

From the Army to Thames Water

Spencer's story

My move from the Army to Thames Water was somewhat of a challenge as I had never planned on leaving the military at the time, however due to being injured whilst on active duty I had no choice. Immediately after my discharge I was employed by a trials and development company working as an engineer on Battle Tank trials. This was the most depressing time for me as I felt worthless and that I had taken a big step backwards. I was a flyer in the Army and one of the youngest ever in my regiment at my rank of Staff Sergeant at the age of 27. Now I was kicking my heels doing a job that required no effort or engagement of my brain, not to mention not utilising all the skills in management and leadership I had learned from my 15 years' service in the Army.



One Sunday afternoon whilst walking my dog I came across an old Army friend and we got talking about my situation and I told him I was looking for other work, he mentioned someone who was starting up a recruitment agency for injured soldiers called Soldier On, well first thing Monday morning I called and a week later I was having an interview with them. Soldier On had been in contact with Thames Water HR and were aware of some L6 management opportunities and set about seeing if I could obtain an interview based on my previous management experiences and engineering back ground within the Army. Within a few weeks I was short listed for interview for two L6 roles, these were Leak Detection Manager Western and R&M Manager Western. I did some appropriate study and attended the interviews in Kidlington, two weeks later I was contacted and offered either of the two roles, I chose the Leak Detection role and about a month later I was in the door.

Despite having absolutely no experience in the water industry I quickly got to grips with how things worked and the management of staff and contractors. Managing people is what I had been doing in the Army under very tough conditions, the transfer of skills was easy and felt seamless. Of course there were challenges in the first 6 months getting to grips with the industry and we all learn new things every day, this process was eased by people within Thames Water and their willingness to help. I have never once in my now nearly four years working for Thames Water ever felt like I couldn't ask questions or seek help and advice with no judgement, and that is the primary reason I love working for Thames Water. Along with its operational challenges, I must admit I do love being in an event and feel this is where I flourish with my forces background.

After approximately 18 months I successfully gained a new role within the business as the ML5 for waste network in Western Region, I have been doing this for 2 years now and absolutely love it, it's very challenging and diverse but what I am learning is fantastic, and the people who work for me are a great team. All in all a good news story so far and one which I'm sure could be duplicated by many service men and women.

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