



## BUSINESS SUPPORT CASE STUDY

**Company:** Boost Academy

**Programme:** Starting and Succeeding in Business

**Participant name:** Tam Hobbs

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### About Boost Academy

Boost Academy is a new start-up founded by English Teacher, Tam Hobbs. Boost is an online school for adult learners of English language, offering non-native speakers can benefit from group classes of English on Zoom.

*“The idea behind Boost Academy came about 2-years ago during the pandemic when I was made redundant from my job.*

*I’d always loved English language and when I decided I didn’t want to continue with my office job, I decided I’d like to teach English because I’d always dreamed of doing so since my 20’s. I love the fact that other people love the English language as I do, and I love all the idioms, the expressions, and proverbs we have in English.*

*I have a huge passion for the language, and I love to be able to equip people with the skill which will open doors for them and give them something useful to take forward and create opportunities in their lives for themselves.”*

## The Impact of Covid-19

Like so many professionals, the impact of Covid-19 and the pandemic on international travel impacted heavily on Tam in her own job.

*“I’d been teaching English for a few years, had moved to Spain completing my CELTA qualification in Granada before returning to the UK to work in a school.*

*When the pandemic hit, a lot of people like me, teaching English as a foreign language lost their jobs because people could no longer travel to the UK. So, I decided to take matter into my own hands and became an independent, freelance teacher working online on various short-term contracts, nothing sustainable so I took the decision to create my own online school.*

*I was struggling to make ends meet and so I thought ‘why not make something for myself?’*

*It’s been difficult, the pandemic meant that I didn’t have a living, but it also created the opportunity to build something even more worthwhile.”*

## Talking about the Starting and Succeeding in Business Programme

Tam discovered the Starting and Succeeding in Business programme using ‘good old-fashioned Google’ after some advice from a friend who was also a business owner. So, she decided to search online for support that Kent and Folkestone Councils might have on offer.

*“I found that there were a lot of courses that I could sign up for including the SELEP Starting and Succeeding in Business programme. When I saw the programme and explored more, it seemed ideally timed and exactly what I was looking for my business.*

*What was ideal was the range of courses covering a wide range of business areas that I could sign up for with everything from finance, legal, marketing – all the sorts of things you need to think about when starting your business.*

*It came at just the right time for me. I thought the resources were absolutely brilliant; I think I was told I attended more courses than anyone else on the programme!*

*I found them incredibly helpful. I do have a certain amount of commercial awareness but not enough to have gotten to the point where I am now.*

*The bank of webinars and resources are fantastic.”*

Along with the online resources that Tam found so important in developing Boost Academy, she found working with a Business Advisor particularly helpful.

*“The Business Advisors have been really good. What’s important is when you’ve got an idea and you think it’s great, that’s all well and good but you need somebody with expertise to give you a reality check and to say; ‘what about this?’.*

*These are things you might have shied away from to avoid discomfort. When you meet with an Advisor you can go through that process and thrash it out. I found working with the Business Advisor on financial forecasting particularly useful as well as being able to do a mock pitch so I can take my proposition to prospective clients with confidence."*

### **Applying for the Business Support Grant**

Tam was delighted to have been able to apply for the full grant available and to have been successful. The grant will help Tam to purchase high quality learning materials that will benefit learners and the entire Boost Academy user experience.

*"I'm so pleased because it's going to give me the ability to buy the things I need to take Boost to the next level. For example, in order to teach group classes, I've been able to purchase presentation materials from Oxford University Press which are some of the best materials available. These will allow me to deliver the highest quality classes.*

*Most importantly, the grant has allowed me to fund the Boost Academy website to drive new business.*

*I've also been able to access the British Chamber of Commerce in Spain which will lead to some great introductions to businesses who want their staff to be able to speak English and there is also a government mandate for learning English."*

When applying for the business grant, Tam was delighted with the support provided by Robyn and her team of consultants and advisors.

*"Even though some of the submission requirements and grant conditions could be complex for someone not used to dealing with them, I have to say that all the business advisors and the leader, Robyn have been absolutely fantastic about the whole process.*

*What I would say to people is don't be intimidated by the forms and information required because you will get the support you need."*

### **Recommending the Programme**

When it comes to recommending the Starting and Succeeding in Business programme, Tam is unequivocal in her support.

*"It's definitely taking Boost to the next level. I wouldn't have been able to go to this next point in the journey with the website, resources and opportunities. It's gone from a small-scale operation to something much bigger and more sustainable.*

*I would say 100%, don't hesitate, it's really worth doing – we're very lucky that these opportunities are in place. When I first started the programme, Boost was just a small idea, but having actively participated in the course, Boost has been able to grow to what it is now and will keep growing.*

*Go for it and you'll get all the support you need which is really helpful and great."*