

50+ WORKS

Case study: adviser / trainer skills

RBLI

Susan, 53, had been unemployed for 18 months before she was referred to RBLI. She had worked in a bank's head office for 28 years and had become frustrated at not being able to find work. Susan felt that many employers deemed her too set in her ways, although such a steady work history should have counted in her favour. Susan also had a hearing impairment and some problems with her back, including spondylosis and disc protrusions. Susan had been to another provider who had tried to send her to call centre jobs. These were totally unsuitable for her, given the likely levels of background noise and lengthy periods of sitting required.

It soon became clear to Alan, her RBLI adviser, that Susan had a wide variety of high level administrative skills and that she also had an interest in the type of work he was doing. Alan rang round a few other providers in the area to see if they had any vacancies and he found one small charity with a vacant administrative post. Investigating further, Alan found out that the role involved some phone work, but that it would also allow Susan to get up, move around and organise her daily tasks so that she could manage her back pain.

Alan arranged an interview and Susan was offered a work trial the following week. Alan visited Susan regularly during the first few weeks of her work trial and arranged for a job coach to help her organise her working environment to suit her needs. Alan also held regular meetings with Susan's manager to check on her progress and to ensure she was coping with the work load as the previous incumbent had left suddenly. As the work environment was completely different to what Susan had been used to at the bank, she was grateful to be able to lean on Alan's experience and to sound him out about the differences in culture.

Susan passed the work trial early and was offered the job after a week and a half. Alan set up an Access to Work assessment and continued to visit Susan weekly for a short period after she had started the job officially. He then reduced his support to fortnightly and then, as he became confident that Susan was developing strong, trusting relationships with her colleagues and managers, to monthly.

Susan received a significant pay rise in her first six months in recognition of the impact she had made in organising the office (and staff) and co-ordinating an office move.

Susan had shared some personal information with Alan when she had been working with him, such as her son was soon taking his exams, and that she was due to go on holiday in July, etc. Alan used these snippets of information as a means of keeping in touch with her. While retaining a professional relationship, he would diarise dates and then email Susan with questions such as “How’s it going with your son’s exams?” This approach has become a useful tool for Alan and other advisers at RBLI as a means of keeping in touch with customers without directly asking how they are progressing at work.

Susan has now been trained and promoted into an adviser role at the local provider and both she and her manager are very happy. In the 18 months Susan has been there, she has never taken a day off sick.

Alan’s final step was to send Susan a card wishing her good luck in her new role. She commented: “Alan constantly going the extra mile has helped me so much, keeping me going and knowing there’s someone out there if I need them”

Key learning points

- Keep a fresh perspective with every customer
- Longer term support can bring longer term results
- Devise ways to keep in touch
- Look for roles to suit the customer’s needs as well as his or her skills