One of the greatest challenges facing the Jordanian manufacturing sector today is the retention of a talented, skilled workforce. Newly hired employees often arrive at the first day of work without the skills necessary to complete the three month trial period for their employment, leading to increased hiring costs and declining productivity in companies.

To address this issue, USAID’s Mihanti Project for Workforce Development has instituted a vocational training and mentorship loyalty program in a number of factories, teaching the skills required to increase retention rates. Participants become well-versed in skills like teamwork, customer service and conflict resolution, skills necessary to maintain employment at their various workplaces.

Areej Abu Safiah trained in the scientific stream in high school, earning a 90% average score, and went on to obtain her bachelor’s degree in laboratory science, only to find herself in a job with little opportunity for progression in either position nor salary. When Areej moved on to try to find a similar job with more opportunities to grow and improve, she found that she still did not have the necessary skills to function in the workplace at her highest potential.

At the Reem factory where Areej works, her supervisor made an announcement about a training program to provide skills to newly hired employees. Areej, always eager to improve her performance at work, enthusiastically signed up.

Prior to the training, Areej reported feeling shy, experienced difficulty in dealing with her coworkers, and was generally unhappy at work. Following the training, Areej saw a clear transformation in her performance at work. She said that her relationship with her colleagues improved and she became more optimistic and confident about her voice in the workplace. “The training teaches us how to assess and deal with situations using real life examples,” she explained, “so I’ve already been able to apply what I have learned.” As Areej speaks, it is easy to see the impact that the training has had on her. She is bubbly and enthusiastic as she discusses the passion with which she approaches learning these skills.

Not only has the training improved Areej’s workplace experience, but it has also improved her ability to assert herself and pursue her professional goals. Prior to the training, Areej said she often felt nervous about asking for more from her supervisors. The training program taught her how to portray herself as someone who is trustworthy and a valuable asset to the company. ­­­­Areej is hoping to eventually become a manager in her lab. In the meantime, she hopes that she can maintain positive relationships with her coworkers, instill confidence in others regarding the quality of her work, and leave a mark on the company in any way can.

The training helped Areej to change her outlook beyond the factory, giving her a more positive outlook in her everyday life. Recently, a fellow employee was speaking negatively towards Areej. Prior to the training, Areej said she might’ve responded by crying and wanting to go home. Now, she smiles and maintains a positive attitude, not impacted by negativity around her.

Areej’s message to other new employees is to remain positive and always put an effort towards improving themselves, and that managers will eventually notice. Now, Areej’s colleagues are curious and eager to learn more about where she gained her skills. She acts as living proof for how others might improve their own workplace performance and experience.