



Ask Tony

Tony Goldstein, Start-up Development Manager for Lewisham Business Advisory Service (BAS), answers your questions

Contact Tony on email at infobas@lewisham.gov.uk, in writing at Opening Doors, 121 Lewisham High Street SE13 6AT or call 020 8297 1171 x 305

Q Earlier this year I was made redundant. I decided to see if I could put my experience of office management to good use by offering my services to small businesses who might want a virtual assistant service. Every one I've called has not been

interested and I don't know what to say to change their mind. Can you offer me any advice? **Rebecca, Catford**

A If you would like some help developing your sales pitch or writing a sales script to use over the telephone or face-to-face, give me a call and we can

look at developing your approach as well as your confidence. BAS runs regular free sales workshops which cover the basic skills and techniques of selling and forecasting. And if you haven't developed a business plan we also offer workshops to help you with this too.

Q I am looking for a change in career that allows me to work more flexible hours to fit in with my family commitments. I am interested in becoming a driving instructor but am unable to make the full payment of £3,000 for the course. I have tried to get a loan but so far have been unsuccessful. Would I qualify for a grant from Lewisham Council?

Brenda, Sydenham

A Unfortunately there are no grants for career development from Lewisham Council. You could try and see if you are eligible for any grants on www.grantnet.com which is free to use. Alternatively try a Professional Career Development Loan arranged through a bank. Barclays is one of the supporting partners. The money must be paid back but while you are learning, the interest on the loan is paid by the scheme.

For more information and to find out whether you are eligible, check out www.direct.gov.uk and search for career development loans. A business loan will cover the cost of training but the lender would expect the business to start paying the loan back as soon as the training is finished.

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