

## **Bobby Russell:** Keep Moving Forward

### **What was your professional background prior to starting the Blue Ocean program?**

I served in the U.S. military for almost 30 years. Most of the time I was an Air Force Logistics Plans and Programs Manager. My job was to make sure that a squadron's personnel and equipment deployed successfully overseas. I was responsible for all aspects of deployment, from mobility training and immunizations to making sure that the aircraft loads were safe to fly and distributed evenly. I have always been fascinated with computer technology but I never had the time to pursue professional training in the field.

### **What drove you to pursue industry certifications and join the Blue Ocean program?**

When I realized that my bachelor's degree was not enough to gain meaningful employment in the IT industry. One of my first conversations was with Mr. Jeff Coruccini. He asked me what I wanted out of the program and I told him that I wanted a job. He told me that I would have one and he was absolutely right.

### **How was your experience working with the LearnKey Veteran Services team?**

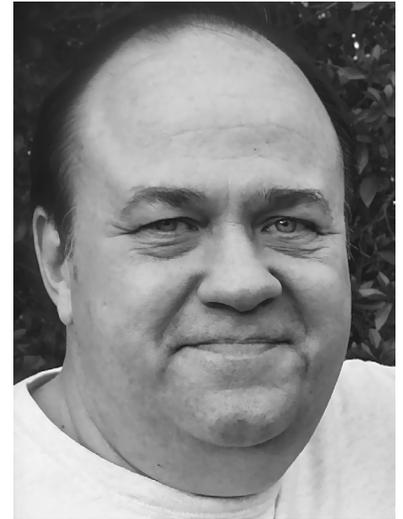
I've had a great experience with LearnKey staff. My first Veteran Services representative was Jessica Staples. She is such a great, caring person. She helped me begin the program and got me through my first few certifications by answering a whole lot of questions and getting me help if she couldn't answer them. My current Veteran Services representative is Susan Havens and she's the bomb! She is so supportive and helps me whenever I need it. Susan and Jessica both seem to be able to anticipate my needs regarding the program because they are usually "already on it" if I ask for anything.

### **What kept you motivated as you worked through the Blue Ocean program?**

My family and friends are my life and their support is essential. The LearnKey staff has also motivated me to succeed. I couldn't have asked for better cheerleaders than Susan Havens, Jessica Staples, and Brian Tremelling. With support like that, how could I fail?

### **What role did LearnKey play in helping you obtain a job?**

My new job required CompTIA Network+ and Security+ certifications. My job is as a Network Administration and Technical Support at an Air National Guard facility. The best part of this type of organization is the potential for



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advancement. These positions require more advanced certifications. Thanks to LearnKey, I already have the ones I need to get most of those jobs.

### What certifications have you earned?

- Microsoft Office Specialist in Word, Outlook, and Excel 2013
- CompTIA Network+ and Security+
- Cisco Certified Entry Networking Technician (CCENT)
- Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA).
- Currently training in the CCNA-Security (IINS) certification.

### What advice would you give to veterans who are just starting the Blue Ocean program?

- a. Keep moving forward! Everyone has setbacks; it's how you recover from them that counts. The reason that I kept going at first was knowing that what I was doing was going to help me find a job. Now that I have a job, I keep going to get a better job.
- b. Use your Veteran Services representative! They want you to succeed just as much as you do. Ask them the questions you need answered and keep them informed of your progress. I called and emailed Brian Tremelling, Jessica Staples, and Susan Havens many times and they always got me the help I needed.
- c. Ask for help from other students, and offer help if you can provide it. For me, nothing clarifies a concept more than explaining it to someone else. I help student veterans all the time and it helps me retain important concepts. I also feel great when I've helped someone over a hurdle.