

VETERAN HIRING: 5 WAYS

to Expand Your Talent Pool



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We may be looking at the pandemic in the rear-view mirror, but its effects can still be felt. With a labor force that has forever changed as a result, employers continue to find themselves struggling to find candidates with the appropriate skills, training, and motivation. According to [Monster's 2023 Future of Work survey](#), 55% of recruiters say that finding candidates with the skills they need is the biggest challenge they'll face in the next three years, with 34% believing the skills gap is greater than it was a year ago.

The pandemic may also end up permanently reducing the size of the U.S. labor force. Baby boomers have retired at the highest rates ever, and August 2021 saw the highest rates of people quitting their jobs in two decades. Additionally, workers who were sidelined, whether by layoffs, disability, or school closures, may find it difficult or impossible to reenter the job market as their skills lapse. Yet, a talent pipeline continues to provide highly skilled workers at a rate of 156,000 per year: transitioning military.

According to Monster research, veterans are interested in pursuing jobs in fields ranging from defense technologies, to healthcare, to government, and offer tangible technical skills, as well as leadership abilities, crisis management capabilities, and adaptability.

This guide will show you the strategies top veteran employers use to attract, onboard, and retain veteran and military family candidates. You'll also learn how veteran recruitment can help close your skills gap and be an integral part of your DEI recruitment strategy, regardless of the size of your firm.

THE VALUE OF VETERAN HIRING

In addition to gaining talent that possesses a high skill level, hiring veterans offers the following benefits, regardless of the size of your organization:

They contribute to a diverse workforce

Diversity is a hot topic for companies. Our Future of Work survey found that 81% of recruiters want to improve DEI recruitment to achieve their recruitment strategy, and 76% said that recruiting veteran talent is part of their hiring strategy. According to the latest **DoD military community demographic profile**, 31.1% of active-duty members of all branches identify with racial minority groups. This number is even higher among women serving in the military, with **42.8% of active-duty women identifying with racial minority groups**. So, by nature of the diversity of the military, veteran hires will naturally contribute to your diversity initiatives and help to create an inclusive company culture.

You're making a difference

Transitioning from military to civilian work life can be a big change. Making an effort to include this population as part of your workforce can add tremendous value

to your company, and to that employee, whether they stay for a year or forever. "If we can do our small part in helping veterans get a job and transition into their next phase, that's something we definitely want to do," says Ryan Eden, veteran employment program manager at information technology and services company PRISM. "The goal is always to help veterans and their families find jobs. It's our duty to assure career development and growth for them."

They've got the chops for remote work

Now that so many employees are working from home, some of the skills that are innate to veterans really come into play. "They have self-discipline, integrity, initiative and a strong work ethic, and they're able to perform in a work environment where you're going to see less supervision," says Gary Patton, MG, U.S. Army (retired) and current CACI vice president and director for military and veterans affairs.

They're natural leaders

"I think you get some great experience and great leadership coming out of the military, because of the tremendous responsibility that is put upon you right from the beginning of your service," says Charles Miles, director of military employment programs for PenFed Credit Union, and retired U.S. Marine major. "I would have 100 people on my airplane, and I was in my mid-to-late 20s and early 30s."



To find and access this diverse and skilled talent pool, here are some actionable strategies to put in place:

HAVE A CLEAR MISSION AND COMMITMENT TO VETERAN HIRING



It may be stating the obvious, but your company must verbalize your mission of hiring veterans. Building a military-friendly workplace requires commitment, particularly from the top levels at your organization. Having the owner of the company or someone in the C-suite championing the cause, can go a long way toward creating a veteran hiring mindset.

Keeping the progress of their strategic goal to hire and retain veterans at the forefront has been imperative for their success at IntelliDyne, LLC. “Beyond informing the executive leadership team, we report the status of our veteran workforce and outreach efforts throughout the organization. Leadership receives a status report on a semimonthly basis, management receives monthly updates, and employees receive updates at the quarterly town halls,” says a company spokesperson.

As much as a strong leadership commitment is essential to a successful veteran hiring program, the front line of hiring veterans, transitioning military, and military spouses, is with your recruiters and hiring managers. The first step in realizing your commitment to veteran hiring is to include veterans on your search committees, in recruiting, or in human resources. In fact, many companies that are doing this successfully have gone one step further and created teams dedicated to veteran hiring. “Three of us comprise the veteran engagement team,” says CACI’s Patton. “We’re a dedicated full-time resource team, and I think that shows our corporate commitment. We actively seek out ways we can bring military into the company.

FOCUS ON FIT



It's not just about reaching out to veterans. You must also create a climate that welcomes them. If you get veterans in the door, but you're not making an effort beyond recruiting, word will spread within the military community that you're a company that's all talk. Some ways to create a cultural fit include recognition ceremonies in months dedicated to military service appreciation, such as May and November. Some companies incorporate displays like a Wall of Honor in which they showcase veteran employees and thank them for their service. PRISM Inc. has an internal program called Operation Weekend to incentivize employees to assist veterans and their spouses in finding jobs. "They can earn time off and perks while continuing to help our veterans find employment," the company states. Having job postings that are written in a military-friendly way, and having a veteran-specific landing page as part of your career site can be helpful, says Chris Davison, veteran recruitment program manager for aerospace company BAE Systems.

Flexibility is important to most employees today, but it's especially crucial if you're going to support your veteran and military family workers. "Military

spouses are very highly educated and skilled but may be required to relocate frequently based on their spouse's deployments, which makes it hard for them to form a strong foundation on which to build a career. In fact, the military spouse unemployment rate has been hovering around 21% for the past decade, **according to Hiring Our Heroes**. This makes it essential for companies to offer them flexibility and mobility as a way of keeping extremely valuable employees at your firm," says Sarah Blansett, director of operations and strategic partnerships for Military.com. "In terms of military spouse employment, that's one of the most important challenges that we have," Miles says. "One of the directors of our branch operations is a military spouse and I think she started with us in northern Virginia and has since continued to work from Texas and New Mexico, and now she's in Maryland. She continues to maintain her career with us." At transportation and logistics company Schneider, Guard and Reserve members are offered guaranteed home time for weekend drills and annual training, without having to use paid time off. "Additionally, extended benefits and differential pay are given to active-duty military members if they are deployed for up to 18 months," a spokesperson says.



KNOW WHO YOU'RE TRYING TO CONNECT WITH

While you want to focus your outreach on organizations that specialize in helping veterans, transitioning service members, or military spouses, you'll also want to take an approach that is both national and local in scope. National organizations can provide excellent resources for outreach, whereas a local or regional branch can help make direct connections to potential candidates in your area. In other words, use your resources to cast a wide net while narrowing your engagement in a more localized manner. For veterans, look for local and national Veteran Service Organizations (VSO), such as Hiring Our Heroes, Hire Heroes USA, AMVETS and the American Legion. There are often opportunities for employers to partner with local branches as a resource—for example, by participating in career fairs and providing information on job opportunities. For transitioning service members, utilize the Transition Assistance Programs (TAP) on local military bases. These help service members transition to civilian life via a series of classes and programs. Military spouses are reachable via national and local groups as well, such as the Military Spouse Advocacy Network or military

spouse programs run by bases. Attend military spouse hiring events and share that information on your social media channels.

Connecting with veterans and military families requires targeting three distinct groups, each with their own skillset and values. Here's a brief description of each candidate group:

- Veterans have previously separated from the military and have additional education and/or professional experience and are looking for new opportunities to build on their skills and training.
- Transitioning service members are in the process of separating from the military and are looking for a civilian career and may need assistance in job search strategy and skills.
- Military spouses are highly educated and are looking for flexibility and mobility to allow them to continue their careers, even if they move due to their spouse's deployments.

A woman with dark hair, wearing a tan blazer over a dark top, stands in a server room. She has her arms crossed and is looking directly at the camera. The background consists of rows of server racks filled with equipment.

BRIDGE THE SKILLS GAP

One of the challenges for any organization hiring veterans is that many of the skills they've acquired don't mirror traditional job skills. Recruiters and hiring managers are at a clear disadvantage if they don't know how to translate military skills or explain the translation to your prospective employees. Skills translators, like [Military.com's](#), can help. "We know that employers are looking to fill soft skills gaps with what we call 'military cultural skills,' such as agility, teamwork, leadership, and dedication, particularly when faced with an unprecedented level of ambiguity such as we're experiencing today due to the shrinking workforce," says Sarah Blansett. "And for many

recruiters and hiring managers, not understanding the skills that veterans bring to the table means losing potential employees." At Capital One, military experience is taken in lieu of a diploma for some roles. And at XPO Logistics, the company trains their recruiting and hiring managers to understand military resumes and the transferable skills that service members bring to the organization. "It's essential for employers to provide ways for veterans to understand how their military skills can be utilized in civilian positions", says Tim Shea, a veteran of the Army and vice president of national sales at Nesco Resource.



PROVIDE SUPPORT AND RESOURCES AT EVERY STAGE OF THEIR JOURNEY

Shea (Nesco Resource) also suggests that if your company is dedicated to supporting veterans, it's important to be intentional about the culture you offer. Consider establishing a veteran's employee resource group, offer mentoring for those transitioning to civilian life, and even provide flexibility or support for military spouses if their partner receives a change of station. Keep in mind the experiences these individuals will have throughout the job search, onboarding process, and their tenure at your organization, and stay committed to providing support and resources for veterans at every stage of their journey.

One of the keys to keeping veterans at your company is making them feel like part of the team. That means recognizing their contribution to the firm, acknowledging their history in the military, and celebrating their achievements. Intelligent Waves, for instance, focuses on transitioning new veteran hires into dedicated employees. "We make them feel

welcome and engaged," the company says. "Our human resources, finance, and operations teams hold an orientation to introduce hires into the culture. We provide any necessary training needed for the position and offer a professional development program that encourages our veterans to continue to grow, learn, and expand their skill sets."

CACI has an active Veterans Employee Resource Group, or VERG. "We represent all the services at every level of leadership in the company," Patton says. "Our mission in the VERG is to keep our veteran employees informed and help us make impactful contributions to the company." At Dominion Energy, employees started an internal podcast focused on military and veteran topics. "The podcast has guests like the PsychArmor Institute, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Blue Star Families, and Student Veterans of America," says Matt Kellam, military and recruitment program coordinator at Dominion.

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