



## Anybody's Neighbor

Growing up in the New Hope–Plymouth area, Steve Kvasnik's life was just as he imagined – a high school diploma, a college degree, a job that he loved and a beautiful wife. Living in California as a successful commercial property manager, Steve and his wife decided to move back to Minnesota to raise their daughter. Though he was able to find work when he arrived in the Twin Cities, it wasn't long before the real estate market crashed and Steve's employer had to let him go.

"It was a very stressful," says Steve. "I was job searching on my own, going to all of the networking events, filling out applications, but it seemed like nothing was working. I wasn't getting the interviews."

Soon after contacting HIRED, Steve connected with Project Manager Ken Roberts. "Ken assured me that I was doing all the right things and that I just had to be patient. He was a huge source of encouragement. He was actually the one who suggested I pursue a career in sales."

Exactly one year after losing his job, Steve was offered a new opportunity as a sales manager at a local telecom company. When thinking about his time unemployed, Steve has this to say: "I never thought this would happen to me. I'm a smart guy and I work hard. The truth is, I could be anybody's neighbor. ... I believe wholeheartedly in HIRED and I'm so grateful for Ken's support."

Steve's story is more common today than ever before. According to HIRED Senior Program Manager Matt Derosier, many of the dislocated worker clients HIRED is serving have a solid educational background, a significant amount of work experience and a good skill set. But because of the economic crisis, their positions have been eliminated.

In 2009, HIRED served nearly 3,000 dislocated workers, many of whom, like Steve, never thought they would be in a position to accept unemployment assistance. Derosier says, "But what makes HIRED unique is our ability to serve people from all walks of life – from business

owners to financial planners to mechanics and assembly line workers. We meet our clients where they're at and do everything we can to see that they get back on their feet and find stable employment to support themselves and their families."



Steve Kvasnik and Ken Roberts

On a whim, Steve's mom suggested he contact HIRED for help. "I was desperate. I learned a lot of things in school, but I wasn't taught who to call if I was out of work."

## NEW TECHNOLOGY IMPROVES EFFICIENCY

Resources – both time and money – are limited, and with an increased demand for services, HIRED set out to improve the technology behind its internal client database in order to free up counselors to serve more clients. Fortunately for HIRED, two experienced information technology consultants, Chuck Bies of Aeritae Consulting and Dave Folsom of VISI, jumped on board to lend a hand, and GNet Group, a St. Paul-based technology solutions company, offered its system design services at a reduced rate. Bies said, "Right away I was impressed with Jane Samargia's vision, commitment and compassion. HIRED is an inspiring organization that is unlike any other."

Together with HIRED's Information Technology Director Jim Thibodeau, Bies and Folsom worked to implement a new client database system – Internal Client Information System (ICIS) – which would save counselors a significant amount of time when entering data. Instead of putting information into two separate systems,



Jim Thibodeau

the team built a secure database that would interact seamlessly with the state's structure – Workforce One.

Folsom said, "HIRED is doing important work in our community and we wanted them be as productive and efficient as possible ... ICIS has definitely achieved the goal."

The system, which is receiving the attention of government officials and agencies across the nation, allows HIRED counselors to focus on the work most important to them – helping people secure employment.



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