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Veteran Career Connection

Helping veterans connect to companies and careers

A plan for helping veterans reintegrate into the workplace by connecting on their culture and experiences, beyond their resume, skills or certifications. This plan presents workable solutions that will help companies connect to veterans using talent they already have in place, fellow veterans.

Alan Hill

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Veterans serving their company like they served their country

Today's Veteran Challenge

Today's service members are returning to an improving employment situation. The challenges they face are well known in job search - such as not having a resume that speaks to civilian skill sets, not understanding what careers they are qualified for (especially infantry soldiers) and not being certified with the necessary civilian certifications to perform similar jobs to their military experience (IE: transportation, medical and computers).

Unfortunately, these 'traditional' career challenges are not the most significant ones service members face upon returning to civilian life. In fact, there are greater challenges for career reintegration that go beyond not having a resume or not having a civilian certification. These challenges are cultural in nature. They set the tone for the difference between a military professional and his or her civilian counterpart. These challenges can prevent veterans from engaging in a traditional job search. As a result, they miss out on opportunities and companies that are seeking them for their 'undefined' qualities. Military service members do have a definition of it; they have a code of honor and a culture they find sorely lacking in today's employment opportunities.

Often veterans do not have a sense of their mission, value or cohesion in the workplace.

As a result, there is no sense of connection for military personnel reentering the civilian employment market.

Many of today's service members may come back and feel somewhat 'disconnected' from their former life, their former friends and their previous career. This is true for National Guard troops as well. When a military person leaves the service, they can lose their sense of camaraderie, connection and context. They can feel alienated and alone because they are leaving behind the things that give them influence, authority and purpose. Often veterans do not have a sense of their mission, value or cohesion in the workplace.

I have counseled several Full Time and National Guard Troops who are not seeking a job so much as they are seeking significance and meaning in their next employment. Veterans benefit from having someone available who has an understanding of their unique point of view and has successfully made the transition inside the workplace. Veterans helping veterans.



This service is provided by DEED through the counseling from the Veterans Employment Representatives. Unfortunately, often times so much focus is put only on resumes and online job search that little time is left for communicating on value, accomplishments and finding a culture match in a new job context.

Value is considerably different than skills. Skills are how a person creates value. Value is the direct benefit their chain of command receives as a result of their skills. In the Bloomington WorkForce Center we focus on two things when counseling veterans; First: identifying their value and translating it into benefits. Second: helping them identify the key drivers for their success, what do they feel they need to do and be in their next job to be significant, not just successful.

Veterans don't find any explanation of 'significance' in typical job postings and since they have no one to talk to about the experience at the company, they may find it easier to not respond to the traditional job postings and instead seek employment elsewhere.

Furthermore, traditional HR professionals and HR departments are not prepared or equipped to properly recruit military veterans, because they insist on recruiting for skills, instead of looking for people who match their culture. As an example, virtually every job posting has a list of skills based qualifications but they do not provide a point of contact (or contacts) for people to inquire about the cultural aspects of the company. They don't recruit through culture, only on skills and experience.

The result is several companies have initiatives to 'hire veterans' – just like everyone else, and they wind up with a lackluster response from military service

members. Eventually these companies may be at a loss to understand why veterans don't respond to their job postings. It's because they failed to connect to the service member and convince them that they would have an opportunity to continue their service and continue being a part of something greater. They have no examples of veterans that have successfully transitioned because they often don't know who they are. Nor are they generally aware of the cultural transition challenges veterans face, often alone.

I predict veteran unemployment will continue to remain higher than average because we aren't dealing with all the challenges veterans face in finding employment - unless we develop a network for service members to 'plug into'. A group that allows them to reintegrate into the civilian workforce and be understood by veterans who have 'been there, done that'.

These groups can and should do more than simply serve as a counseling group or a rap session. These groups should demonstrate real workplace value. They should serve their companies like they served

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their country; taking on the toughest company challenges with honor, distinction, adaptability and commitment.

Action Plan:

The three point plan for solving the veteran unemployment problem uses simple steps that are already available and are targeted at 3 areas: HR, Employees and Government services.

1. Company HR Departments should start using the recruiting process for executives for veterans. This is a better model that would result in greater success attracting and recruiting veteran talent.
2. A veteran career network called “Corporate Allies” <http://www.srkinc.com/corporateallies.pdf>. Patterned similar to the already existing employee affinity groups (sometimes called Employee networks). They typically are a part of the company’s diversity programs.
3. Government support – DEED can initiate marketing to service members and veterans about understanding where they are coming from and serving as a ‘first point of contact’ for career re-entry. Veterans can now be counseled on how to translate their accomplishments into corporate value.

HR Recruiting

Company HR Departments already have a process that results in attracting the top talent – it is the same they use for executive search. This process includes steps like researching candidates, determining what package of benefits would attract each prospect and most importantly, identifying the culture and values match. Candidates are assigned a point of contact (usually a retained executive search consultant) that is available to answer questions about the company. This results in the candidate feeling appreciated and valued, something that veterans and military members are looking for in their job search but do not find in typical job postings.

We propose this contact person be a veteran from the veteran employee affinity group.

A veteran career network

This network would serve many purposes, as varied as the missions assigned by the leadership at the companies they work for. Primarily this veteran career network would develop inroads, connections and contacts at all levels of leadership and operations in a variety of companies. This network would be an affinity group based on the affinity of having served in the military.

This group would perform 2 main functions 1. Serve as a point of contact for recently separated service members into companies, serving as a mentor and liaison for the newly separated service member, assisting in the recruiting efforts of the HR executive recruiting team. 2. Serve on executive appointed missions to resolve company problems, improve operations and deliver results. This is the key to a successful *veteran* affinity group because veterans are ‘hard wired’ to seek accomplishment and driven to deliver results in a context of service.



Government Services

When viewed from a competitive marketplace point of view, DEED is in an enviable position because they have direct access to the service members returning to Minnesota, marketed and endorsed by several complimentary service providers. DEED already has veteran representatives to help them in their career transition. These people are veterans themselves, and therefore understand the unique challenges of transition from the military. This combination of identified resources with a mission of transition assistance are a huge leverage point in the marketplace. These individuals can provide several career resources such as resume help and interview coaching.

Veterans however, tend to shy away from these resources because they perceive the functions they provide are limited to resume help, job leads and instructions on how to get on the major job boards. They are seeking help reconnecting to their lives in a more significant, meaningful way.

DEED can re-market these services as 'resume plus', meaning DEED provides these services and will help the service member find connection and context to their next significant career achievements.

I have developed techniques for helping veterans identify their value by a series of questions aimed at helping them identify their accomplishments and then transferring them into the context of helping their organization improve its performance. I often recite the slogan 'cheaper, faster, better, more, people' when working with veterans to help them understand that their career in the military has been focused on helping improve the performance of their organization.

Here are the 3 ebooks I wrote to help veterans understand their value, each one available at no charge of course.

- Job Search Process <http://srkinc.com/wantyoufirst.pdf>
- Resumes http://srkinc.com/miracle_resumes.pdf
- Problem Solver Networking <http://srkinc.com/problemsolver.pdf>

I use these and other tools I developed in one-on-one sessions to help veterans and service members find their value. I have found them to be incredibly effective at helping these transitioning service members discover their relevance. Here are some example testimonials that show the effect of these tools in the job search: <http://srkinc.com/testimonials.pdf>

Instead of coaching veterans to eliminate the 'military speak' from their resume, we give them a new way to explain the benefits of hiring them



Instead of coaching veterans to eliminate the ‘military speak’ from their resume, we give them a new way to explain the benefits of hiring them. Here are some example accomplishments that I have recently gathered:

- Saved \$5 Million in logistics costs for Guantanamo Bay
- Being in charge of constructing entire military bases in the deserts of Iraq and Kuwait
- Increased sales for a high end jewelry company \$80 million in 2 years
- Saved client companies over \$160 million dollars in 18 months through LEAN practices
- Provided VIP protection services to the US Ambassador to Iraq
- Provided economic development services including developing trade networks, farmer training, radio broadcasts, wells and more in Afghanistan

The common thread among all of these is a commitment to service, and a dedication to deliver more than what is expected, which translates into financial wins and solid business performance gains.

DEED can position themselves as being highly relevant to helping today’s veterans make a successful career transition if they add to their career services portfolio of resume coaching and job leads to include value coaching and assisting in transitioning from success to significance.

If you have silos in your company, consult your veterans for help.

Collaboration wins

Connecting these groups together will allow a greater synergy of service. DEED serving as an initial point of contact and providing the initial career services, HR teams using their executive recruiting teams to recruit on culture, values and significance, while the Veteran employees give the returning veteran a sense of mentoring, purpose, mission and significance in the workplace.

Corporations get veterans to respond to job openings, and they get them to collaborate across department boundaries and across the value chain with other suppliers, vendors and customer veteran networks. **Veterans can connect across departments and across corporate boundaries because of their common culture of service.** If you have silos in your company, consult your veterans for help.

Veterans find their relevance, a sense of connection and the opportunity for significance and the chance to be part of something larger than themselves. They get a chance to contribute and to serve their fellow employees like they served their county, with dedication, honor and distinction.

To discuss this further – we welcome your call at 612 819 1803.

