RICHARD HASSALL

OPERATIONS DIRECTOR | AGENCY OPERATIONS & COMMERCIAL PERFORMANCE

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EXECUTIVE PROFILE

Operations Director with 20 years in digital agency services, including eight years as the principal operational leader. Owns operational and commercial performance: decides what needs to change across delivery, Sales and Accounts, sets managers' priorities and carries improvements through to results.

Track record of increasing recurring fees, growing additional-service work with existing clients and reducing operating costs. Develops managers who make sound decisions independently and take ownership of their teams' performance. Uses practical technology, including AI-assisted tools, to improve delivery efficiency.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

- **Recurring fees:** Originated and led pricing programmes, including one that increased gross monthly recurring fees by 17.7% across an initial portfolio of XXX+ legacy contracts. Designed the logic for a continuing programme, built into the CRM by its supplier.
- **Existing-client growth:** Led the processes and training behind a 33% increase in additional-service invoicing over twelve months, generated through account managers rather than Sales. Trained them to identify suitable services for existing clients, explain their value and carry agreed work through to invoicing.
- **Operating costs:** Migrated around XXX client websites to a new hosting supplier, cutting recurring costs by around 76% (c. £XXk annualised). Led supplier selection, testing and a phased migration with rollback safeguards.
- **Delivery efficiency:** Built and rolled out a workflow platform for client website optimisation work that the CRM could not manage, bringing tracking, quality checks and approvals into one place. Saved an estimated 150 working days of staff effort across c. 150 completed cycles of substantial optimisation work. Used daily by 11 people.
- **Leadership:** Led a delivery department of 20+ people through up to six managers, with a c. £XXXk annual payroll. Developed seven managers and helped two further colleagues progress into senior roles.

CORE EXPERTISE

Agency operations • Commercial management • Service pricing and scope • Service delivery • Capacity and workforce planning • Change management • Client retention and service recovery • Supplier management and cost reduction • Management development • Process improvement and automation

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

FirstFound | Operations Director

July 2018 – Present

Digital marketing agency | £Xm+ annual revenue | X,XXX+ active small-business clients

Principal operational leader reporting to the MD. Led delivery operations and capacity planning, and initiated operational improvements across Sales and Accounts & Administration. Set service pricing, headcount, pay budgets and team structures in partnership with the MD, and owned implementation across delivery. Led a department of 20+ people through up to six managers, across account management, SEO (technical, on-page and off-page), paid search, social media, paid social, copywriting and web development.

Commercial and service economics

- Led ongoing reviews of all services, assessing client commitments, scope, pricing and delivery time allowances against the work required. Implemented changes that gave Sales clear service boundaries and delivery teams a realistic planning basis.
- Held final authority over complex early cancellations, refunds, settlements, credits and deferrals. Approved, challenged or redirected managers' recommendations while building their commercial judgement.
- Led client retention and service recovery across onboarding, account reviews and escalations. Brought delivery teams into arrears discussions so commercial decisions reflected unresolved service issues.
- Reviewed supplier costs and negotiated terms as part of ongoing cost control.
- Negotiated scope, budgets and deadlines for bespoke SEO, marketing and website projects, and owned delivery commitments through managers and developers.

Agency delivery

- Led the introduction of automated website health checks and Google Search Console data into monthly client reporting, giving teams and clients clearer information on technical issues and search performance.
- Specified and commissioned customer-contact reporting and used operational data to find where client work was stalling, turning recurring problems into changes to guidance, process and systems.
- Led technical and expenditure reviews for R&D tax submissions, coordinating managers, accountants and specialist advisers and challenging ambiguous time and cost allocations.
- Set the rules for staff use of AI: sensitive-data restrictions, human checking of client-facing work and periodic spot checks.

People and capacity

- Forecast required headcount by comparing client delivery hours with team capacity and sales forecasts. Identified when recruitment or staffing reductions were needed, designed team structures and led implementation.
- Led the team through COVID, managing furlough, home working and morale, and led the implementation of restructures to match workload.
- Secured recruitment budgets and ran hiring end to end, involving team leads in selection and training new starters. Led salary reviews and allocated pay awards within the agreed budget.
- Redesigned senior account-manager roles and split management responsibilities. Coached managers to bring recommendations and explain their reasoning, reducing their reliance on day-to-day support.
- Created company-wide training and onboarding, including for Sales and Accounts & Administration. Checked that staff could apply the guidance and addressed performance gaps.

Earlier career at FirstFound

Team Manager 2009 – July 2018

Led client-service and paid-search teams, owning workload, performance management and escalations. Developed account managers' judgement in difficult client conversations, used frontline performance information to improve working practices, and managed company and client hosting supplier relationships.

SEO Account Manager / Paid Search Specialist June 2006 – 2009

Managed SEO accounts, expanding into social media and then specialising in paid search. Built automated Google Ads reporting and an API/database integration with external developers, connecting reporting to the CRM.

SYSTEMS AND SECTOR EXPERTISE

Operations and systems: CRM, operational reporting, workflow automation, Excel, Power Query, Microsoft Access and SQL; AI-assisted development with ChatGPT, Claude and Cursor.

Agency services: SEO (technical, on-page, off-page and local), Google Business Profile, Google Ads, Google Analytics, organic and paid social, copywriting, web development, website hosting and monthly performance reporting.