



VETERANS AT WORK

# TOOLKIT

Best Practices for Attracting, Hiring,  
and Retaining Veterans

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In Partnership with

JPMORGAN CHASE & CO.

SIRM  
Foundation



VETERANS ARE  
**VALUABLE  
MEMBERS**  
OF OUR WORKFORCE...



...RESEARCH  
**SHOWS:**

**65%**

Of veterans have some college education, or higher, making veterans more educated than their civilian peers.

Center for a New American Security. (2016). [Onward and Upward: Understanding Veteran Retention and Performance in the Workforce.](#)

**68%**

Of employers report that veterans perform “better than” or “much better than” their civilian peers.

Call of Duty Endowment and ZipRecruiter. (2017). [Challenges on the Home Front: Underemployment Hits Veterans Hard.](#)

**57%**

Of veterans stay at their jobs longer than the median tenure of 2.5 years (for subsequent roles after their first-post separation job).

Institute for Veterans and Military Families at Syracuse University. (2016). [Work After Service: Developing Workforce Readiness and Veteran Talent for the Future.](#)



# YET, VETERANS FACE **EMPLOYMENT DIFFICULTIES**



**90%** of veterans indicated there were obstacles in attaining employment.

Once employed, nearly half of veterans left their first post-separation position in the first year and more than 65% left their first job within two years.

Veteran Job Retention Survey, Institute for Veterans and Military Families, 2016.

**Your veteran employment program,  
LED AND MANAGED BY HR PROFESSIONALS  
AND A PROACTIVE, WELL-INFORMED VETERAN,**  
can mitigate these challenges. This is a win-win for employers  
and veterans.

# WHY DO YOU WANT TO **HIRE VETERANS?**

- ✓ Veterans have unique skills, knowledge and abilities (SKAs).
- ✓ Your organizational needs are aligned with their SKAs.
- ✓ Companies generally gain enormous goodwill from customers and a boost in their public image when they commit to hiring more military veterans.
- ✓ Veteran's competencies align with your corporate values.
- ✓ You want to demonstrate appreciation for their service to the nation.
- ✓ Companies can earn up to \$10,000 in federal and state tax credits through the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC).



# WHY WOULD VETERANS WANT TO **WORK AT YOUR BUSINESS?**



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Your company is recognized as a military-friendly organization.



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Your company's brand reinforces its vision, mission and values.



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Your organizational culture is inclusive.



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Your position responsibilities have a clear purpose and align with your organization's goals.



# WORKFORCE READINESS ALIGNMENT



Workforce readiness is a combination of what the veteran brings to the workplace and what the employer does to align with the needs of its veteran employees. There is a relationship between job preferences, military-conferred skills, and a variety of outcome measures, including retention, income, and perceptions about transition. The application of the skills gained in the military and securing employment in a desired career field are two critical factors in the transition process for both veterans and their employers.

# WORKFORCE READINESS ALIGNMENT

## Veteran

- ✓ Skills
- ✓ Abilities
- ✓ Knowledge

Is this job in your preferred career field?



## Employer

- ✓ Knowledge of Military skills
- ✓ Workforce development
- ✓ Other workplace supports

Adapted from [Workforce Readiness Alignment: The Relationship Between Job Preferences, Retention and Earnings](#) (Workforce Readiness Briefs, Paper No. 3) by R. Maury, B. Stone, D.A. Bradbard, N. Armstrong, and J.M. Haynie retrieved from [Workforce Readiness Alignment PDF](#). Copyright 2016 by the Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Syracuse University.



A man with a beard and a black beanie is focused on working on a piece of machinery in a workshop. The background is slightly blurred, showing other equipment. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

VETERANS CAN BE  
**EFFECTIVE &  
SUCCESSFUL**  
IN YOUR ORGANIZATION

## BEST PRACTICES FOR **ALL EMPLOYEES**

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- Champion and provide advocacy and outward support for workforce readiness alignment and balance of your workforce in all employment programs.
- Meet with leaders/hiring managers and walk them through the importance of readiness workforce and employment initiatives like the veteran employment program.
- Develop close working relationships with talent placement agencies.

## BEST PRACTICES FOR **VETERANS**

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- Ensure leadership, at all levels, understands the business case for hiring veterans and how it supports employer readiness.
- Be willing to support, champion and provide advocacy for the veteran employment program.
- Ensure company website appeals to veteran talent.
- Find an executive-level sponsor to advocate for veteran employment.
- Publicly pledge your support to veteran employment.

# QUESTIONS TO ASK



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- ✓ Do we have a close working relationship with talent placement agencies?
  - ✓ Is there advocacy for a veteran employment program?
  - ✓ Do our leaders and hiring managers understand the importance of workforce readiness alignment?
  - ✓ Did our website attract veteran talent?
  - ✓ Do we have a dedicated point of contact for federal, state and non-profit military organizations that can recruit veteran candidates?
  - ✓ Do position responsibilities have clear purpose and align with our organization's goals?
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# EMPLOYER READINESS CASE STUDY: **COCA-COLA**

## Attributes

- Workforce alignment
- Recognized military-friendly organization
- Demonstrated appreciation for service to the nation

## Narrative

Since 2014, Coca-Cola has joined forces with American Corporate Partners (ACP) to provide more than 280 career mentorships to veterans transitioning into the private sector. Paired based on mutual occupational interests, Coca-Cola mentors offer veterans outside of the company professional development advice as well as networking and resume building tools.

Army Veteran Lillian Norton, who has worked at Coca-Cola since 2013, now serves as one of the company's ACP mentors. The senior commercialization manager is thrilled to support her fellow veterans, recalling her own challenging transition finding a civilian career path after graduate school.

[A Corporate Transition: Coca-Cola Associates Mentor Military Vets, May 24, 2018](#)

# INTERVIEWING STYLES

The two most effective interview styles for candidates with a military background are behavioral based and situational based.



## Behavioral Based Interviewing

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Provides insight to how the candidate acted in specific employment-related situations. The logic is past performance predicts future performance.



## Situational Interviewing

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Looks at things from a forward-thinking perspective, giving the candidate the opportunity to highlight their analytical and problem-solving skills, and how they would work under pressure.



# INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUES

- ✓ Be familiar with the MOCs that correlate with the job.
- ✓ At the start of the interview, thank military-talent applicants for their service or spouses for their support at home.
- ✓ Clearly describe the job role and its responsibilities, defining expectations upfront and avoiding generalizations.
- ✓ Draw out applicants and uncover their strengths by asking them to share their stories.







# INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUES



- ✓ Avoid closed-ended questions (those that elicit a “yes” or “no” response) by asking probing, job-related questions about an individual’s service experience.
- ✓ Focus on actively listening for skill sets and correlate them with job functions within the organization.
- ✓ When interviewing military spouses, ask questions using a similar behavioral and situational approach. Members of this talent pool are often found to be great problem-solvers with an ability to manage change adeptly.

## BEST PRACTICES FOR **ALL EMPLOYEES**

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- Cultivate an excellent candidate experience.
- Ensure that education level and years of direct experience are not being exclusionary.
- Apply a resource endowment lens to human capital needs assessment. Look across the organization and apply a skills and competency inventory to identify both areas within the firm where existing skill and competencies are both superior and lacking.

## BEST PRACTICES FOR **VETERANS**

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- Let veterans know you have received their resume or application; give them insight as to the next steps in your application process.
- Triple-check on job descriptions: pass the job descriptions to see if the roles and responsibilities are clear.
- Focus on veterans needs and skills, in order to match them with the best positions in the company.

# QUESTIONS TO ASK



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- ✓ What are your prioritized needs for skills?
  - ✓ How do you curate an excellent candidate experience?
  - ✓ Are you considering other factors besides years of direct experience and education level?
  - ✓ Are interviewers familiar with interviewing techniques to ensure effective discussion with veteran candidates?
  - ✓ In your conversation with veterans, are you gaining understanding of their unique needs?
  - ✓ Have you established a workflow to communicate receipt of resume or application?
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# CONSIDER THESE **BEST PRACTICES**



## **CREATE**

Create a military hiring website separate from a traditional careers page.



## **WRITE**

Write job postings in military-friendly language.



## **GAIN**

Gain executive sponsorship for your veteran program.



# TALENT ACQUISITION CASE STUDY: **LOCKHEED MARTIN**

A photograph of four F-35 fighter jets flying in a formation against a clear blue sky, leaving white smoke trails.

## Attributes

- Veteran Recruiters
- Relationship building
- Use of technology

## Narrative

For the fourth time in a row, Lockheed Martin cracked our list—and it's easy to see why. For one, Lockheed Martin employs a full-time military team that's composed of vets and is dedicated to recruiting outreach to veterans and advocating for veteran job placement.

Additionally, the company hosts a Veteran Employee Resource Group Leadership Symposium every year for military and veteran leaders across the enterprise to share best practices and build new initiatives in support of veterans. Perhaps most impressive, though, is Lockheed Martin's Military Connect, the first-ever social media platform designed to enable discussions between external military candidates, veterans, and the company's internal employees.

[The Monster and Military.Com 2018 Best Companies for Veterans](#)

# BEST PRACTICES FOR VETERANS: **ONBOARDING**



Send information about the company dress code in a welcome letter.



Build in tangible goals and check-in points on their 90-day plan.



Plan to have lunch as a team, at a minimum, have a one-on-one lunch with a team member.



Send an introduction letter to the team, highlighting some of the assignments and places the Veteran has been. Be sure to let the team and leadership know what department the Veteran will be working in and the date of their first day on the job. Conduct a team introduction.

## BEST PRACTICES FOR **ALL EMPLOYEES**

- Communicate before the first day, send a welcome letter to the new employee and family, lay out what they can expect in their first week.
- Send the hiring manager a “reminder alert” email requesting these five critical tasks are done on the first day:
  - Roles and responsibility discussion
  - Match new employee with a peer buddy
  - Help new employee build social network
  - Set up monthly onboarding check-in for first six months
  - Encourage open dialogue
- Build a 90-day plan in the first week

## BEST PRACTICES FOR **VETERANS**

- Send an introduction letter to the team, highlighting some of the assignments and places the Veteran has been. Be sure to let the team and leadership know what department the Veteran will be working in and the date of their first day on the job. Conduct a team introduction.
- Send information about the company dress code in a welcome letter.
- Build in tangible goals and check-in points on their 90-day plan.



# QUESTIONS TO ASK



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- ✓ Have you developed a plan for newly hired Veteran's first week of employment?
  - ✓ Is there anything the hiring manager needs to support the "reminder alert" email?
  - ✓ Did you develop a 90-day plan template that can be used universally?
  - ✓ Based on the introductory letter, does anyone on the team have points of common ground with the new Veteran hire?
  - ✓ Have you calendared the 90-day check-in points to ensure dedicated time?
  - ✓ Did you define clearly what the dress code is? If there is a special item like company Friday, did you send a shirt to the new hire?
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# DID YOU KNOW

**Military formality can create distance rather than respect:**

Veteran new hires should be prepped on what military formalities do and do not align with the corporate culture.

**Vets are used to being mission NOT profit driven:**

Working for a government entity for most of their career, Veterans are often not aware of the nuances of for-profit organizations.

# TALENT DEVELOPMENT KEY FACTORS

**These seven factors will ensure your talent development processes are lasered into the needs of the business and your veteran and civilian employees.**

- ✓ Identify clear talent development vision, values, and goals that support your business objectives.
- ✓ Build an end-to-end talent development framework that serves as the programmatic roadmap for how you attract, build and retain talent.
- ✓ Administer a talent gap assessment that serves as the baseline of near-term competencies and actions that need to occur to shore up immediate gaps and guide long-term talent investments.
- ✓ Create a talent succession plan model that defines the roles, responsibilities and demonstrated capabilities needed for advancement.

- ✓ Implement an employee engagement program that measures perceptions of the workforce and provides data to leadership on the true pulse of the culture and the workforce.
- ✓ Commit to a diversity and inclusion strategy that promotes balanced hiring and development.
- ✓ Deliver an HR talent and tools assessment to assess if you have the internal capabilities to execute, maintain and measure against your talent management goals over time.

## BEST PRACTICES FOR **ALL EMPLOYEES**

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- Secure C-suite buy-in for your talent management strategy.
- Provide standardized talent review and feedback processes.
- Increase visibility of talent management initiatives.

## BEST PRACTICES FOR **VETERANS**

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- Be able to say what's next. Share opportunities for further development, training and certification, opportunities to expand, move, repurpose or refocus as needed.
- Take the time to develop Veterans to get the right mix of experience, skills and personal qualities to assume additional organizational responsibilities and leadership.
- Provide early, frequent and informal performance feedback.



# QUESTIONS TO ASK



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- ✓ Is the entire C-suite on board with the recommended talent strategy?
  - ✓ Does your current talent review and feedback process effectively support talent strategy model?
  - ✓ Who has visibility of talent management initiatives? Is that enough?
  - ✓ Are leaders aware of required training and certifications required to advance in careers?
  - ✓ What are the development opportunities to position talent for increased responsibilities?
  - ✓ Are there identified committed times for performance feedback placed on the calendar?
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# TALENT ACQUISITION CASE STUDY: **SHELL OIL**



## Attributes

- **Rotational experience**
- **Professional development**  
(enlisted and officer)

## Narrative

Shell Oil has created “Career Transition Opportunity” (CTO), a unique program that aids the transition of top-performing JMOs with four-year degrees and less than six years of military or private-sector experience from the military into corporate life at Shell. CTO combines on-the-job learning, training for recognized professional qualifications, personal development programs, and direction and support to assist JMOs with their transition.

The program is high-touch and participants benefit from personal mentoring and executive-level support. Such a model practically dictates limitations on scalability. The current program is focused on military officers, and the applicability of the model to prior enlisted employees is clear, but untested in the context of GE’s experience.

[Talent Development \(Business case\) Leading Practices Model: General Electric – Junior Officer Leadership Program](#)

## BEST PRACTICES FOR **ALL EMPLOYEES**

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- Develop unstructured opportunities for employees to move to different locations on project basis early on, add value to the community and then come back.
- Put in place an internal job market by using a common platform for both local and international opportunities.
- Dedicate 20% of employee time to side projects or testing waters with different roles.

## BEST PRACTICES FOR **VETERANS**

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- Throughout the rotational process provide broad-based experience, but also assign the veteran specific tasks that are meaningful related to the organization's mission.
- Foster personal development by integrating mentoring and coaching throughout the rotational assignments that provides valuable contacts and experience that accelerate the development of technical skills, awareness and acclimation to the culture of the company.
- Consider how certifications and credentials obtained in the military can be relevant to credentialing requirements needed for professional development, including those specific to any departments participating in the rotation.

# QUESTIONS TO ASK



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- ✓ Are you giving employees opportunity to compete for positions before external posting?
  - ✓ What is the risk appetite to facilitate employees stretching themselves with different roles?
  - ✓ Can we support project-based rotations in different locations?
  - ✓ Who do we have that would bring value as a coach or mentor during Veteran's rotating assignments?
  - ✓ Have we mapped and given credit for military certifications and credentials?
  - ✓ What specific requirements and goals are assigned that clearly related to the mission statement?
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# CONSIDER FOR YOUR **VETERAN EMPLOYEES:**

- ✔ **Employer investment improves matching**
- ✔ Be knowledgeable of the relationship between military skills and civilian workforce skills
- ✔ Offer workforce development opportunities to veteran employees
- ✔ Offer workplace support, such as veteran-specific employee resource groups.

## **ACCOMMODATIONS**

Despite laws to aid persons with disabilities in gaining employment, veterans with a service-connected disability are still having trouble getting and retaining jobs.

## **FAMILY MEMBERS**

To aid in reducing challenges to a veteran's transition to the civilian workforce, continue expanding job opportunities for both veterans and their family members.





# TALENT ACQUISITION CASE STUDY: **SODEXO**



## Attributes

- Greater employee engagement and retention
- Lower talent acquisition costs

## Narrative

Internal mobility has now become ingrained in the Sodexo USA's culture and business practice. Moreover, it has contributed to making the organization an attractive employer, as recent graduates as well as current employees know that there is tremendous focus on professional development and that the company offers endless opportunities.

However, the process to take the company from traditional sourcing to cross-divisional internal hiring and promotions wasn't established overnight. Hiring managers hadn't expected to source internally all of a sudden; rather, the process was gradually implemented in a number of stages to become a highly valued program that has benefited Sodexo through enhanced employee engagement and retention.

Adapted from Sodexo USA. (2014). Best Practice Case Study of Internal Mobility.

# NEED MORE SUPPORT?

CHECK OUT THESE RESOURCES FROM THE VETERANS AT WORK DIGITAL TOOLKIT:

## EMPLOYER READINESS:

**U.S. Chamber Of Commerce Foundation**

Hiring Veterans and Military Spouses:  
A Workbook for Employers

**Institute for Veterans and Military Families**

Revisiting the Business Case  
for Hiring a Veteran

## TALENT ACQUISITION:

**U.S. Department of Labor**

Employer Guide to Hiring Veterans

## HIRING AND ONBOARDING:

**JPMorgan Chase**

Pathfinder Playbook

## DAV

The Veteran Advantage: The DAV Guide to  
Hiring and Retaining Veterans with Disabilities

## TALENT DEVELOPMENT:

**USAA**

Veteran Mentor Program

Department of Defense Skill Bridge Program

## TALENT MOBILITY:

**Cornerstone**

Using Talent Mobility to Bring Out the  
Best in Employees and Your Organization

**USAA**

Veteran Empowerment Case Studies