



Drupal Career Starter Program Success Story



From unemployed Safety Specialist to full-time Digital Media Developer, Linda Cook transitioned into her new, higher-paying career through the Drupal Career Starter Program, lots of hard work, and active Drupal community involvement.

Looking back about three years, Linda Cook was in a much different place than she is now, even though she still lives in the same lovely home in the small town of Mims on Florida's Space Coast. In mid-summer 2010, she lost her job as a Safety Specialist for the City of Orlando due to an employee reduction program. This was a position for which she was selected because of her solid IT background, and for which she had been intensely mentored and trained as an OSHA authorized trainer to serve as a database administrator, trainer, and curriculum developer for the city's Health and Safety division.

"Becoming a part of the Drupal community has introduced me to the most supportive, sharing, caring, nurturing, smart, collaborative, fun loving people I have ever met... There is no other professional community like it that I am aware of. This sense of recognition and belonging strengthens self-confidence and worthiness. This is so important to people, especially important after losing a job."

Upon receiving her notice, she immediately registered with her local Workforce Investment Board, as well as with the state's employment database. Weeks turned to months as she searched for jobs where she could use her training and talents while researching other careers that might give her additional options. Finally, just after her lay-off anniversary, she learned about an innovative pilot program being supported by Brevard Workforce through a state funding program to train people for careers in an open source software platform called [Drupal](#). This news changed her life.

Linda was one of just 18 accepted into DrupalEasy Academy's [Drupal Career Starter Program](#) in October 2011. She recalls, "The training I received was the most effective training I have experienced." Challenging, but not difficult, the program especially encouraged community elements of a career in open source technology through local and national participation. The 10-week immersive course helped her build technical expertise, confidence and an ongoing

"Most training, even degree programs, provide you with a curriculum that you complete with no real direction as to what you should do with it when you complete it... The DCSP program begins with an end in mind. I have received support after training with help finding paying jobs and clients. Without the support of DCSP mentors and the Drupal community this would not have been possible."

commitment to Drupal community involvement to help her earn professional credibility. She completed the program as a passionate class leader and collaborator, and in January 2012, thanks to coordination by DrupalEasy Academy, she began an [internship](#) with the Orange County Library System.

Linda describes her time with OCLS as "an amazing work experience with amazing people that also provided me with outstanding references after I completed my internship." Her task was to migrate a static employee intranet site to Drupal 7 with limited direction, but plenty of opportunity to gather the

requirements for the project, design the project, and build the site using all the tools and resources available. She interacted with network and database professionals in a team setting, and adds, "I was treated as a professional and expected to perform as a Drupal professional." She did.

From there, Linda used her training and OCLS work experience to land several consulting gigs, on her own and in partnership with other DCSP grads. She remained very active in the community as she built her contracts. Then, in 2013, she spotted a full-time, telecommuting position on [Jobs.drupal.org](#) with the Florida Times Union in Jacksonville. She got the job as the Digital Media Developer for [Jacksonville.com](#), and is now earning more than she was as a Safety Specialist for the City of Orlando.

Linda is looking ahead to even more success, "I plan to continue to grow in Drupal. The Florida Times Union provides me with...limitless opportunities for professional development." She adds, "Drupal development makes it possible for me to take control of my work life instead of my work controlling my life. That is a really great feeling."