Hiring Veterans

Today’s Heroes, Tomorrow's Workforce

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In 2014, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reported that 21.2 million living Americans have served the nation in uniform. Of this population of military veterans participating in the labor market, just under one million (5.4%) were unemployed at any given time throughout the past year. Historically, this employment situation compares favorably to the non-veteran population; that is, across the entire population of veterans participating in the labor market (all eras of service/age groups); there has not been a significant difference in the unemployment rate between veterans and non-veterans. However, this favorable comparison has not held true as it relates to the contemporary generation of military veterans.

Specifically, Gulf War Era II veterans (post-9/11) aged 18-24 have experienced disproportionally higher unemployment rates compared to other veteran and non-veteran demographic segments throughout the period from 2008 to 2014. As of OCT 2015, rate was 10.4%.
Challenges or Risk

- **Skill translation.** Civilians often have difficulty understanding what veterans did in the military and how those skills and experiences can benefit a company.

- **Negative stereotypes.** Some employers report concerns about the effects of combat stress, including post-traumatic stress issues, anger management and tendencies toward violence. Additionally, whereas some companies intentionally recruit veterans because of their perceived comfort with structure and discipline, other companies speak negatively of veterans’ “rigidity.”

- **Acclimation.** Some companies perceive that veterans require time after military service to acclimate to the civilian world and, thus, that veterans either require additional assistance from the company or should not be hired immediately after returning from service.

- **Finding veterans.** It can be difficult for some companies to locate veterans, and the landscape of Internet resources and organizations meant to facilitate or broker relationships between veterans and employers is confusing.
Top 11 Reasons to Hire Veterans

Hiring veterans is good business, according to detailed and lengthy interviews with 87 individuals representing 69 companies. The companies reported 11 reasons they hire veterans, with an emphasis on veterans’ leadership and teamwork skills, character and discipline.
Top 11 Reasons to Hire Veterans

- **Leadership and teamwork skills.** Veterans typically have led colleagues, accepted direction from others and operated as part of a small team.

- **Character.** Veterans are perceived as being trustworthy, dependable, drug-free and having a strong work ethic.

- **Structure and discipline.** Companies, especially those that emphasize safety, appreciate veterans’ experience following established procedures.

- **Expertise.** Companies value veterans’ occupational skills, job-specific experiences and understanding of the military community.

- **Dynamic environment.** Veterans are accustomed to performing and making decisions in dynamic and rapidly changing circumstances.
Top 11 Reasons to Hire Veterans

➢ **Effectiveness.** Interviewees report that veterans “get it done.”

➢ **Right Thing to Do.**

➢ **Proven success.** Some organizations hire veterans largely because other veterans have already been successful in their organization. Veterans demonstrate that they share company values and fit the organizational culture.

➢ **Resiliency.** Veterans are accustomed to working in difficult environments, and to traveling and relocating.

➢ **Loyalty.** Veterans are committed to the organizations they work for, which can translate into longer tenure.

➢ **Public relations value.** Some companies have found marketing benefits to hiring veterans.
Creating a Welcoming Workplace for Veterans

- **Develop an understanding of military culture and experience.** When standing up any initiative, or preparing your workplace to welcome Veterans, keep in mind that no two have the same experiences, but a basic knowledge of the values, structure, policies and expectations of the military promotes a stronger working relationship amongst employers and employees who are Veterans or family members of Veterans.

- **Advertising.** Mention on your website and in recruiting materials that your organization values the service Veterans and their family members have given to our country and that you support the hiring of returning Service Members and military spouses. Supporting the hiring of military spouses (especially when the Service Member is unable to work) is extremely important to the military community.

- **Job Shadowing.** Offer job shadow opportunities for transitioning Service Members so they can explore your organization and make an informed decision as to whether or not their skills and experiences meet the needs and demands of your workforce, including the organizational environment.
Creating a Welcoming Workplace for Veterans

- **Enlisted Personnel** are the specialists of the military. They are trained to perform specific hands-on tasks in the military as needed for any mission. As enlisted personnel progress up the ranks (there are nine enlisted ranks), they assume more responsibility and provide direct supervision to their subordinates.

- **Non-Commissioned Officers (NCO)** are enlisted military members holding a position of some degree of authority, usually obtained by promotion for performance, knowledge and discipline. Additional testing and leadership schools are often required to achieve these ranks.

- **Warrant Officers** are highly trained specialists and subject matter experts. They remain in their primary specialty to provide specialized knowledge, instruction and leadership to enlisted members and commissioned officers alike. With few exceptions, one must be an enlisted member with several years of experience, recommended by their commander, and pass a selection board to become a warrant officer. The Air Force is the only service that does not have Warrant Officers.

- **Commissioned Officers** have the primary function of providing overall management, planning and leadership in their area of responsibility. Unlike enlisted members and Warrant Officers, Commissioned Officers are not as specialized (with certain exceptions such as pilots, doctors, nurses and lawyers). Commissioned Officers must have a minimum of a four-year bachelor's degree.

**Bottom line:** *Commissioned officers plan, enlisted personnel do, and NCOs oversee the "doing" with the spirit of the commissioned officer's plan in mind. Warrant officers serve as the subject matter experts.*
Actively Recruiting Veterans

- **Contact your local Business and Career Solutions Center.**

- **Determine Employment Opportunities:** Review job descriptions to ensure they are accurate and up to date. Compare needed skills to military skills by utilizing Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (COOL). (websites listed in Helpful tools)

- **Consider using military language in your outreach and job descriptions.** O*Net Online offers a military to Civilian Crosswalk that may help you improve your Veterans outreach by targeting specific Military Occupational Classification codes that relate to civilian positions.

- **Paid internships:** Many medium- to large-sized businesses have structured corporate internship programs. Those that don't, but would be interested in partnering to create one, should consider contacting their local Business and Career Solution Center to determine if funding exists to support such a program.

- **Apprenticeship:** Registered Apprenticeship programs meet the skilled workforce needs of American industry, training millions of qualified individuals for lifelong careers since 1937. Registered Apprenticeship helps mobilize America’s workforce with structured, on-the-job learning in traditional industries such as construction and manufacturing, as well as emerging industries such as health care, information technology, energy, telecommunications and others. Registered Apprenticeship connects job seekers looking to learn new skills with employers looking for qualified workers, resulting in a workforce with industry-driven training and employers with a competitive edge.
Retaining Veterans

- **Place a Value on Military Service:** Understand that many transitioning Service Members have leadership capabilities above and beyond the typical civilian employee. Value this characteristic and find ways to weave leadership responsibilities into the civilian position. Be sure to overtly demonstrate the value your company places on military training and experience, perhaps by creating a Veteran-specific page on your website or reaching out to a local Veterans Service Organization (VSO) to find out how you can partner to assist in transitioning Service Members into the civilian workforce.

- **Develop and Promote mentorship in the workplace – Vet to Vet:** Mentorships are not a new workforce concept, but according to the information gathered from Veterans and employer networks, Veterans in particular look for connections (and ways to connect to their peers) in the civilian workforce. Ideally, someone who has had similar experiences and has already been through the transition process could provide support to a new or transitioning Veteran employee. Consider reaching out to your employees to learn who your Veterans are, as well as military spouses and family members. Find out from those groups what you can do to support them - and what they can do to help support new Veteran employees in your organization.

- **Practice Veterans appreciation and promote a Veteran-friendly workplace.** Just as many companies recognize and celebrate Black history during the month of February, or breast cancer awareness during the month of October, so too should Service Members and the families of Service Members be recognized for their service and/or the ultimate sacrifice on Veterans Day and Memorial Day. While our Veterans should be thanked and honored year round, consider special recognition of these national holidays within your organization. Consider including a workforce education initiative on issues related to Veterans and their families.
Helpful Tools

- Louisiana Workforce Commission  www.laworks.net
- O*NET Military to Civilian Crosswalk  http://www.onetonline.org/crosswalk/
- Army Credentialing Opportunities Online  www.cool.army.mil
- Navy Credentialing Opportunities Online  www.cool.navy.mil
- Find an Career One Stop Near You  http://www.servicelocator.org/contactspartners.asp
- Veterans Services Organizations  http://www1.va.gov/vso/index.asp
- Information about Veteran Mentorship  http://dmec.org/