

## Denchi Group

### Chief Operating Officer and Leadership Development Project

## 01 Background

Denchi Group is a leading designer and manufacturer of advanced-state batteries and chargers, predominantly to the global defence industry. Other markets for the company include industrial, oil and gas and clean energy, where the capability to produce highly reliable and robust products, designed to stringent specifications is also critically important.

With a heritage which spans over 30 years, the company has a standard product range but focuses on designing products for specific applications.

Situated in Thurso, Northern Scotland, Denchi has built solid foundations, with a reputable brand and key customers which include BAE Systems and General Dynamics. The business now required an injection of world-class operational leadership to launch the next phase of growth.

Intramezzo first worked with Denchi in 2014, when we were appointed to find an Interim Chief Engineer to lead the successful delivery of projects and the implementation of engineering best practice for design and resourcing processes. Extensive experience in the design of electronic products for the key industries addressed by Denchi was required. From the short-list of three candidates, Simon Marker was selected and, due to his performance in the role, was subsequently given a permanent position. He remains one of the key members of the senior team.

As a result, we were tasked with identifying and securing a COO to focus on the current operating model and customer requirements. Additionally, there was strategic need

to scale the business over the coming 5 years to enable harmonisation with the Chairman's other engineering and electronics business in Cambridge.

"I met with Dermot [Hill] to have in-depth business conversations to understand the kind and level of senior leadership required to drive the business to next levels" states Nick. "There was plenty of consulting with Dermot to achieve clarity around motivation and salary expectations and how this would work out for the new person living in Thurso."

"Simon's appointment has been critical and he has been instrumental in driving new revenues. Post Simon all worked out very well with lots of continuity communication from Intramezzo."

DENCHI'S CHAIRMAN, NICK RUSSEL

## 02 What we did

A COO with a track record in operational leadership and building process manufacturing and technology intensive companies into larger, growth businesses was sought. This individual needed to be a 'game changer', someone with the ability to challenge Denchi's status quo - its steady state performance and culture.

The ideal candidate would come from the battery manufacturing sector, although Nick expressed concern over the likelihood of finding someone with sufficient 'post conventional' leadership capability from within an industry dominated by large global players.

As with the Interim Chief Engineer role, Nick defined this as a challenging search, given that it would involve finding a candidate with the right set of skills and experience who was willing to relocate, possibly with a family, to a remote area of Scotland. But, for the right candidate, this would be a career enhancing role, with the opportunity to progress to CEO.

The board additionally requested the Intramezzo services of Leadership Assessment and Coaching to successfully onboard the COO and rapidly optimise the performance of the management team around this new appointment.

After just two exec coaching sessions, Martin hit the ground running, successfully launching and driving the £multi-million 5 year growth phase by initially reshaping the senior team, creating operational excellence and championing the design of client project methodology. This resulted in further extensions of an Aerospace contract for an additional 5 years, securing £multi-million worth of future growth.

Our first step was to draw up the detailed specification outlining the particular requirements of the business, the objectives of the role and the characteristics and qualities of the individual. Once agreed with Denchi, this document became the working brief for our search.

We then moved to our extensive multi-channel research approach. Our in-house research team set about investigating the key markets most relevant to Denchi, drawing up a list of target companies and then dissecting those businesses to uncover the most appropriate individuals within them.

Additionally, we worked within our own network to identify potential candidates and sources of referral. Following initial approach, we conducted detailed interviews, both by telephone and in person, of those that met the requirements; looking at their skills, achievements and aspirations.

Within 8 weeks, this approach yielded a shortlist of three high calibre candidates who matched the brief and were willing to work in Northern Scotland, with availability to start within 3 months. Denchi interviewed all three candidates and we conducted full psychometric assessment and feedback for each of them.

## 03 Martin Ruse

Denchi selected Martin Ruse for his broad commercial experience and track record in operational excellence in precision engineering and manufacturing businesses. Importantly, he had worked in both the battery and electronics sectors and had direct experience of customer development in the defence, aerospace, oil and gas and medical sectors.

With an MBA and a degree in Aeronautical Engineering, Martin also had the ideal combination of both global corporate and SME experience, gained with a range of companies.

When we approached Martin, he had been working as a senior interim and consultant for SMEs for four years. These diverse projects covered operations, marketing and strategic development, product design and manufacture and continuous improvement.

Prior to this, Martin worked for Crane ChemPharma Flow Solutions, where he was Global Business Line Manager for a product range with annual sales of \$25.3M.

Martin was highly versed with forming and developing teams using a range of leadership styles and had demonstrated success in building high performance high tech engineering teams in challenging situations. These qualities, combined with his broad-based commercial experience give him the scope to progress to the CEO role.



## 04 The Leadership Development Project

Martin's initial priority was to focus on bringing the current senior team together in order to position the business for a significant growth phase. The Chairman was concerned with the impact the creation of the COO role might have on team dynamics and also the cultural issues of leading a team in a remote setting and identified this as a high risk to the success of the project.

This risk was carefully managed by Intramezzo with the inclusion of an Occupational Psychologist and Leadership Consultant at the interview stage for all three candidates on the short-list, in order to gain deeper insights into their leadership styles. Psychometric assessment was undertaken and feedback was provided via a written report and face to face feedback.

The psychometric assessment was extended to the senior management team and a mapping process undertaken to establish the key leadership differentiators between the candidates and the leadership team. This was accompanied by a high level cultural analysis of the Denchi business. The resulting detailed psychometric team mapping was

used during coaching sessions with Martin post appointment to raise awareness of what had created the 'steady state' performance and to enhance his authentic leadership style for the Denchi team.

Following the two coaching sessions with Martin during his first 100 days, a two day leadership workshop was held. Designed by Intramezzo and led by Martin, it resulted in rapid engagement. This intervention was the catalyst for the team moving to high performance, demonstrated by high levels of trust, increased levels of team engagement, clear communication channels and newly adopted process innovation.

" Intramezzo ran the search and transformation project seamlessly and I was able to quickly launch myself within the team through a programme of accelerated action coaching. I learnt what performance under pressure really means and how this can be a spur to building top team performance. Luke's coaching challenged and supported me to really lead authentically!"

MARTIN RUSE, CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER,  
DENCHI GROUP

" ... a unique offering that opens up compelling opportunities to significantly raise growth trajectories through high performance teams ... "

MARTIN RUSE, CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER, DENCHI GROUP



## 05 The outcome



Martin was able to gain high levels of momentum with the newly created high performance team by focusing on critical key projects, processes and customers. Within the first six months, Martin led the team to build a 2 year revenue growth pipeline from £5.6M to well over £11M, having secured over 60% of orders.

The business is now enjoying clear project-focused client relationships operated confidently by the senior team and with a focus on harnessing the Denchi brand with new customers. Further achievement has been the alignment of the business onto an accelerated growth trajectory 2 years early and beyond the target of £20M.

This is an example of how using a Leadership Development Programme prior to the executive starting in the role can result in significant business benefits and lay the foundations for a long-term team solution – providing there is an understanding to get the approach right from the outset; that is to identify the cultural issues and the authentic leadership style required.

“Intramezzo has been a powerful, supportive and caring business partner who has gone the extra mile to ensure our success now and for the future.”

“Giving us rapid access to high calibre talent capable of transforming the culture from a ‘slow and steady’ to a ‘trusted fast paced’ engineering business has been a huge success factor with this project.”

NICK RUSSEL, CHAIRMAN, DENCHI GROUP

“Martin is now leading the creation of a new fast paced highly trusted operating model: this is fundamental for us to achieve our next stage objective and growth success.”

“It is vital to get the team right and that includes partnering with a top talent provider.”

NICK RUSSEL, CHAIRMAN, DENCHI GROUP

[Denchi Corporate Video](#)

If you would like more information,  
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