



A service business has at its very heart that word 'service'. It sounds obvious, doesn't it? When Covid-19 forced us in to lockdown, we decided to see what and how we could be *of service*. As a business we began a process of talking to our customers and clients. In the food and drink sector we approached around 200 businesses – micro, small, medium and large – to find out how they were doing, what they were doing and if we could help. Sometimes we could; sometimes we couldn't. That information also gave us a voice to input to others and helped direct and focus our attention.

As we move out of lockdown and face a new future we know that many things may be very different. Our business support activities will continue and our Training and Development will be more adaptable in digital platforms. For our Careers Guidance and Careers Coaching for adults and in schools we have promoted our digital skills portfolio to assist people to get the best from remote working, keeping our attention keenly on the need to walk alongside people and young adults (socially distancing of course!) as we support them back into work (from furlough or into new jobs) or make the decisions that start a career. Our online careers coaching has gone down well with our clients.

For the Weetabix Northamptonshire Food and Drink Awards we could easily see our role in promoting local food and drink heroes who have helped those in need, their communities and NHS as well as developing a series of webinars to help businesses to have access to the thinking and information to make decisions about the future. We have been supporting sector businesses through the FEAST2 programme to access grants, technical support and mentoring, as well as being instrumental in setting up a national collaboration of food and drink regional groups to have a voice to government.

We have continued to work with individuals, companies, organisations and charities on zoom, Skype and telephone, to help with everything from succession planning to resilience, leadership skills to scale up, setting up an

online coaching business (with Enterprise Nation) to facebook live videos on CVs and Interview Skills and YouTube videos, the first of which about 'why we work'.

At a team zoom in April I was asked about the future: what can we do when we don't know what is going to happen? That answer was easy – we focus on our values – such as integrity, helping others, social responsibility, diversity, working collaboratively, enabling others – and let them guide our short term objectives. All of these alongside entrepreneurial strength and finding profitability to be secure. Like most small businesses, not an easy task when we can't predict the future impact on the economy; but we have to rely on our experience, expertise and training to make the right decisions or the best decisions we can in the circumstances. In all of this we hold true to being *of service* to our customers and clients in whatever capacity: our coaching, training, mentoring, careers guidance, business support and promotional activities.

Finally, but importantly, as a company we are deeply saddened by the recent events and divisions in our society, but as our ethos is valuing Equality and Peace in our communities we continue to work hard for that aim to be achieved.

Thank you for your continued support.



Rachel Mallows, MBE DL

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