period, the Board has always been composed only of members of the Denny family since its founding in 1945. The current Managing Director, Barry Denny, had become aware of the narrowness of experience that this situation could, at least potentially, create,

with possible risks to the business. He and his fellow shareholder directors decided to invite two long-employed departmental managers, responsible respectively for the key departments of production and sales and marketing, to become directors.

### Our Task

Before the two designate directors took up their posts, Barry Denny engaged two of Obsidian’s partners, both experienced directors and mentors themselves, members of the Institute of Directors, to support these candidates through the change in their status.

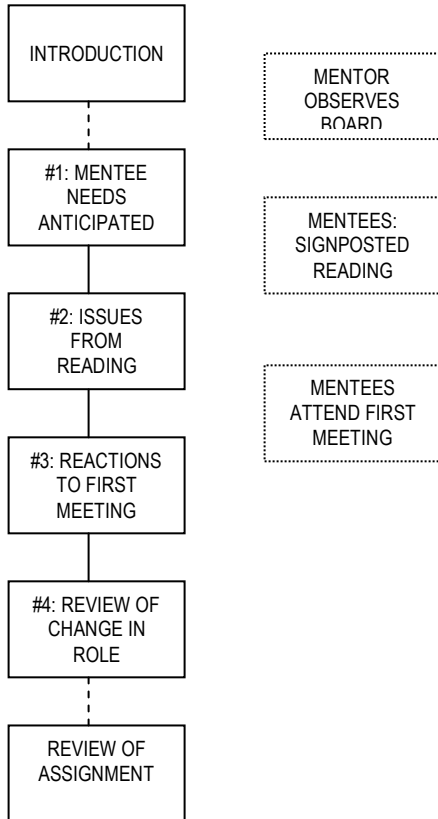
When a senior manager is to step up into the Board Room s/he faces new challenges. The role of a director is different to that of departmental responsibility. Whilst the latter is retained, to it is added being answerable for its work and budget to the Board; and taking on strategic responsibilities. Understanding these new duties and expectations is vital preparation for the directors designate.

Obsidian Consulting is a management consultancy ideally matched to mid-sized, established companies such as Denny Bros. It offers performance improvement through development of both processes and people. Obsidian’s Tom Serpell had undertaken work previously for Denny Bros and knew one of the directors-to-be. As Obsidian’s strategic marketing specialist he was paired with the future Sales and Marketing Director, Stephen Jarrold. Paul McIntee had considerable operations experience as well as qualifications in coaching and mentoring; he supported Colin Hunt, Production Director-designate.



## How the Assignment was Designed

Whilst generic understanding of director responsibilities was important, as with all assignments Obsidian tailored the project to the client's own needs.



Tom Serpell asked to be allowed to sit in on a pre-augmentation Board meeting in order to gain understanding of the culture and style to be faced by the new appointments.

Desk research was carried out to ensure that understanding of company law was up-to-date and relevant resources to which the candidates could be sign-posted were identified.

A series of four 2-hour mentoring sessions was planned for each pairing: two before they joined the Board and two after.

A review with the complete Board after the end of the assignment was included, to ensure that the project had delivered what was required and that all Board members were happy with the change.