

Steve Dalton

Managing Director, Sony UK Technology Centre

“This is the qualification for elite leaders of business in Wales”



Sony is one of the UK’s leading organisations in both manufacturing processes and training and developing staff. Steve has been employed at Sony for nearly 25 years and has progressed through Sony’s ongoing learning and education programme to Managing Director. Having seen the business through major changes, Steve completed his Diploma in Company Direction in April 2007.

• How did you get to the position you are in?

My initial roles at Sony provided me with the technical knowledge to progress into manufacturing management and head the start up of new product categories. This entailed designing the manufacturing facilities and leading a team to produce and ship digital set top boxes throughout Europe. The success of this business resulted in promotion to Senior Manager. A natural progression followed to head up our professional camera business, localising full manufacturing within Wales. Following this success I became General Manager tasked with growing the business as one of our core operations for the future. 2003 saw me take up a Directorship. Technological advances led to major change within Sony and a need to diversify the business. I successfully lead the business through a difficult time, which involved the manufacturing of new products in line with customer demand and a shift to a much more diverse business model.

• How did you identify the course was the right one for you?

I wanted to attain a qualification that would incorporate everything I had learnt through previous training programmes and my experience to date, and also gain an understanding for company law to allow me to carry out my function to the highest possible standard. I saw the programme advertised and discovered that the content would fit with my aspirations.

• What were the main points that attracted you to the programme?

Sony have a strong learning and development culture and are committed to promoting the knowledge economy. Therefore a qualification that would benchmark my knowledge and experience was paramount along with understanding the full responsibilities of holding a director position. The programme covered the areas that I was looking for. The fact that it was a generic programme to all business and not specific to Sony meant I would be able to draw on other people’s experiences and discuss best practice with my peers. It gave me the opportunity to constantly question our practices and re-evaluate what we do. The fact that the programme contributes to the welsh economy and that it was delivered locally was a big draw.

• How did you find the e-learning aspects of the course?

The tuition on the website was excellent and useful for revision purposes as some of the subject matter was covered at the beginning of the course. It also helped to reaffirm the learning that had taken place, and on some occasions covered topics that hadn't been dealt with in the taught classes. Overall it was a major assistance for further understanding and exam preparation.

• Were the time scales flexible enough to fit in around your work and home life?

Undertaking the programme was a huge commitment. Bigger than at first expected. The perception of the commitment needed given at a taster session event didn't meet my expectations and at times I struggled to fit the revision and reading in between my work commitments and family life.

• What were the main points of the programme that you found helpful?

The module I think I gained the most from was the 'Role of the company director and the board and the director and the law'. This module educated me as to what my full responsibilities as a Managing Director and Member of the Sony UK board of directors entailed. I had a good understanding of the content of the other modules having covered most of it at some point on other training programmes but it was good to reinforce my knowledge and look at changes and new ways of thinking on some of the subject matter.

• Did the delivery style of the tutors suit your style of learning?

The practical experience the tutors brought to the programme was excellent. There was a worry before I started the course that this would be an academic programme mainly dealing with theory and

principles but that was quickly dispelled when we met the tutors. The 'Role of the company director', 'Strategic business direction' and 'Effective marketing strategies' were delivered by knowledgeable, practical tutors that brought the subject to life with the use of case studies and real life experiences.

• Was the course gauged at the correct level?

The content on the course modules was gauged at the correct level. The Finance for non financial directors went into the subject matter in great depth; most directors would not need to be so involved in finance to this level. Although it does now mean that I can offer further support to my finance manager and grasp the full implications in decision making processes.

• How have you implemented your learning into the organisation?

One of the biggest things I re-evaluated was the way in which the executive management committee worked. I changed some of their roles to ensure that we worked more effectively as a team. I implemented procedures to improve efficiency and promote good practice throughout. This in turn encouraged me to stand back and look at skill gaps within the team. We refocused the agenda of meetings so that risk management became the focus and so enabled the decision making process, while I asked more relevant questions of the team.

• What were the personal benefits to you?

The course has helped me gain confidence in the Managing Director role. I now have a qualification that gives me a credible benchmark for my knowledge and experience, a wider appreciation of the responsibility towards staff, and an understanding of the boundaries and framework that we must work to, to demonstrate a professionally run business with best practice as it's foundation.

For further details on our IoD courses contact UGCS on:
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