

# How “Michigan Works!” Helped Me start a New Career

In 1987 I was recently discharged from the Army, in school full-time, and looking for more than just a minimum wage job to support my family. I signed up for O.J.T. with “Michigan Works!” in suburban Detroit. (The VA paid for college using the G.I. Bill, but my Army skills – Mortar Gunnery and Nuclear, Biological and Chemical warfare defense - were not in high demand in the civilian world.) The “Michigan Works!” affiliate placed me in a steel warehouse, where I learned how to run a 1/4" shear, level line, and slitter. I was working on the night shift, and going to school to finish my degree during the daytime. While I enjoyed the work, it was not my long-term career goal. The job did, however, offer lots of overtime, decent pay, and it paid the bills for 18 months. This was just long enough for us to save up, and buy our first house. I got in the door because of the “Michigan Works!” O.J.T program. The employer was willing to train as long as the cost of my wages was shared, until I was fully productive on the job. That six-month O.J.T. was a means to an end. The job paid enough to support us until I could look for work in the field I really wanted, which was teaching history. As it turned out, history teachers were in short supply, but I eventually did get hired by the Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth. My degree was the ticket to this job and the O.J.T. program was the ticket to getting the degree. The “Michigan Works!” O.J.T program provided me with decent job while I was in school.

The moral of the story is that “Michigan Works!” can put you into an O.J.T. program if you need it. Even if the job you get isn't your ultimate goal, it's a means to an end, and it beats unemployment or underemployment any day. Interested? See a Joint Adjustment Committee member or contact Michigan Works, at (800) 285-WORKS/(269) 789-2409 about O.J.T. for dislocated workers. You'll be impressed by the sheer number of possibilities that it can open up for your future.

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