

## **On-the-job training program worked wonders for Quality Engineer in Manufacturing**

With over 20 years of experience in the manufacturing industry, Yelda Kivarkis never dreamed that he would have trouble finding employment. He had started his career in the HVAC industry as a floor inspector, working in various areas including welding, sheet metal and riveting, with progressive promotions to a quality engineer position. In fact, he had remained with the same employer for over 15 years, dealing with internal/external customer relations, internal audits and many issues relating to quality control. Unfortunately, a downturn in the economy resulted in changes for his company, and an ultimate mass layoff – affecting Mr. Kivarkis and many others.

Originally seeking jobs exclusively related to his previous experience in the HVAC industry, Kivarkis focused upon jobs in a specific industry, geographic area and salary range expectations. He soon realized that after a year of unemployment, he needed to expand his job search plan to include new skills and other industries. His passion was to remain in the “quality assurance” area, yet he was willing to accept any related job, even temporary or contract, just to gain updated experience, hoping that it would lead to full-time employment.

Naturally enthusiastic, and with a strong willingness to learn, Kivarkis accepted a three-month assignment with an engineering fabricator and the goal of retaining a major customer who had been experiencing quality related issues. He had to review documentation, root causes and costs related to quality control issues, ultimately saving the account within two month, returning the company to the “preferred provider list.”

With new-found confidence, Kivarkis was recruited to participate as a Quality Engineer, in the “On-the-Job” (OJT) Training Program at [AGS Technology, Inc.](#) in Schaumburg, IL. The OJT Program is grant-funded and designed to assist manufacturers in addressing a skills gap between a job and new hire. Through the OJT Program, Kivarkis has been able to quickly learn new skills related to his new position. His biggest issue was familiarizing himself within the first two months about new processes and products, in order to effectively resolve customer issues. Quality Control issues in the automotive industry are significantly different than those in the HVAC industry.

In addition to studying volumes of manuals, Kivarkis diligently worked with plant and maintenance management, as well as the customer service staff to understand what to look when manufacturing automotive parts in a molding machine. As a “hands on” guy who learns by “going out to the shop floor,” he interacted with everyone on the team at this small manufacturer. During weekly meetings, through self analysis, he would identify areas requiring additional improvement.

And how does he feel about his experience with the On-the-Job Training program? Kivarkis said, “I still need to learn. This is the first time I’m so happy. At [AGS Technology](#), I truly feel like I am part of the team. I feel like I am working *with* someone – not for them. And the best part is that they have given me a chance and a real future.” He continued, “I feel so fortunate and thankful to have this training opportunity! I am a completely different person from just a few months ago. Every day I look forward to coming to work and learning new things—this is exactly the kind of company and job I dreamed about during my job search!”