



John Shields from Colours of Design

Background of business

John Shields, of Queensbury, Bradford, spent more than 11 years as an Interior Consultant for one of Britain's leading designers and manufacturers. But a knee injury and post-surgery problems led to him losing his job in April 2008. With his self-confidence at a low ebb he felt he had reached a crossroads in his life. But with his 20 years experience of working with fabrics and his knowledge of the furniture and soft furnishings market he decided to set up his own interiors consultancy, Colours of Design, working from home. It was frightening but also exciting,

says John, who is now building a successful business with a growing and supportive customer base.

Support journey

A meeting at the Jobcentre and a subsequent call to Bradford Chamber led to Natalie Kershaw, a Kickstart Business Counsellor, offering John intensive support in building his new business venture. Natalie has been great, he says, adding: I wish I had seen her before I set up, so I could have planned better. I enjoy the monthly Kickstart networking meetings as I have spoken to so many people who are worried about going it alone, just as I was, but they shouldn't. Every day is a challenge. It's only by daily networking with people you meet that you can promote yourself and your business. People are interested and drawn to you when you have a buzz or passion for what you do. My life is now exciting and new, which 12 months ago it wasn't.

Where they are now

Initially John took a part time job to maintain an income while building his new business. He marketed Colours of Design by cold calling carpet, curtain and kitchen suppliers, offering them business cards and leaflets for their customers. One piece of business was gained simply because a prospective customer noticed his company name on his car in a supermarket car park. Soon the orders started coming in and John was able to leave his part time job. Each new sale boosted his confidence and when his knee condition causes him problems he can benefit from the flexible hours which self-employment allows. He is now working as a freelance consultant for other designers and property developers and gains a lot of repeat business from satisfied customers. Most customers find it easier and less stressful to view fabrics and discuss designs in their own home, says John. Also, I am launching a distinctive range of silk flower arrangements made to customers own requirements. I would like Colours of Design to be known for excellent customer service, whether they need just a pair of curtains or interior design for a whole house. In the long term he hopes to have a working design studio which customers can visit to view fabrics and discuss their interior design requirements.

Background Information

Client Name: John Shields

Ward in which resident: Queensbury

Business Name: Colours of Design

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Any further comments:

John acknowledges the support he received from JobcentrePlus and from Bradford Chamber, as well as from Kickstart.

It was stressful to think of setting up on my own, wondering if I was doing the right thing. With their help I feel that I am not alone, that there are people who are there for me and interested in what I want to achieve.

This makes me feel more confident and at ease in getting on with the job I enjoy doing . and this has already resulted in sales.+