

Spotlight on Dislocated Workers

“Workforce Solutions Left me Feeling Better About Myself”–Howard Pankonin

After becoming separated from my full-time employment at the end of June this year, I was introduced to the Workforce Solutions’ facility in North Saint Paul because of unemployment compensation obligations. I have to say every contact has been positive, instructional, and professional. Derek Jackson and the others at the front desk were all very helpful when I was hung up on the computers, as often happened. I was able to make use of many of the workshops offered and found them all to be of great help.

I desperately needed help in composing a professional looking resume worded to show off my strengths and also practice in interviewing as to be comfortable and put my best foot forward. Those two workshops alone were great. The use of the facility to go online to search out possibilities for employment and set up an email address was useful as I do not as yet have Internet access at home and found the library to be difficult to use as they have a time limit of an hour.

I entered the Dislocated Worker Program with Claudia Melbye as my counselor. She was at all times nonjudgmental and professional. After my meeting with her, and doing a mock interview for the position I now have, I was able to present myself well. I used her suggestion of a small portfolio of customer appreciation letters and emails from my previous employer file. I received comments that my panel interview went well and was offered the position about three weeks later.

Through a period in my life when it was, at times, hard to remain optimistic about my situation, the contacts, workshops, and help I received at Workforce Solutions always left me feeling better about myself.

Realizing His Full Potential– Claudia Melbye

As devastating as a job loss can be, a person may realize new opportunities for growth and fulfillment. The job seeker may experience periods of low self-esteem and doubts about one’s ability to re-enter the workforce. As a



counselor, I try to help the participant put some structure into the overwhelming job search process by breaking that process down into small, achievable steps. Just as a job comes with a schedule and structured tasks, the “job” of looking for employment needs that as well.

Howard lost his job of over 30 years in retail management as a result of downsizing by his employer. We mutually agreed that he would benefit from an upgrade in his computer software skills as well as coaching and support to help keep him on track and reach his employment goals.

(cont’d on page 29)

Suddenly Unemployed

Doris was 51 years old and had worked for Andersen Windows for the past six years as a Customer Service Representative/Receptionist. The company decided to eliminate her position and Doris was suddenly unemployed.

Doris was apprehensive about finding work; she had few skills to offer a new employer, particularly in the area of computer technology. Doris and her counselor decided the best option would be to return to school. She decided on an 18-month course at Century College, Office Technology/Medical Office Support.

Doris was able to secure a part-time position, 16 to 24 hours per week, as well as a volunteer position of eight hours per week at a local hospital near her home. She also manages to attend school full time. She is now completing her final semester of classes and boasts a 3.4 Grade Point Average. Her goal is to complete her training program and secure full-time employment in her field at a local hospital.



After being laid off from Andersen Windows, Doris sought help from Workforce Solutions to find another job. She is now attending school full time at Century College and working part time at Lutheran Memorial Hospital where she was nominated three times for customer service awards.

Realizing His Full Potential (cont'd from page 28)

Securing a job with benefits like health insurance and a retirement plan, as well as a higher wage, was a high priority for Howard who is a homeowner and totally self-supporting. In a part-time job with the potential for full-time work, the goal became to work into full time with that employer.

We did some upfront practice on interviewing. He attended the job search workshops at the WorkForce Center, revised his resume, and created a portfolio highlighting his past accomplishments. When a full-time supervisor position became available, he was a polished professional candidate, more confident and ready to present his skills and demonstrate his caring, positive spirit. He got the position working in retail for a non-profit business, Arc Greater Twin Cities, an advocacy organization for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. For Howard, it is a perfect combination—a fun, business-like atmosphere that feels purposeful and rewarding, with the potential of other possibilities within the organization.

In hindsight, Howard reflected that his job loss gave him the opportunity to realize his full potential and broaden his work/life experience.



(For more information on services to laid-off workers, contact Wayne Young of Workforce Solutions at 651-779-5087.)

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Committed to Finding Employment Again

by Kim Glasbrenner, Employment Guidance Counselor

As one of the counselors on the Dislocated Worker Team, I was asked to work on the Ford Project. I met with Kris in the Fall of 2007. While some employees returned to the plant, she accepted one of the buyout packages and her employment with Ford ended in January 2007.

During the twelve years she worked at Ford, Kris assembled various parts of the Ford Ranger, working in three different areas as well as in Quality Control. Prior to her employment at Ford, Kris worked in the banking industry for almost a decade. These transferable skills would play a significant role in her career transition, because a back injury prohibited her from returning to a physical job in manufacturing. Because of her disability, Kris was also eligible to receive services from the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS). She and I worked with a DRS counselor in Anoka County, and the three of us developed a plan based on Kris' DRS vocational evaluation.

From our conversations, I could tell that Kris was committed to finding employment again. I was impressed with how she handled the roadblocks she encountered. Throughout her time in the program, she remained upbeat and believed something good was coming down the road. She conducted research and made the decision to go through the Minnesota Resource Center's Office Support program. Like most dislocated workers, Kris needed a training program that was short, yet at the same time increased her marketability. Because DRS provided the initial evaluation, the Dislocated Worker Program covered all the training costs.

After completing the training program, Kris devoted her time to finding a new job. She worked with a DRS placement specialist, and he provided additional encouragement and job leads. In October of last year, she was offered a position with the State of Minnesota. She is enjoying her new job and has received many compliments about her positive attitude and strong work ethic.

Most Rewarding Part of My Job

As a job counselor assisting laid off workers during a struggling economy, I take pride in knowing the Dislocated Worker Program is available to individuals like Kris. She was determined to make the best of this career transition. To bear witness to her success is the most rewarding part of my job.

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