

# Putting warriors to work

## Military veterans offer employers important skills and abilities

When Johnny and Jane come marching home — regardless of whether it's from combat or non-combat operations — they have apprehensions. These apprehensions can stem from reintegration to “the world” (military speak for coming back stateside) to closing the door on their military service.

You don't just “quit your job” when you leave the military and explore the civilian world. You leave a close-knit community of order, regulations and rules unlike most outsiders ever will experience. For many, this lifestyle was undertaken by young adults and served as a surrogate parent of sorts during their late formative years. For others coming to the end of a 20-year military career, they suddenly find themselves not only surrounded by a new community with

different rules of existence, but also navigating the world of the civilian employment. Concerns about the economic climate fuel worries about the ability to secure a job and causes service members to question their decisions. Their mission to country has become a mission to survive.

Still, apprehension isn't all bad. And as active service members transition from the military to the civilian sectors, they begin to see themselves in a different light — one that employers want to capture. This evolving individual has the potential to benefit an organization in ways not evident to civilian counterparts.

According to a 2007 survey conducted by Military.com, 61 percent of employers didn't have a complete understanding of how military experiences translate into job qualifications and 81 percent of transitioning service members didn't feel as they were fully prepared to enter the civilian workforce. According to a 2008 survey conducted by CareerBuilder.com, 17 percent of veterans looking for a job said it took more than six months to secure one after leaving active duty and nearly 10 percent said it took a year or more.

Bethany Hall, a veterans employment representative at the Mesa County Workforce Center in Grand Junction, believes veterans are still struggling with employment in 2011, but not necessarily more than their civilian

counterparts. “The biggest disconnect between veteran job seekers and potential employers lies in the difficulty, by both parties, in translating military skills into the civilian workplace,” Hall said. Veterans take it for granted their skills should be easily accepted in the civilian world. Employers must look past a laundry list of hard skills on a resumé and read between the lines to discern what the veteran applicant can bring to the organization.

Think about the following:

■ Veterans have an accelerated learning curve and possess skills proven to achieve success under adversity.

■ Veterans' leadership skills and respect for authority have been honed through the lead-by-example principle. They have practical knowledge for management and goal achievement. Policies and procedures are paramount to productivity and accountability is key.

■ Veterans' concept of teamwork has been developed by a sense of duty to others, all working for a common goal, regardless of background. Diversity is viewed as an asset.

■ Veterans possess technological knowledge on a global scale.

■ Veterans go to great lengths to protect themselves, others and property through a heightened awareness of health and safety standards and a strong work ethic.

Should your organization move to incorporate a veterans' hiring program into your recruitment efforts, a different strategy should be considered. The Americas Heroes at Work Web site has a great toolkit for getting started at [www.americasheroesatwork.gov/foremployers/hiringtoolkit](http://www.americasheroesatwork.gov/foremployers/hiringtoolkit).

Putting warriors to work isn't as difficult as employers might think, especially considering the resources available. Being armed with information, and training their sights in a different direction, organizations are setting themselves up to reach a desired target through the creation of a diverse, loyal, mission-oriented work force.



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