Where to Get Job Training

Workers today are finding that they must frequently upgrade their skills and knowledge in order to be competitive. Training and retraining have become necessary as technologies and methods of doing business evolve at a rapid pace. The job seeker demonstrating the willingness and ability to learn new skills is in the best position with a prospective employer. With a little exploration you will find training opportunities are plentiful in both the private and public sectors.

The changing job market

Job training is needed more than ever, thanks to the following market trends:

- According to the Labor Department, average workers will change jobs eight times in their lifetime.
- Low-skill jobs that pay a living wage are almost nonexistent today.
- More education translates into higher wages. A college graduate, for example, earns over $20,000 more per year than someone with just a high school education.
- Nearly 100 percent of businesses use computers.
- The job market is increasingly competitive. Education and skill level are now major factors in the selection process.
- The decline of manufacturing and the growth of the services industry puts less emphasis on working with your hands and more on working with your head.

Skills training: Who needs it?

In today's economic climate, almost everyone is a candidate for more learning, but some people can benefit more than others. Chances are, you need additional training when you:

- Are unemployed or underemployed.
- Want to earn a better wage.
- Are being passed over for promotions.
- Are intimidated by changing practices or technology in your occupation.
- Are unfamiliar with the basics of computers and other technology.
- Are brand new to the job market.
- Are re-entering the workforce.
- Are changing careers.

Basic computer training

Employers utilizing computer technology will be more willing to train you in more advanced computer skills if you've got a good foundation. You will benefit from courses in basic computer operations, such as:

- The latest PC or Macintosh operating systems
- Word processing program like Microsoft Word®
- Presentation or graphic programs such as Adobe Acrobat®
- Improved typing skills
- A spreadsheet program like Microsoft Excel®
- A database program
- The Internet and social media programs like Facebook®

How to Get the Best Training

If you are able to pay for your training or can qualify for financial assistance:

- **Community colleges** These educational gems are inexpensive and offer academic, vocational and technical courses.
- **Vocational and proprietary schools** These schools offer certificate programs, are affordable and have short courses that are frequently offered at night or on weekends.
- **Universities** Most universities are now accommodating adult and working students with more weekend, night-time, on-line and correspondence courses.

If finances are a problem:

- **Employer provided** Many employers contract with consultants or community colleges to teach their employees basic and new technology skills.
- **Government programs** Local, state and federal governments offer job training programs, as well as financial aid to eligible workers. Local American Job Centers can provide you with a list of low cost training options that are available in your community.
- **Community centers** Computer training and courses teaching marketable skills are often available at a minimal cost at libraries and community centers. Check with your local library for a list of these courses.
- **Apprenticeship programs** These paid jobs allow you to learn a skill while working under the supervision of a journeyman craftsman. Apprenticeships are available in a wide range of skilled trades.
- **Internships** These positions are available through a large number of businesses that offer training and experience in exchange for your labor. Internships can be paid or non-paid positions. Your local American Job Center can help you identify employers that offer internships.

Make the most of your training

Before embarking on any training course, whether a company-sponsored course or a full degree program, you need to be able answer the following questions:

- What do I want or expect to get out of this training? How will it help me achieve my goal?
- What will be the benefits of extra training in my current job? Talk to your boss or an employment counselor about your plans. Find out what long-term changes will be occurring in your job. If you obtain training, will your pay change or will you be given more responsibility?

Decatur Illinois workNet Center
757 W. Pershing Road
Decatur, IL 62526
217-875-8751
www.worknet19.org

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Federal Government Programs

The Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act
Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor in partnership with local councils or boards, these programs offer classroom training, on-the-job training in a wide variety of occupations and job search assistance. The Act provides for the creation of American Job Centers. These Centers provide free employment services to everyone and, depending upon your actual situation, specific assistance to:

- Obtain job training.
- Receive on-the-job training with a local employer.
- Receive a vocational assessment and career counseling.
- Participate in classroom training in basic skills or a particular vocation area.
- Receive job placement assistance.

americanjobcenter

To be eligible for some of the programs, at least one of the following must apply to your situation:

- Recently laid off due to employee cutbacks or a plant closing.
- Separated from the military.
- Unemployed for more than six months.
- Economically disadvantaged.
- Transferring out of a public assistance program.
- A member of a targeted minority group (Native American, homeless, etc).

Review the JobSearch Guide ***How to Use Your Local American Job Center*****.**

Apprenticeships

- are on-the-job training under the supervision of a certified worker.
- vary in length from one to six years.
- are paid positions. Wages are generally about 40 percent of the master worker's.
- can be found in hundreds of occupations, ranging from automotive mechanic and sheet metal worker to health care technician and printer.
- can be found in union and non-union shops, independent businesses and large corporations.

Check with your local American Job Center for information on what apprenticeship programs are available in your area. To be eligible, applicants must:

- be at least 18 years old (or 16 years old with a parent's permission).
- meet employer's employment qualifications.
- show a good aptitude for the occupational skills involved.

College and School-Based Programs

Internships:

- offer on-the-job training for both part-time and full-time college students.
- are sometimes paid by the hour but more typically earn a set number of college credits.
- are flexible. Students can often determine what hours and what days they're able to work.
- usually are only one semester or one summer in length.
- give students a chance to explore different job fields.
- are excellent for building a résumé and obtaining good references.

Co-op Programs:
Similar to internships, only they

- are generally longer in duration.
- are temporary but full-time jobs.
- are usually paid positions.
- generally have prerequisites for participation, such as a certain grade point average and completion of a set number of college credits.

Like internships, co-op programs offer on-the-job experience and are excellent for building résumés and relevant skills.

Other Ways to Gain Skills

- Volunteer to work without pay in the field of your choice.
- Volunteer for added responsibility within your job and make yourself available for special projects.
- Find a mentor willing to train you on the weekend or after hours.
- Join associations that support your occupational goals. Attend any workshops or lectures that may be offered by the associations.

Get Help with Training Costs

You may be surprised by how much private and government assistance is available for adults seeking additional job training. Begin by talking with the Financial Aid Office at your local college or vocational school about these programs:

- **Government Gift Aid** Federal Pell Grants and the Supplemental Education Opportunity Grant Program are two programs that provide tuition assistance to eligible students. Eligibility is based primarily upon income.
- **Scholarships** Scholarships are money grants that can be used for tuition and other expenses. You can find out about thousands of private scholarships and grants in the reference section of your local library or by talking with a Financial Aid Advisor at your local community college. Scholarships are usually based on need, merit, interests or other criteria.
- **Federal Loans** Stafford Loans, among others, are government-backed student loans. The loans are at a very low interest rate. For more information go to ***www.scholarships.com/financial-aid/student-loans/stafford-loans/***.
- **Private Loans** Sallie Mae's Signature Education Loan program allows students to borrow money to cover the cost of tuition and other expenses. These loans come from private sources, such as banks, but are backed by the federal government. For more information go to ***www.salliemae.com***.
- **Workforce Development Act** Contact your local American Job Center and ask about training programs. Review the **JobSearch Guide** ***How to Use Your Local American Job Center***.

Internet resources

www.careeronestop.org/FindTraining/find-training.aspx-- Locate a American Job Center and other training and educational resources in your area.
www.doleta.gov/oa/eta_default.cfm -- Information on apprenticeship programs.
www.collegesurfing.com -- Locate vocational/technical schools and programs.