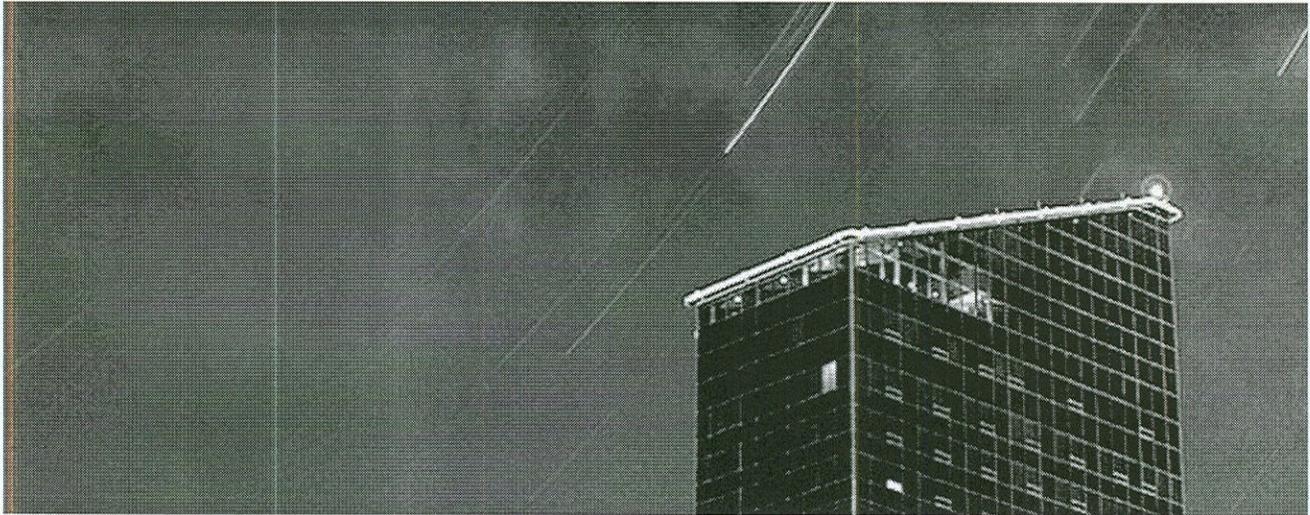


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## Innovation + Job News

February 21, 2008

### WIRED innovation helps workers stay on the job, saves Michigan \$1M

By: Deborah Johnson Wood

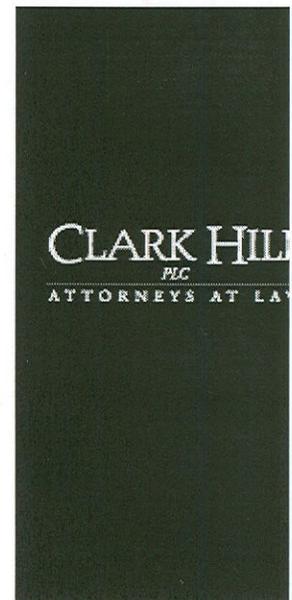
A consortium of Grand Rapids-area manufacturers has maintained an average employee retention rate of 87 percent, provided training to 617 employees, and saved the public sector \$1 million in public services to lower wage workers.

That consortium, The SOURCE SW, helps its member manufacturers find ways to provide lower wage employees with job training and social services needed to overcome obstacles to work, such as childcare and transportation issues.

Funded by a portion of WIRED's \$15 million federal grant, West Michigan TEAM is working to help spread The SOURCE's model across the region by helping manufacturers and healthcare businesses form consortiums.

Over the past two years, four consortiums have been formed in Kent County, one in Battle Creek, and consortiums are under consideration by businesses in Ottawa and Muskegon counties.

"We work to improve the lives of workers, increase the success of businesses, and intensify the impact of government," says Ashleigh Emmerson, VP of West Michigan TEAM. "Our focus is helping the lower wage workers be successful and advance."



One manufacturing consortium, the SOURCE NW, organized in 2007 in northwest Grand Rapids.

"Historically there has been a gap between the services our employees need and what our HR team is capable of providing," says Jennifer Mesler, TrimQuest LCC. "As a small to mid-sized employer, we often do not have the same resources, scale or leverage to provide what larger employers can. The SOURCE NW has been a perfect fit to assist us in closing that gap and we've seen immediate value."

West Michigan TEAM advanced its efforts through the WIRED Innovations initiative and spun off to form a non-profit organization. WIRED approved it for funding for the next phase of the innovation project which ends in February 2009.

Source: Ashleigh Emmerson, West Michigan TEAM; Jennifer Mesler, TrimQuest LLC

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