

Apprentice to Journey Worker

FIRST IMT REGISTERED APPRENTICE TRANSFORMS HER CAREER



Brandi Dunham receives Certificate of Achievement from Liz Shuler, AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer.

"It's all about self growth. If a person is more interested [in the work], you're going to have an employee with growth." This is Brandi Dunham, Quality Control Inspector at HB Performance Systems in Mequon, Wisconsin. She's talking about the value she felt she had as an apprentice. In 2013 Brandi became the first Industrial Manufacturing Technician (IMT) Registered Apprentice in the nation. Much of her drive and motivation in her apprenticeship she says is grounded in her relationship with her employer. "It's all about trust. If I feel like I'm getting invested in, I feel like I could give back what they've given me."

With support from WRTP/ BIG STEP and Jobs for the Future, manufacturing employers have been transforming the skills of their workforce with apprenticeship programs like the IMT. The IMT is a nationally recognized apprenticeship program registered with the U.S. Department of Labor that trains frontline manufacturing production workers, like Brandi.

After nine years as a bank teller, Brandi changed paths and found herself working at HB where she was selected for the IMT Apprenticeship program. "If it wasn't for the IMT Apprenticeship I probably wouldn't have stayed in manufacturing," said Brandi. As manufacturing employers face challenges in attracting and retaining skilled workers, they need training models that work. Apprenticeships are a powerful solution that equip workers with the skills needed to drive business success and employee productivity and satisfaction. For Brandi, her apprenticeship transformed how she approached work at HB:

When you know how everything runs, it's more helpful. I was able to learn more about quality and function, what products was made for, what they do and how they're monitored. It helped me be more comfortable knowing how everything works.

Employers are developing talent strategies with apprenticeship to meet their skill needs, while making a positive impact on the work and lives of their employees. Since 2014 when Brandi completed her apprenticeship, she has championed apprenticeship as not only a model for unleashing employee potential in the workplace, but for the impact it has had in her personal life as well:

Before I took to the apprenticeship program I would have never been going to speak on panels. For myself, I took the IMT a lot farther than I thought I would. I would have never guessed that. It opened for me how to talk, how to understand what people are looking for. That's what you need when you're working with employers. People are more willing to open up when they hear it from a person that came changed through apprenticeship. Before I probably wouldn't have cared.

For more information on the IMT Apprenticeship, including resources for employers, workforce development organizations, unions, and apprentices, [visit IMTApprenticeship.org](http://visitIMTApprenticeship.org).