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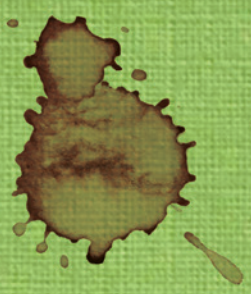
**TRANSITION**

**GUIDES**

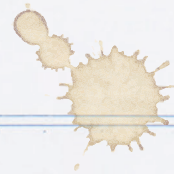
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**The tips you need to get the \$#@% out  
and hit the civilian world with a BANG!**

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# THE MOTHER OF ALL TRANSITION GUIDES

G.I. Jobs | TAP Program

## Introduction

If you are one of the 250,000 service members transitioning out of the military in or you have already transitioned out and you are still looking for help, this guide is for you. More than 20 years ago, G.I. Jobs's co-founders—veterans themselves—celebrated the first day working at a new company and a new mission: to create vital, civilian-produced resources for the approximately 250,000 people leaving the military each year, at no cost to service members or taxpayers. In doing so, they introduced these candidates to civilian employment, entrepreneurship and education opportunities. 



G.I. Jobs founders, left to right:  
Chris Hale, Scott Shaw and Rich McCormack

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## MOTHER OF ALL TRANSITION GUIDES IS PUBLISHED BY VIQTOR

in conjunction with  
G.I. Jobs magazine  
GJobs.com  
MilitaryFriendly.com  
Military Spouse magazine  
MilitarySpouse.com

Visit us online at [GJobs.com](http://GJobs.com).  
Mother of All Transition Guides is published annually by VIQTOR, 333 Rouser Road, Bldg. 4, Suite 503, Moon Township, PA 15108-2773. The inclusion of advertising is considered a service to subscribers and is not an endorsement of products or concurrence with advertising claims. Copyright ©2001–2024 by VIQTOR. No part of the contents of this magazine may be reproduced by any means without the permission of VIQTOR.

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# SECTION 1:

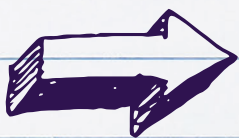
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# TRANSITION PLANNING



# TOP 4 THINGS TAP CLASS DIDN'T TEACH ME

by Bri Cooper, U.S. Army Veteran



There I was—four-year contract fulfilled, gear turned in, terminal leave submitted. All that stood between me and civilian freedom was one more round of mandatory fun—TAP class.

Sure, it lived it up to my expectations: kept me away from my unit for a couple of days, I got to wear civilian clothes, and on most days we were released by 1500. But it fell a little short on Uncle Sam's given purpose of preparing transitioning veterans for the civilian workforce.

Résumé? Got it. Mock interview skills? Nailed 'em. Having the stamina and brain capacity to survive a 3,846 slide powerpoint presentation, should I ever have to encounter such hell in the civilian world? Golden. But, believe it or not, there were still a few things those government bureaucrats left out when they wrote the TAP curriculum. Over the last several years of my post-military career, I've gathered a few things TAP class didn't prepare me for.

## 1. Vacation Days Do Not Equal Leave Days

To say the military is demanding of our time is probably the understatement of a lifetime. So surprisingly, the number one thing I had completely taken advantage of was the amount of time we actually got off. There are no "four-days" in the civilian world. There's no sick call. There's no buddy on staff duty to sign you out. Any time spent away from work is counted against you, and it adds up quickly.

## 2. It's Not as Easy as 1, 2, 3


TAP curriculum, like most military directives, is cut and dried. You're told to follow steps A, B, and C, and you're expected to get D as a result. Military transition isn't the fairytale TAP can paint it to be. You might have a pristine résumé and the shiniest dress shoes in interview rooms across America, but that, combined with your veteran status, does not guarantee a perfect military exit strategy. Be prepared to figure out a plan E.

## 3. You Need to Get Paid More Than You Think

There is a brief chapter in TAP on civilian salary negotiation. PAY ATTENTION. You can easily underestimate the value of BAH, special duty pays, healthcare costs, etc. There's a good chance you'll end up in a jam because you accepted a salary that can't handle your cost of living.

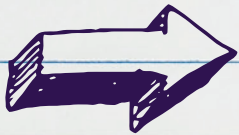
## 4. HOOAH!? Not Quite

Unless you're lucky enough to find an employer who is overly passionate about the daily morale of its employees (in which case, stay put), you're not going to have the inspirational speeches, blood pumping cadences, or the in-your-face motivation you're used to. Be prepared to dig deep for your own workplace enthusiasm.

It's not a surprise civilian life is drastically different than that in the military. The government wouldn't spend millions of dollars on TAP to prepare you for the transition if it wasn't. Use the advice above, similar articles on [GIJobs.com](https://www.gijobs.com), and the valuable information TAP does teach you, and you'll be well on your way to post-military success—where there's a lot of fun, and none of it's "mandatory". 

# MASTER THESE 10 DETAILS FOR A SUCCESSFUL MILITARY-TO-CIVILIAN TRANSITION

by Hudson Saffell



From fashion to conversational politeness, it's the little things that count, and will be appreciated. Here are 10 often overlooked details that will ensure your success as you make the military-to-civilian transition.

## 1. Look the part

Let's face it, people are predominantly visual, and first impressions are clinchers. No need to take out a personal loan to dress tasteful, but spending money on well-made clothing is a great investment. Hate putting outfits together? Let professionals do it for you and get the outfits delivered right to your door. Check out [Stitch Fix](#). For a quick lesson on how colors of clothes matter, don't miss our [article on how to ramp up your wear more visually](#). I highly recommend mastering the art of business casual and you can learn more by reading: [Out of Military Uniform: What the Heck is Business Casual](#).

## 2. Talk the part

It's a fact that most human vocabularies are not as expansive as they once were, but no need to study a dictionary or thesaurus (unless you thought the latter was a species of dinosaur); there are a few simple ways to express yourself without sounding like average Joe or Jane. For example, when someone asks you how you are, the reply: "I am well, thanks, and you?" versus "I'm good..." sounds a whole lot better—and arguably, grammatically correct. After swapping "well" for "good," you'll notice how many other people will adopt "well" after hearing your smoother rendition. There are an onslaught of common speaking

mistakes that we make on a daily basis, and even more—often brash—dialects (say NO to Yosemite Sam) and colloquialisms. The more you can clean up your vocab, and manner of speaking (say YES to Miss Manners) the smoother you'll sound. And don't forget to [kick that military jargon to the curb!](#)

## 3. Ask people questions

People—not Google. For those who have been on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan, you know how important elders are to local communities; why not in America? Remember to respect those who have been on this earth longer than you; they might just know a thing or two—learn from

them! Talking to people is an art in and of itself, and it's in your best interest to improve it. One of the best ways to begin a conversation is simply ask a question. You'll be surprised how much you can learn from other humans face to face.

## 4. Show interest

Believe it or not, this can be as simple as listening. Everyone wants to squeeze their thoughts in a conversation, but if you fail to show interest—through active listening—and try to control the conversation, others will become disinterested in what you've got to say entirely. Find patience, listen, and show (don't tell) that you care.



## 5. Relax

It's contagious! You've put in application after application and have set up accounts on recruiting portals that you didn't even know existed. You're losing steam and starting to think you may never actually find a job. What are you supposed to do now? Relax and read [5 Ways to Stay Positive During Your Job Search on GIJobs.com](#).

## 6. Read

It's a proven fact that reading not only broadens your brainpower—and vocabulary—but also increases your chances for success. If your new line of work involves writing, it's like the poet Ezra Pound said: "To write well, read well." You've seen the lists from the Huffington Post and BuzzFeed: "20 Books to Read in Your Lifetime," "The Top 5 Books of 2015 That Will Change Your Life," etc. Well, here are the [five books every transitioning military vet should read](#).

## 7. Watch documentaries

Not a big reader? No big deal. Thanks to the swell of documentaries and podcasts ready and waiting, you can learn just about anything you'd like. Engaging in conversations about history, current events and progressive thought makes for great ice-breaking in a job interview; if it veers in that direction, be ready for it.

## 8. Exercise

The ancient Greek philosophers were keen on exercising the mind, but a close runner-up was physical fitness. Get your gym on; or at least take walks (walking is actually the best form of exercise for "bipedalers" like us). If you did land a career and want to stay Army Strong, fitting in fitness at work can be a challenge for all of us at times, especially if you have a desk job. Here are a few amazing things you can do for yourself and your waistline, all while increasing your


personal productivity at work. Read [5 Ways to Fit Fitness in at Work on GIJobs.com](#) for exercises you can do even if you have a cubicle desk job.

## 9. Don't settle

This happens to people way too much, and often, once realized, it's too late. "It's never too late" or "better late than never" are not the most logical or realistic expressions. If you want to be happy and remain happy, you must first be happy with yourself—which can't happen if you settle for anything less than what makes you happy. And when it comes to choosing a career, this is a hallmark. For more advice, see [For Love or Money? Choosing Your Career on GIJobs.com](#). We aren't here just to get you a job. Though we do have the best [career resources for veterans](#) on writing a résumé, getting an interview and accepting a job offer, we also cover everything you need to know about the

corporate environment and progressing in your career. We got your back the whole way through.

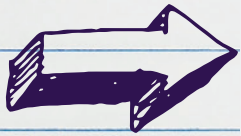
## 10. Manage your time

All told, there isn't much you can accomplish if you don't learn time management. This may seem like a no-brainer to veterans, but civilian life is a creature of a different color, and time will pass you by if you don't get a handle on time. Make the most of every minute and try your best to make them regret-free, but keep in mind that life is about making choices, and often, making a decision is better than not making one at all. Even if it turns out to be the wrong choice at least you learned what not to do, versus never knowing either way, eh? 



# 9 STRESS RELIEF TIPS FOR AFTER TRANSITION

by Deidre Grieves



**Transitioning out of the service**, being back with family and trying to find a suitable career can cause stress and anxiety for any veteran.

The pressures and difficulties of everyday civilian life are completely different than those associated with military employment. This stress can be debilitating and lead to trouble sleeping, relationship conflicts and physical ailments, including body aches, difficulty breathing and nausea.

But you have the power to reduce your stress and get on living your life. Here are nine stress relief tips to help you focus and stay relaxed.

## 1. Plan out your day

A regimented routine is one way to avoid feeling anxious and will provide a familiar, military-like structure. Before you go to bed, make a plan for the following day. Include appointments, tasks that you need to get done and a list of goals. By putting a plan in place, you're less likely to feel on edge when you wake up and confront a new day.

## 2. Take a deep breath

Focusing on breathing exercises is an easy and scientifically proven method for reducing stress on the spot. According to the American Institute of Stress, deep breathing for 20-30 minutes a day increases the supply of oxygen to your brain and stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system, which helps calm you down.

## 3. Unplug your devices

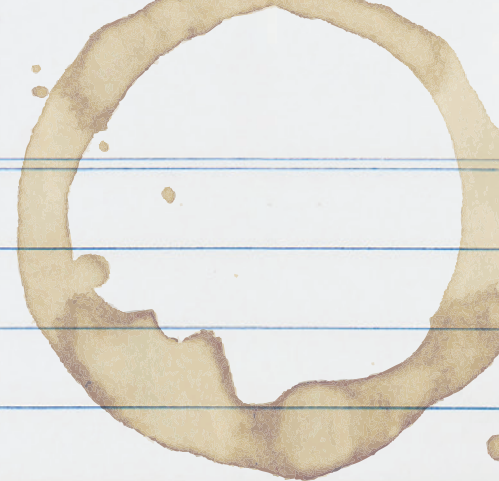
Constantly monitoring your work email, checking for Facebook updates on your iPad and watching television right before bed—all of these things can make your stress levels spike. Research from the University of Gothenburg in Sweden found that the blue light emitted from computer and television screens throws off melatonin production and has a negative impact on sleeping patterns. To unwind, unplug or turn off your devices and focus on having a meaningful conversation with your family or take some time to read a book.

## 4. Get a dog

Got a lot on your mind that is making you stressed? Just spend some time with your family pooch to combat the symptoms. A study from the University of Buffalo actually found that spending time with a pet significantly reduces blood pressure and provides companionship that boosts mental health.







### **5. Go to a comedy club**

Laughter is one of the simplest and most effective ways to de-stress. Several studies have shown that laughter increases your oxygen levels, stimulates circulation and aids muscle relaxation, all of which help to reduce stress in your body. Spending a night at a comedy club with friends, or simply watching some comedy specials at home on television, is a great way to relax.

### **6. Get moving**

Regular exercise pumps up the production of endorphins in your brain. These neurotransmitters trigger positive feelings throughout your body and help alleviate depression and anxiety.

A quick walk around your neighborhood, playing some racquetball with a friend or

taking a spinning class can all have a big impact on your mood.

### **7. Cut back on the caffeine**


If you're drinking multiple cups of coffee each day, it's time to cut back and get your stress levels in check. The caffeine in coffee increases catecholamines, your stress hormones. One study by Duke University showed that caffeine can actually amplify regular stressors throughout the day and multiply the negative impacts of stress on your body. Try limiting yourself to one cup of coffee in the morning, or slowly scale back by adding half a cup of decaf to your mug.

### **8. Chew a piece of gum**

If you're feeling uptight, pop in a stick of Juicy Fruit and go to town. Several studies have shown

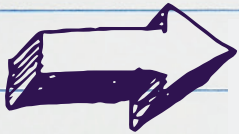
that levels of cortisol, a stress hormone, significantly dropped after participants chewed gum for approximately 10 minutes. Since gum chewing is affordable and accepted in most situations, it is a quick and effective way to de-stress.

### **9. Write in a journal**

Feelings of depression, anxiety and incompetence can easily begin to overwhelm you if you let them. But getting your thoughts down on paper will give you a new perspective and help you feel like you're in control. Try starting a journal to document your thoughts and feelings. Going back through the pages can help you identify stressors and come up with solutions for how to prevent similar situations from happening. 

# WHAT GEN. PETRAEUS WANTS YOU TO KNOW ABOUT TRANSITIONING OUT OF THE MILITARY

by Liz McLean



**I tend to mention that I am** “often fascinated by people, but rarely impressed.” My expectations of others to be well-rounded motivators frequently leaves me feeling disappointed and uninspired at the end of the day.

Perhaps this is a reflection of my own internal critic, but when I look for someone who deserves my respect and admiration, my prerequisite is that the person is inspirational to others and encourages them to be better people in more than just one aspect of life. Bottom line is that it takes a great deal for me to truly respect and admire someone as a leader, but retired Gen. David Petraeus is someone whom I have held in the highest esteem for as long as I can remember. When I reached out to the general to ask if I could interview him in regard to the concepts of transition for our military service members, his response was that he was honored, further affirming my beliefs of him as an iconic and influential inspiration.

With 37 years of stellar service in the Army, Petraeus served as the commanding general for the surge in Iraq, then commanded Central Command. He served as commander of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan before moving on to become the director of the CIA. Petraeus proved to the men and women in the military that you could climb the ranks of success while still keeping up with the other checks and balances of life—one may have to make sacrifices, but self-respect was not one of those elements. The same applies to the civilian world.

The following are the responses from the general to nine pointed questions that I receive on a regular basis from men and women serving who are seeking advice on career transition. Here the general, who now serves as partner and chairman for Kohlberg, Kravis Roberts (KKR), provides us his opinion with candor.

**1. As you grew in rank, was there a point that you started to think about the transition to civilian life? If so, when, and what were your biggest fears?**

**Petraeus:** I did not spend much time thinking about transition to civilian life over the years. Periodically, I thought that one pursuit or another might be intellectually stimulating and rewarding; however, I did not do any serious thinking about what I might actually do in civilian life until after I left government. I then undertook a five-month process to determine what opportunities existed, to evaluate each of the opportunities, and to negotiate the specifics of those opportunities I ultimately decided to pursue. In fact, I have been very fortunate to develop a wonderful portfolio of business, academics, speaking and veterans-support endeavors, and I have enjoyed the new pursuits enormously.

**2. How do you feel the military prepares members for their exit to the civilian world? If you could aid in assisting the programs, what would you change?**

**Petraeus:** I think that the military is doing a better job of helping its members prepare for the transition to civilian life, having expanded the transition course and pursued other initiatives to ease the move to “civvy street.” Having said that, there is undoubtedly more that could be done, including getting those preparing for transition thinking farther ahead and not waiting until their final weeks to explore the opportunities that might be available to them. Just helping those in uniform take advantage of the various online sites that help make job opportunities known, that help mentor new veterans, and that offer various elements of advice would be helpful, too. Those are the initiatives I would pursue if still in uniform.



**3. What words of wisdom would you give to a member to better help him/her be set up for success come transition? What would you say to lessen THEIR fears?**

**Petraeus:** My words of wisdom are actually statements of the obvious, I'm afraid! The key, of course, is to think ahead—and also to recognize that the best opportunities will be those where it is clear the firm will invest in the education and development of the new veteran. In that regard, we veterans need to have a degree of humility about what might be needed for us to become value-add in pursuits that might be fairly technical and, at the least, very different in the expertise required from what we have done in uniform. That's OK; it is reality. And, with time, the attributes, experiences and qualities we bring from our time in uniform will make themselves felt. But development, education, mentoring and assistance will be essential if we are to succeed in many civilian endeavors.

**4. What jobs or assignments prepared you best for civilian life?**

**Petraeus:** Various positions in the military prepare us in different ways for jobs in the civilian world. Some develop or reinforce leadership skills, others provide directly transferable technical capabilities. It is likely, however, that many in uniform will perform tasks in the military (e.g. tank crewmen, machine gunner, etc.) that are not directly transferable to jobs in civilian life—though many of the tasks performed required in those fields require the ability to master various skills—and that ability will help in civilian life, too. So the idea is to develop in a general sense—and to capitalize on those general skills, attributes and abilities when pursuing what likely will be considerably different jobs in civilian life. In my view, in fact, military service provides a wonderful foundation on which to build for the rest of one's life.

**5. What are your views on experience versus education? For some it is almost a badge of honor to not "need it."**

**Petraeus:** I think both education and experience are needed. One without the other seldom is sufficient, at least if one hopes to progress in a particular field.

**6. How do internal military politics differ from civilian politics?**

**Petraeus:** I don't know that it is "politics" that are the dynamic; rather, it is all about relationships and understanding the responsibility one has to be forthright and capable of speaking truth to power in a way that is not "in your face"—i.e.,

that is constructive and respectful and positive in tone, rather than confrontational, disrespectful and negative.

**7. What do you think about "the grass is greener" concept of civilian life to military work life? Do you think one is necessarily easier than the other?**


**Petraeus:** The reality is that one has to truly commit fully to succeed in uniform and also to succeed in civilian pursuits. Life is a competitive endeavor, whether that life is in uniform or in the civilian world.

**8. What words would you say to employers who are questioning why they should hire military members? Why SHOULD they hire them, and what should they do to retain them?**

**Petraeus:** Employers should hire veterans because it is the right thing to do (given what veterans have done for our country) and, as importantly, because it is the smart thing to do (in a business sense, as veterans bring a wealth of very valuable capabilities, skills, attributes and experiences).

**9. Any other words you want existing members to know to motivate them in their transition out?**

**Petraeus:** There is no greater privilege than serving a cause larger than self in uniform—and doing it with others who feel the same way. Having said that, there are innumerable pursuits in the civilian world that are incredibly rewarding, stimulating and important to our country. Indeed, our nation's economy is the foundation of our national power, and those in the civilian world obviously are the ones who construct that foundation! Veterans engaged in such efforts take great pride in thus having contributed to the security that makes our economic endeavors possible—and then contributing to the country's economic growth, especially at a time when our economic growth has been so impressive and is poised for further expansion.

The reality is that military members are given advice day-in and day-out about what they should or should not do as they ready for their transition, but rarely do they receive the advice from someone who has succeeded so well on both the military and civilian side. Gen. Petraeus has seen members come and go throughout his career and has been involved at the highest level of America's government. His tips and humble transparency are words that hopefully will instill both confidence and trajectory as they make their way forward. Gen. Petraeus' legacy of mentorship will last a lifetime. 



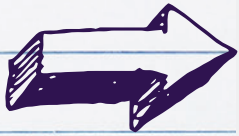
# SECTION 2:

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# CAREER EXPLORATION

# MILITARY VALUES THAT TRANSLATE TO CIVILIAN JOBS

by Glen Stilson



There are a lot of jobs in the military that can be difficult to transfer into the civilian world.

While some of us may wish there were an opening for a tank crew member or an infantryman in corporate America, those specific skills are likely to be left in your past. However, those who have served developed the following military values, usually under stress, and they are very useful and highly sought after in the job market today.

Here are five military values that translate to civilian jobs.

## 1. Punctuality

I will admit that this has always been and will likely always be a weak point for me, but if there's one thing that will still make you pucker up, it's the idea of being late to a formation. Being on time is simply par for the course in the military, and many civilians who have never served have never had to face serious consequences for being late to work. This can give you a real edge when it comes to the modern workplace. Remember: if you're early, you're on time.

## 2. Integrity

This one may seem simple enough, but being honest and always doing what you say you'll do is something that seems to be slipping away in the modern workplace. In the military many of us learned about unit cohesion, and the trust that you need from and give to those you serve with is something that is beyond worldly value. If you can bring that same unit cohesion and trust to your civilian job, the bonds you'll form among your co-workers will likely only be second to the value that your boss will place on you.


## 3. Understanding Chain of Command

If every sergeant went to the captain with every complaint they had, the captain wouldn't get anything done; and besides—what would the LTs do? Understanding how a true chain of command works is something I have found to be incredibly useful in civilian life, from the workplace to personal relationships and family. Figure out what the chain of command is at your job, or the job that you're going into, and use it to get things done more efficiently.

## 4. Teamwork

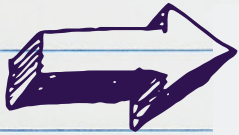
I don't think I need to say a lot here, as being a part of a team is something that we've all experienced. We've had some good leaders and some bad leaders, but regardless of leadership, the quality of your team is what holds it all together. Learning to recognize team members' strengths and weaknesses, and helping them utilize both to maximum efficiency, is a skill that is highly valued at nearly any job. Placing the success of the team above the desire of the individual can give you a strong edge in the corporate world.

## 5. Strong Work Ethic

Sometimes work sucks. You didn't sleep well last night, your dog died, it's raining, the coffee's cold, and you dropped your phone in the toilet at the office. But regardless of what is going on in your personal life, your job still needs to be performed—the mission still needs to be completed. I was told many years ago that the mark of a true professional is someone who can do their best work even when they don't feel like it. 

# FOR LOVE OR MONEY? CHOOSING YOUR CAREER

by Hudson Saffell



## Ah, decisions.

Don't you love them—especially ones that can spin your life in so many different directions? Breathe easy, it's all a matter of perspective.

Making a choice—even if you realize later it was the wrong one—is better than not making a choice at all. Absurd, you say. Well, maybe. But life is all about taking action, and sometimes exploring a dozen career trails is the way to go if that's what it takes to discover what matters most to you when choosing a career for love or money.

Truth is, there's no right answer. In this economy, money matters—and retirement even more. Many individuals desire a luxurious lifestyle and will sacrifice their career

choice for it. If that's what floats your boat (or yacht, I should say), then float on.

Again, I don't have the answers. But I do know that personally, through much exploration, doing what I love is far more fulfilling than any amount of money. The good news for those who are financially concerned is that many careers you love may pay less in the beginning but have a bigger payoff when you retire; you may just be lucky enough to achieve both the love of your career and enough money to retire comfortably.


Overseas—in those areas many of us came to know so well—I used to work shoulder to shoulder with civilian contractors who were making twice my salary doing the same job.

They'd brag, saying, "I'm making 120k a year" and I would reply, "Yeah, well I still have a job when I go back to the States." I was ultimately offered a job with that contractor team post-military (one of several high-paying job offers I've shunned) but turned it down. My reasoning? As much as I like adrenalin surges and austere locales, and money, I love my country and family more. Plus, guarding diamond mines in Africa just sounded like a really bad idea.

Anyhow, I guess there comes a point in anyone's life when they ought to reflect forward. The future (inasmuch as I like living day-to-day on the edge of my seat) is very important, and when you get there—to

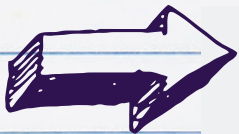
the future—and look back and say, "Damn, I should've done that instead," it's probably going to really dampen your spirits.

And I don't know about you, but when I'm old and gray (well, I'm already graying), I'd like to be in good spirits and satisfied with my concrete career choice. For this reason I commonly ask myself, "Self, what are you going to think—about this or that choice—when you're 80 years old?"

It's food for thought, and sometimes a not-so-perfect job is inevitable. But if you can see past the vacuum of having to make a lot of money and just go for what makes you happy—oftentimes the money will come to you, and then you can get that yacht. 

# HOW TO DRIVE YOUR CAREER IN THE CIVILIAN WORLD

by Matthew Klobucher



**If you're just getting ready to transition,** or are already in the middle of it, chances are you're focused on getting a job. Maybe you're nervous enough about leaving what you've known in the military that you'll be happy to take any job that has the right salary or location. But don't forget that after you've transitioned, there's a career to think about, whether it's in one type of work until retirement, or following your passion wherever it takes you. Here's how to navigate the civilian job world to build a career you love.

Decide what's important to you and your family, if applicable. This is probably the hardest part, and honestly it's not something most transitioning veterans get around to before they leave military service. Let's face it: career is relatively simple in the military. You do what you're told and go where you're assigned, and if you don't like a particular job or station, you have at most three years to suffer before you get something else. Also, military careers usually come with certain "wickets" you need to hit—certain schools, or job assignments. Eventually, you'll get to staff NCO or field grade or warrant officer, and then retire.

There are similar career progressions in the civilian world, but they're harder to find for someone coming from a military background. And transition complicates the picture because it inserts concerns about where you are going to live, which jobs are going to be best, or whether you go to any college. So for those reasons, reflection on how you want to live your life as a civilian is usually something that occurs in the background.

Once you have fully transitioned, however, it's easier to see where you want to go. Are you happy in your current job? Is there a future in it

for you? Maybe you aim to become some kind of senior manager or technician. Or perhaps you look at your company executives and decide that, after all, you want to get a college degree. Or maybe you decide you want a total career change to get to a better place for your family. Setting your sights on goals like that help you determine the civilian "wickets" you need to hit to get there.

Figure out how to get to your goals. This is pretty straightforward. It mostly involves research and paying attention to those who are farther along than you. Sometimes, the next step forward in your company requires some education. If so, maybe it's time to leverage those benefits at the local technical college. But don't forget to tell your company your aspirations and ask if they'll invest in you by helping with tuition. Many companies have education initiatives for their employees and welcome someone with initiative and drive. Don't make the mistake, though, of treating them like a bank. Expect them to demand you still contribute to the company by working a certain amount, and make their financial support contingent on you succeeding in your studies (usually by achieving a certain grade point average).

If the next step is a certain title or position, tell the appropriate person you're interested and ask what you need to do to get there. Oftentimes you'll be given extra responsibilities, or certain performance goals to accomplish, before they'll move you up. Or, if you're in a company that doesn't have a lot of room above you (which is common in smaller companies with established workforces, or with union workers), then maybe you begin looking for a similar position





with upward mobility.

And if your chosen career requires a full college degree (graduate, undergraduate or associate), it's time to start researching benefits, colleges and starting applications.


Don't take a career step back unless it's absolutely necessary. One red flag for any recruiter is seeing someone's career backslide, say from a supervisory position to a regular employee position. Usually that indicates that you got demoted because you failed or because you made a critical mistake. Try to avoid job hopping backwards, career-wise, even if you're tempted by a better location or (as sometimes happens) better pay.

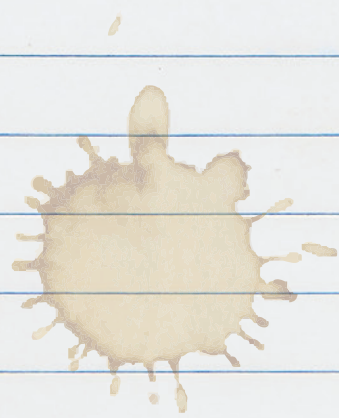
There are a few times where this is acceptable, however. If you're faced with some kind of personal need, like taking care of a family member, that requires you to go to a certain place, you can explain taking a career step back in the future. Employers

will certainly understand that, though they will likely check your references to see if that's true. Also, you can transfer from a smaller company to a larger one as long as the backslide is not significant. For example, you can go from a supervisor in a smaller company to a "lead person" in a larger one because the responsibilities are similar. That's a good career move, actually, because you're presumably pursuing more responsibility by moving to a larger company. But be careful! Moving from a supervisory position in a small company to a regular technician in a large company is a large step backwards and will raise questions of why you moved so far down the career ladder.

Maintain a presence in the job market. The obvious advantage to this is that you can monitor job openings in your area for new opportunities to build your career. But by keeping up an online presence on sites like

LinkedIn and Indeed.com and adding accomplishments to your profile as you get them, you increase your chances of receiving a cold call. Also, by looking at your contacts' profiles, you can expand your knowledge of what's possible, and how to get there. It's easy to ask a discreet question about your ambition to someone who's perhaps a little ahead of you. Just be careful—some companies don't like it if they find out you're trolling for other jobs.

Keep the career conversation open. It's normal for your goals to change as your life does. Whether your "dream career" turns out to be less than you expected and you discover something you like more, or you get married and start a family, your desired career will develop over time. So keep returning to the question of, "Where do I want to go next?" The answer, though it may change over time, will help you build a career that you love. 







# SECTION 3:

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# JOB SEARCH

# 5 JOB SEARCH RULES YOU SHOULD BREAK

by Matthew Klobucher



## Transitioning from the military can be exciting.

You may dream of a steady schedule, no deployments, a break from iron discipline and strenuous activity... basically, just freedom. And if you've been following popular media, you're probably thrilled to hear so much emphasis on hiring veterans. You happen to be a desirable candidate with great experience and useful skills, so this job search is going to be a piece of cake!

Or at least you hope. The truth is that despite a popular push to hire veterans, it can be very hard to find the job you need, much less want. Veterans who have tested the job search markets can say that even with all the goodwill about your service, employers are often confused by your experiences and eager to hire the "safe" candidates: the ones who have done that job before.

But that's if you follow "the rules" of a job search like every other candidate. In hiring processes designed to find "safe" candidates, the deck is stacked against a veteran with meaningful experiences and unteachable skills. In many ways, your best bet is to break those rules and grab a potential employer's attention. Here's how.

## 1. Write a human-sounding résumé

This is hard for veterans because the military is famous for teaching robotic, dry prose. Also, the military strongly disapproves of anything that smacks of self-promotion or style—a consequence of its focus on performance. But you need to be a person to an employer. If you write a résumé and cover letter that sound like they should be read in a monotone, you can count on sending your recruiter to sleep. (Read on [GIJobs.com: Why You Should Write a Human-Sounding Résumé](#)).

## 2. Make your résumé a story

Preferably one that starts with you making a courageous decision to serve your country, and then building a solid base of skills and experiences that has perfectly prepared you for the job to which you're applying. It takes a little authorship, but humans—including recruiters and employers—always respond better to a story than a list.

## 3. Don't be afraid to use the word "I"

Trying to write about what you've done (your experiences) or what you can do (your skills/achievements) without using the word "I" results in convoluted sentences, added words which eat up space, and ultimately a supremely uninteresting résumé. Don't be afraid to write your application documents naturally. You'll come across as more engaged and more interesting.

## 4. Contact the hiring manager about your application

It's easy to hit "send" on the online application and think you've done your due diligence on the job search, but don't abandon your résumé to the computerized hopper of some company website. Find the hiring manager, send a paper copy of your application to his or her work address,

and then call that person directly. Tell him or her that you applied and offer a short summary of why you're a great fit for the job. It's hard to forget tangible and sensory things like a voice or a paper copy of a résumé, but it's easy to flick past a hyperlink to your online application. Make yourself hard to forget so when that hiring manager remembers he or she has to fill a spot, you will be the first one who springs to mind.

## 5. Don't talk about how great you are

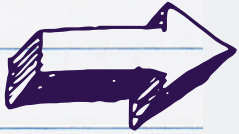
Everyone dislikes hearing others brag, even when they're reviewing an application on which you're supposed to brag. Instead, tell how you can make the business better by identifying the need lurking in the subtext of the job posting. That means research: you have to figure out what is lacking, or not working right in their organization, based on the qualifications they require. With that, explain in your cover letter and résumé summary how you're going to fix what is broken. You don't have to be all slimy-used-car-salesman about it, either... just be friendly, helpful and respectful. That's how you offer added value instead of a boring group of boilerplate qualifications like every other candidate in the system.

Don't let computer automation and check-box-ticking human resources departments ignore your applications. Break the old job search rules designed to elicit computer responses and make yourself hard to ignore. Because once you get to talk to an employer, your veteran status, bearing, dedication and experience will carry the day. ☑

# 5 WAYS TO STAY POSITIVE DURING THE JOB SEARCH

Section 3:  
Job Search

by Daniel Swanson



You've put in application after application and have set up accounts on recruiting portals that you didn't even know existed. You're losing steam and starting to think you may never actually find a job. What are you supposed to do now?

## 1. Believe that something will ... Make something open up for yourself

As time continues, don't be afraid to tweak your job expectations toward what positions are available in the current job market. Simply being a bit more open-minded could be the difference between being employed or not. Maybe you can't get hired directly as a plant manager yet, but with a bit of experience on the plant floor a rung or two down from manager, you can improve your chances of landing the job you want in the near future. By being proactive in tailoring yourself to available jobs, you're going to keep a more positive outlook about your potential job prospects.

## 2. Go full-time

Treat the job search like your full-time job. Get up around the same time every day and set up a schedule for yourself. I knew a kid in college who did this with his schooling and brought his GPA up two whole points during his sophomore year (rough first year, you know how it goes...). It was a completely foreign concept to me, but it worked for him, and being regimented about the job search can make or break your experience.

To fill your time, keep putting in applications both in-person and online, trying to contact hiring managers and building your network of family and friends that are on the lookout for jobs in your field. Perfect your résumé down to the last "t." Knowing someone who knows something about a job is always the best way in, but the next best way in is with your spectacular résumé.

Also, don't be afraid to learn a new skill to include on your now-perfect résumé—a foreign language, HTML, copy editing, anything. Extra points for tailoring the skill you learn to the field you're looking to get into.

Just keep doing constructive things that break up the monotony of having to copy and paste your résumé into a differently formatted box. AGAIN.

## 3. Workout

You don't have an actual 9-5 yet, so this isn't going to kill you. You'll need the stress relief and it will be an excellent base of fitness for when you are sitting for eight hours every day in a swivel chair. And we all know that working out chemically enhances our life outlook, right? Probably more than watching Netflix does (although I have yet to read a thorough study on this).

## 4. Remember why you wanted that job in the first place

What interested you in your job field? Likely the same thing that still does. Don't forget that.

Every single person looking for a job goes through the stage of "Nothing's happening, what am I doing with my life?" For some people, it's a few weeks. For others, it's a year or two. If you have to get a part-time job to cover yourself until you get your dream job, so be it.

It's cliché, and I can't believe I'm saying it, but it's true: Any way you look at it, you're going to make it through and be better off once you're on the other side of the job search.

## 5. Relax

If you're putting your best into the job search, you're doing the best you possibly can. This kind of stuff doesn't just happen overnight, despite all of the people who keep telling you that "something will open up for you, you deserve it."

You do deserve it, and it will happen in time—so don't freak out on your aunt for telling you that every time you see her. 🍷

# 4 WAYS TO MAKE YOUR MILITARY TO CIVILIAN COVER LETTER IRRESISTIBLE

by Matthew Klobucher



**If you haven't done it in a while** (or ever), job hunting in the civilian world is confusing and overwhelming.

There are corporate buzzwords to learn, military experiences to translate into “civilianese,” and even strict but unwritten formatting rules for your military to civilian résumé.

To top it all off, there's the fact that your résumé is only one of hundreds or even thousands floating around the internet ... so how do you even make sure it's read? The answer is your cover letter. These four tips will help you craft a military to civilian cover letter that ensures hiring managers and employers will read your résumé (and probably give you a call).

## 1. Make the cover letter personal

The purpose of a cover letter (besides introducing yourself and your résumé) is to get the interest of the employer so that he/she actually reads your résumé in the first place. And the best way to seize someone's interest is to address them personally.

Although good résumés are specific to a particular job posting, they are also fairly impersonal. Even the catchy paragraph at the top of the résumé where you establish your personal brand is impersonal. It doesn't engage the reader by talking to him/her directly ... so no matter how interesting you make it, you may not convince anyone to read it.

The easiest way to make your military to civilian cover letter personal is to address the hiring manager by name, if you can find it. And make sure to express interest in something business-related the company has done, such as a recent product launch or acquisition, to establish that you care enough about the company to have done some research. It's surprisingly easy to do this via the internet and social media. If you can't find the name of the hiring manager, then you can at least still express interest in the company: “Congratulations on winning XYZ award” or “I saw that you acquired ABC company—you must be very excited to utilize such-and-such capability.”

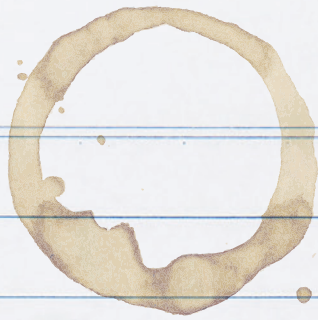
## 2. Sympathize with the company's issue(s)

Because so much of a job search involves you talking about yourself, it's easy to forget that most people don't like listening all that much. The fact that you're supposed to talk about your experiences, your talents and your achievements in résumés, interviews and (yes) cover letters does not make that kind of conversation any more palatable to a hiring manager or employer. You try listening to a bunch of people talk about themselves for an entire work day, and see how you like it.

Being personal while talking about yourself, as if you and your needs are the most interesting thing in the world, makes you come off like a used-car salesman. That's not appealing. You want to come off as knowledgeable and likeable instead, and a slam-dunk way to accomplish that is to sympathize with the company and its needs. Specifically, you want to address the need hiding behind their job posting.

This takes a little guesswork on your part. But if you look closely at the job requirements, you can make out the outline of a hole or gap in their organization. If they're looking for someone with a lot of work experience, for example, maybe they're struggling with the technical or administrative side of a particular function. If they're looking for someone with a specific skill set, you can bet they lack that very skill set.

Once you have identified their need (at least generally), sympathize with it in your cover letter! Something like “I imagine the increased growth of XYZ product has really taxed your customer service team” (probably their production and distribution teams as well) or “I know that integrating new people and skill sets presents unique challenges” shows that you understand a vital company issue. For many hiring managers, just that indication that you are familiar with their issues is enough for a call-back.




### 3. Offer yourself as a solution

The natural conclusion to this military to civilian cover letter is to offer yourself as a solution to the company's issues. This is the easiest part of the cover letter to write: simply tell a story where you solved a problem similar to the one faced by your prospective employer. With a little imagination, you can imagine any military problem that you've faced matching up to civilian problems: how to deal with increased task loads (such as patrols or intelligence reports); how to develop new capabilities (perhaps in response to a mission change); how to get stuff safely and quickly from one point to another.

Remember to tell this part as a story, however. Stories resonate with people much more than facts, and your cover letter is the place to connect personally, so leave the bullet points in your résumé. As a general rule, only include enough facts to demonstrate your success: "After my maintenance unit arrived in Afghanistan, our vehicle pool doubled in size. It was a major challenge, but I helped start a third shift of workers and standardized the category of maintenance assigned to each shift. Ultimately, we increased our finished maintenance actions by 175% and never failed to provide vehicles for patrols and convoys."

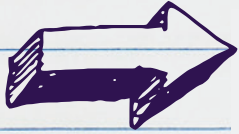
At this point, most hiring managers or employers will be very eager to talk to you. Your cover letter will have introduced you as a person who understands what your role will be, and demonstrated that you will be successful. There's just one more thing you need to do to make sure your irresistible cover letter is read.

### 4. Send a paper copy of your cover letter (with résumé) directly to the hiring manager

All your work, making your cover letter perfect, is wasted if it disappears into an online hiring portal. Even today there is something so compelling about a piece of paper—it's tangible and harder to forget than text on a computer screen. So even when you see a job online, and apply to a job online, go the extra mile and send it in an envelope too. That way you're much less likely to be screened by a junior recruiter monitoring a website. And there's just something irresistible about receiving a personal letter, even for a hiring manager. 

# YOUR RÉSUMÉ: WHAT A POTENTIAL EMPLOYER SEES

by Glen Stilson



## Looking for military to civilian résumé tips? We got you!

Over the years, I've looked at plenty of résumés while in management or supervisory positions. Some of them were humorous, filled with misspelled words, obnoxious fonts, unorganized information, even ridiculous accomplishments (high score in a video game—really?)

Some of them were plain, and thus passed over, with boring descriptions of educational and work history, or an objective such as “I wish to obtain a job that has potential for the future.” Then there were the ones that really grabbed my attention—they looked sharp with to-the-point, well-written descriptions, nicely laid out without too much information, no grammar or spelling errors, and easy-to-find contact information. It was these résumés that got someone in the door to an interview.

I'm not going to write a list of “[Résumé Do's and Don'ts](#)”—there are plenty of those available with a quick Google search. I'm also going to assume that you understand that even the most basic job application (read: Starbucks barista) should always be accompanied by a résumé ... always. What I'm going to do here is go over what a potential employer actually sees when they're reading your résumé. Of course, this is all based on my own experiences, being on both sides of this situation, as well as the experiences of business associates of mine, so take this all for what it's worth. That is, I want to help you get a good job so follow these military to civilian résumé tips.

## 1. First impressions are everything

First impressions also typically happen in the first eight seconds, so résumés with any kind of obvious visual flaws, such as a water stain, a small rip, a weird font, a small font, or cluttered info, are not likely to get looked at. Sloppy résumé = sloppy person = someone who isn't going to get hired.

## 2. Grammar Nazi

I am happy to admit that I am a spelling and grammar Nazi. One common spelling error? I'll overlook it if the rest of the résumé is solid. More than one error, or something that the average person should have caught in a proofread? Hello garbage can. If someone doesn't care enough to proofread their résumé, I don't care enough to read it at all.

## 3. One size does not fit all

When I'm hiring someone new, their future and their loyalty are of particular interest to me, so if they don't know much about what we do around here or what they'd like to do around here, they're probably not the right person for the job. I can spot a “blanket résumé” within the first few seconds, and that means that the writer probably isn't that interested in working with a specific company.

## 4. It's not a novel

A potential employer does not want to read a novel about your life. [A single page résumé](#) is enough for the majority of people out there. If I pick up a résumé that looks like an application for a security clearance, it's a no-go.

## 5. A place for everything, everything in its place

If I can't figure out if this line goes with this section or that one, I'm losing interest. Organization is important in every job I've ever hired people for, and your résumé is the first place to show that you can put things where they ought to be. Like your name at the top, for instance. I personally like résumés with bullet points and some extra lines or “white space” between sections that help me stay dialed in to where I was, since I may be going back and forth from your résumé to your application, or to you during an interview.

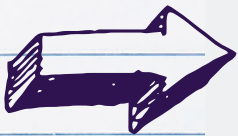
## 6. Boring descriptions

“Platoon Sergeant for 3rd BCT, 82nd ABN.” That doesn't sound cool to everyone; in fact, it sounds boring, and I'm not interesting in boring. “Worked directly with a commanding officer from 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division to maintain a high level of training standards, unit cohesion, and operational efficiency for a group of 40 people.” Now that's better—lots of good keywords in there that show me that you have some real experience leading people and maintaining goals.

Remember: your résumé shouldn't be written to get you the job, [but rather to get you in the door for an interview](#), and that's where you can really shine. What a potential employer sees at an interview, however, is a whole other article. Bear in mind, first impressions are everything.

# 4. RÉSUMÉ TIPS TO HELP VETERANS LAND A CIVILIAN JOB

by Bryan Rollins, Wounded Warrior Project, and Linda Lee, Randstad RiseSmart



Nearly 200,000 service members transition to civilian life every year, according to the U.S. Department of Defense. But many face challenges entering the workforce, particularly when competing against civilian workers with more job-seeking experience.

One of the biggest challenges veterans face is striking a balance in their résumé between promoting their service and highlighting the skills most relevant to civilian employers. To aid veterans, Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) and career and résumé writing experts at talent mobility leader Randstad RiseSmart offer tips to best frame your military experience and tailor your résumé:

## 1. Define your plan and rely on resources.

Before you create your résumé, enter your job hunt with a plan. Decide whether you want to work in the public or private sector, which industries interest you, and who you plan to reach out to for advice. Setting expectations and identifying resources that can help you will make developing your résumé and looking for jobs much easier.

## 2. Highlight experience; avoid record briefs.


Tailor your résumé to focus on experiences and accomplishments, but avoid excessive military language or using a record brief to build an employment timeline. Consider listing a deployment as a single bullet, with an emphasis on the experience, skills, and professional development you gained during your service.

## 3. Adjust your résumé for your audience.

Just as uniforms aren't one-size-fits-all, one résumé doesn't suit every employer. It is critical to do your research so you can create multiple versions of your résumé that are targeted for the specific jobs you are applying for.

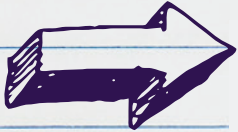
## 4. Simplify training and awards.

While military training and awards are certainly achievements to be proud of, many civilian employers may not understand them. Only include technical certifications and leadership-based accomplishments that demonstrate specialized proficiency or expertise and clearly help employers understand the depth of your skillset.

*WWP and Randstad RiseSmart offer résumé-writing assistance to wounded veterans and their families reentering the civilian workforce. Through individualized sessions, participants receive professional advice from Randstad RiseSmart résumé writers who are former military personnel, veteran transition specialists, military spouses, and veteran employment coordinators. Visit [woundedwarriorproject.org](http://woundedwarriorproject.org) and [randstadrisemart.com](http://randstadrisemart.com) for more information on both organizations. *

# 10 WAYS TO CIVILIANIZE YOUR RÉSUMÉ

by Shane Christopher



**Is your résumé wearing too much camouflage?** Learn 10 easy ways to make sure you are effectively communicating your military skills and education.

Your military service is coming to a close and you want to find a great job in the civilian sector. You know one of the most important tools in your job search is your résumé. Creating a military to civilian résumé that will be well received and understood by civilians can be tricky. Here are 10 ways to civilianize your résumé.

## 1. Can You Pass the “Seven Seconds Test?”

**How long should your résumé be?** As a general rule, target one page for every 10 years of service, with a two-page maximum. Regardless of the length, here is the most important question: will it pass the “Seven Seconds Test?” A civilian employer will go through hundreds of résumés to find a manageable number of qualified candidates. Your résumé must survive the culling process. Assume each résumé will get seven seconds of the reader’s attention. During those seven seconds the reader has to find the key information.

## 2. Think Accomplishments

Companies hire people for their experience, their potential, or a combination of both. If your military specialty has a direct civilian equivalent and you want to continue in that occupation, then highlight that information on your résumé: operating or maintaining gas turbines does not need much translation. If you are not continuing in your current specialty you are then selling your “potential” more than your experience. In either case, how well you do a job is

more important than your job description. Why? Because your accomplishments sell your potential, your experience sells your past.

## 3. Don’t Get Lost in Translation

Much of what you do in the military will make perfect sense to civilians, but there are some functions that have little or no civilian equivalent (e.g. ammunition handler). The significance of being assigned as your detachment’s Classified Material Systems (CMS) custodian will probably be lost on a potential civilian employer. You don’t need to eliminate these duties from your résumé. They are important positions with a significant amount of responsibility. You should translate the position into a language a civilian reader can understand. Therefore, CMS might read “selected by the Commanding Officer to be the controller of the detachment’s classified material.”

## 4. Throw Out the Alphabet Soup

Where would the military be without acronyms and abbreviations? Every OP

ORDER, MOVEREP, SITREP, and MUC would double in length without them. Unless you are certain that the acronym has common civilian usage, **forget it!** Spell it out or paraphrase it in civilian terms. However, one acronym you should not punt when writing a résumé is “K.I.S.S.” Loved by civilians and the military alike, “Keep It Simple, Stupid” is an excellent rule-of-thumb. Too much information will make your résumé overly long, time consuming and probably boring.

## 5. Save Your Ammunition, You’ll Need Bullets

Think of the information appearing on your résumé as ammunition. There is a tendency to present this information in paragraph form, but this makes the good stuff harder to find. If we consider the importance of the seven seconds test, then we have a new use for those bullets. Concise phrasing of your duties and responsibilities in terms of specific accomplishments and itemizing them as bullets on your résumé will enhance the chances of the desired impact.





## 6. Don't Look like a Job-Hopper

Most military personnel have multiple jobs and multiple duty stations during their contract, enlistment or career. The list gets even longer if schools and training are included. Listing every job on your résumé may make you look like a job hopper. Combine similar experiences without paying strict attention to the timeline. Perhaps the easiest way is to use an all-inclusive timeline statement at the beginning of your experience section. Show the reader that you may have had six different jobs in three different locations in the last six years, but they were all with the same employer! For example, the phrase “Machinist’s Mate, U.S. Navy (2013–2019)” is the first line in the “experience” section, followed by an outline of the actual assignments during that timeframe.

## 7. Be Careful with the “M” Word

Guess which word appears the most often on the typical military performance evaluation or fitness report? “Manage” and all of its forms: management, manager, manages, managing, managed. Not surprisingly, the same is true with résumés written by separating military personnel. It is a wonderful word, because it says so much. But for that same reason, it also says too

little. What do you really mean when you use that word? Be careful—civilians do not use it with the same frequency or generality that you do.

## 8. Move Your Rank or Rating, but Don't Hide it


You are seeking a civilian job. It is time to start thinking and looking like a civilian. You may think of yourself as “MM3 Michael S. Ortiz, USN,” but do not open with that statement. On your résumé, you are now just plain Michael S. “Mike” Ortiz. Why? Many civilians have a negative stereotype regarding military personnel when it comes to formality and rank structure. Beginning your résumé with your rank or rating will just reinforce that perception. On the other hand, there is much about your military experience that works in your favor. Some military service members are under the impression that they should completely “sanitize” their résumés, and remove all things military. Going to this extreme is a mistake. There are hundreds of civilian employers that want to hire you because of that military experience.

## 9. Put Your Training and Education Front and Center

One of the reasons so many civilian companies like to hire military personnel is the built-in training and education. Many service members have

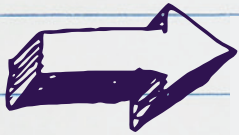
college degrees, and those that do not will often have a significant amount of technical or specialty training courtesy of Uncle Sam. Whether or not this training and education is directly relevant to the civilian sector, companies like to hire educated people, especially those who have done well in that environment. Accordingly, put this information on your résumé where they can easily find it. Remember the seven seconds test!

## 10. Make Yourself Easy to Find

Your résumé must include your contact information. Assuming the résumé does its job, a potential employer will contact you to obtain further information and set up an interview. When it comes to finding you, many military personnel are at a disadvantage. Where are you stationed? CONUS? Overseas? Deployed? On a ship? Under the ocean? Not allowed to say? Unless the answer is CONUS, you are probably at either a geographic or a time zone disadvantage. If you are permitted to do so, make sure your cell phone number, work phone number and e-mail address are on your résumé. If not, perhaps there is a reliable person with access to your personal phone number and/or e-mail account who can act as a relay for you. 

# WHY YOUR RÉSUMÉ SHOULD TELL A STORY

by Matthew Klobucher



As a [transitioning veteran](#), you may be in the position of having to write a Military to Civilian résumé for the first time. And although you may have a lot of help—[Military TAP class](#), [Military Veteran career websites](#), the discarded résumés of friends and family that have been offered up for you to use as templates—you may fall into the trap of including so many keywords and snazzy phrases that you sound like a résumé template yourself instead of a dynamic potential employee with meaningful military experience. Here's why this happens, and how to avoid it.

You're right! My résumé does sound, uh, robotic and boring. How did this happen? Well, it's partially the advice you received, and partially the computers that run companies' job searches.

Let's focus on the advice first. Your TAP class instructors, career counselors and even the odd (ahem) online article tells you to focus on key words and to make sure you incorporate the requirements of the job posting so that you appear to match up exactly to the job. This is good advice, as far as it goes, and you should follow it ... except, remember that you're supposed to incorporate the job requirements into your story and your experiences, not trim your experiences to fit the job requirements. More on that in a bit.

As for the computers, well, they're designed to look for certain key words and phrases. Just like online publishers try to jam popular, oft-searched words and phrases into their articles so that search engines direct traffic to their websites, so do job-seekers cram their résumés full of the most popular corporate buzz words and job requirement key words so that résumé-searching engines return their résumés to company searches more often. This element of the modern job-search is why you get the advice you do about key words and job descriptions in the first place.

However, if you only focus on the mechanics of a good résumé (or [military to civilian cover letter](#), or interview), you will look exactly the same as every other candidate to a recruiter. The bullet

point about military service? It's probably written in jargon indecipherable to a civilian recruiter, and lost amid the repetitive adjectives of corporate lingo. You might need the key words to show up on a search, but you need to sound like a person to grab a recruiter's attention.

Is "sounding human" another way to say "bragging?" No. But in an effort to avoid bragging, many veterans purposefully cut out anything human in their application documents. They restrict themselves to bare facts, trusting that the results of their service will speak for themselves. That's often how it is in the military, which has rigid metrics for success (passing a PT test, for example, or completing a class), and there's a military culture that disapproves of bragging as a consequence of putting the team before the individual. But while you won't often find those virtues in the civilian world, you will find the same distaste for bragging.

Creating a human-sounding résumé is really about presenting yourself as someone who is valuable and likeable, especially as a member of a team. It's showing that you came from somewhere, that you have the ability to contribute (beyond corporate-speak like "results-driven" and "oriented on the bottom line"), and that you can connect with others. It's about crafting a narrative, telling a story through your experiences that gives the person considering your application an idea of you as a person rather than a bundle of accomplishments and adjectives.


I have to write a story? That doesn't sound like very good résumé advice. To put it baldly, the trick is to tell a story through your experiences, within the framework of a résumé. The idea is that you want to use all the right key words and job requirements to prove that you're a fit for the job, but also that you appeal to the recruiter personally because he or she will begin to like, admire and become interested in you. You want to make them say, "This veteran is qualified, and I'd like to meet him or her!" As long as your qualifications are up to par, the level of interest you spark in your application is what will separate you from the rest of the candidates.



This is starting to sound very complicated. I'm supposed to be all "human" and "tell a story," but I still have to use keywords and job requirements? There's an easy way to put this together, actually. It takes a little time, however, and it's something you'll have to repeat for each job you really want when you apply. But it comes down to a couple of steps. Here are a few Military to Civilian résumé examples you can use to land that job!

1. Make a list of your previous jobs. It's easiest to do this on the computer.
2. Look at the job for which you're applying, and see what they want from their applicants. This is where you focus on the "job requirements" part of the job posting.
3. Under each of your previous jobs, list accomplishments and experiences that directly relate to the job requirements. Make sure you frame achievements as times when you overcame challenges and succeeded, and write about experiences as times when you developed knowledge about a subject or a specific trait important to the job.
4. When you are finished, review your list of jobs and résumé bullets and make sure there is narrative continuity. Basically, your earliest job should read as starting you on a path of constant growth and successive achievement that naturally culminates in the job for which you're applying.
5. Write your introduction paragraph as a summary of that story you developed. Make sure you include the most important (usually the most common) keywords and phrases.
6. Rinse and repeat for other job applications.

Wow! That seems so manipulative! It's not manipulative as long as you don't tell any lies. If you get the job, then your past experience will have helped you succeed exactly as you wrote it in your résumé. Another way of looking at it is that you're focusing your past experience on the job you plan to do, and explain what that specific experience actually is.

Ultimately, you're taking your experience and telling it as a story. That story has a protagonist that is more than a jumble of keywords and corporate lingo: YOU. The narrative element and your role as a human actor will make it easy for a recruiter to sympathize with you and to see your qualifications as human traits rather than job-search boilerplate. That, combined with the fact that this story ends with the success of the company to which you're applying, means there is a very happy ending for a recruiter ... which makes you a very easy hire! 



# SECTION 4:

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# FEDERAL JOBS

# WHY YOU SHOULD CONSIDER A FEDERAL JOB

by Matthew Klobucher



**Many service members in the midst of transition** are nervous about entering the civilian job market. The uncertainty of whether or not you'll get a job combined with a complete departure from military culture makes transition pretty scary. But an often overlooked source of jobs, as well as a possible intermediary between military life and going full civilian, is the federal service. Here's why you should look at federal jobs and how to get started.

Federal jobs are everywhere. If you've discounted federal jobs because you don't want to live/work in Washington, D.C., prepare to take another look. More than 80 percent of federal jobs are located outside of the national capital, and they exist in all 50 states. The odds are you can find federal jobs wherever you want to live.

Federal jobs have competitive pay and benefits. The [salaries](#) of federal jobs are often a little better than your total take-home pay, including military allowances for housing, subsistence and special duty. In fact, federal pay and [benefits](#) are competitive with the private sector in order to draw good people to federal service. Also, if you already have a Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) account, you can take advantage of federal matching and boost your retirement plan!

Federal jobs are available. Whatever your politics or opinions, the fact is that the current administration has expanded the federal government. Also, up to 25 percent of current federal employees are eligible for retirement and will exit federal service over the next several years. They will need to be replaced—and if you get in the game early, you might have an opportunity to

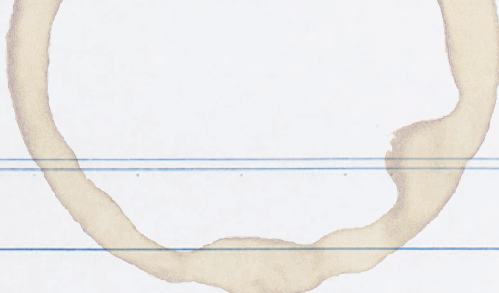
rise quickly as positions at/near the top of federal organizations go empty.

Federal jobs offer veterans preference. There's not much to be said about this fact. It's an actual advantage you have over civilian applicants. Take advantage of it!

Federal jobs are easy to find. It's daunting to start a civilian job search if you're used to the restricted options of a military career. But federal agencies are required to post all their job openings on [USAjobs.gov](#), which is searchable by location, desired salary, profession and more. But while you can apply through the USAJobs website, federal agencies also post the jobs on their own websites, so if you find one that's interesting follow it to the source as best you can. Also, speaking of websites, you can check out the resources of the [Partnership for Public Service](#) and find out what it's like working for a particular agency, or get [specialized advice](#) on how to apply to a particular federal job.

You can network into federal jobs. There is a well-worn path from the military into public service. This is, in part, because the kinds of people who join the military are service-minded, so they're more likely to consider entering the public service. The result of this is that many public servants are veterans, and that makes many federal agencies very Military Friendly® (beyond even the legal requirement to offer veterans preference). If you're interested in one federal job or another, ask your military friends and colleagues if they know anyone currently in the federal service that you can meet. Also, [build a LinkedIn profile](#), and you'll find many contacts in the federal service through your military network.





If you're nervous about asking for "help" or "charity," remember there's nothing wrong with the question, "So what's it like working in X agency? How would I try to get a job there?" A message via LinkedIn can accomplish the same thing, [especially if you write it professionally and respectfully](#). A question like that invites the other person to talk about him or herself, which people in general love to do. And you know how much military personnel and veterans love mentoring. Finally, always take the chance of calling in after submitting a job application in case you can strike up a bond with a recruiter.

Federal "lingo" is closer to [military jargon](#) than civilian-speak. There's no question that the military is separated from the civilian sector by its particular language. But there's some crossover into the federal service, so the culture shock won't be as severe. However, you still

want to [de-militarize your résumé](#) and make sure you tailor each application you submit to the job posting. Federal services may not be military, but each agency has its own "lingo" and you want to apply in its own language.

Finally, applying to federal service requires patience. Federal agencies are legally required to post their jobs for a certain period of time and the hiring bureaucracy must parse all the applications. So there's a big lag between your submission and any calls coming your way. So be patient when you apply.

The federal service may not be the first thing that comes up on a transitioning veteran's radar. It is, however, a viable civilian job opportunity which provides some major advantages to veterans preference, similar benefits and a more familiar culture than many civilian jobs. Take a look and see what's out there! You may be pleasantly surprised. ☐

# HOW TO FEDERALIZE YOUR RÉSUMÉ

by Elizabeth Kalafatas-McDonald



**Résumés are the first impression** a potential employer has of you. They are extremely important, but they can be challenging and time-consuming. “List your best attributes”, “be detailed but don’t make it too long”, “tailor your résumé and cover letter for each job”...the process feels never ending. Applying for federal careers makes it even more complex with the inclusion of military status, citizenship, security clearance, etc. The most important thing to remember when aiming to federalize your résumé is to clearly demonstrate your skills, training, and education and how they match the employer’s needs.

As with any other résumé, make it clean, simple and avoid improper grammar and word misspellings. The style and format of the résumé are more of a personal touch. Just remember to keep your margins set between  $\frac{1}{2}$ ” – 1”, use a standard font such as Arial or Times New Roman and keep font size between 10-12 points. Another thing to remember, minimize as best you can the use of military jargon and acronyms. Instead, translate it for the hiring manager.

Here are some tips on what to include in your own résumé for federal positions.

## Personal Information

This is the section that will list your full name, mailing address, phone number and email address. When federalizing your résumé, according to The Federal Résumé Guide, you also want to add the last four digits of your social security number, country of citizenship, veteran’s preference points and your security clearance level.

## Objective Statement

This section is a helpful but optional addition to your résumé. If included, you’ll want to briefly state what you are looking for in a position, what you offer that position and also how you can assist the agency with accomplishing its mission.

## Education


List the schools you attended. Include the school’s location, your degree title and graduation dates and your GPA. If you did not receive a degree, you want to list the number of credits you received.

## Work Experience

List relevant work experience with the employers name and address, your supervisor’s name and phone number and your job title. Also, the dates of your employment, salary earned and hours worked per week.

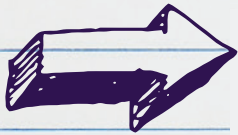
## Awards and Accolades

This is the section where you list special accomplishments such as awards, honors or certificates. Also list if you are a member of any professional or honor societies and organizations and any training courses completed that pertain to the job. You may also list skills and special accomplishments.

Remember to use the Transition Assistance Program prior to departing the service. Their counselors can help with the résumé writing process as well as offer some very helpful tips in the application process. Also use your “Verification of Military Experience and Training” (DD Form 2586) as a helpful tool. It lists your military work experience as well as your training history, making it an excellent tool to fill up your experience and awards sections. 

# HOW MORE EDUCATION MEANS MORE FEDERAL PAY

by Robert Stevens



## Pay schedules for [federal jobs](#)

are determined primarily by education and experience. Experience must be verified, and each job has a set of proficiency requirements that applicants are required to confirm they possess during the application process.

Here's how more education means more federal pay.

Education is cut and dry: you either have it or you don't. Government pay scales indicate how far you can progress based on your current educational credentials, as well as what is required for the next pay grade. There are many pay scales throughout the federal government used to set pay. The three most common are:

- Federal Wage System (FWS), which is used for the trades—either skilled or unskilled labor

positions, or blue-collar jobs.

- General Schedule (GS) is used for positions classified as clerical, the administrative and technical categories, or white-collar jobs.
- Senior Executive Service (SES), which covers managerial, supervisor and policy-makers that do not require U.S. Senate confirmation.

The most familiar of these three scales is the GS, or general schedule, which we will examine here. The GS scale comprises 15 grade levels, each with progressively higher educational and experience requirements. The table below illustrates just how each grade level follows this progression:

Grade Level	General Experience	Specialized Experience	Education
GS-1	None	None	None
GS-2	3 Months	None	High School Graduation or equivalent
GS-3	6 Months	None	High School Graduation or equivalent
GS-4	1 Year	6 Months	1 Year above High School
GS-5	2 Years	1 Year equivalent to at a GS-4	2 Years above High School
GS-6	None	1 Year equivalent to at a GS-5	1 full year of Graduate Education

Requirements for GS-7 and above are as follows:

Grade Level	Specialized Experience	Education
GS-7	1 Year equivalent to at a GS-5	1 year of graduate-level education or superior academic achievement
GS-9	1 year equivalent to at least GS-7	2 years of progressively higher level graduate education leading to a master's degree or master's or equivalent graduate degree
GS-11	1 year equivalent to at least GS-9	3 years of progressively higher level graduate education leading to a Ph.D. degree or Ph.D. or equivalent doctoral degree
GS-12	1 year equivalent to at least GS-11	3 years of progressively higher level graduate education leading to a Ph.D. degree or Ph.D. or equivalent doctoral degree

Every federal job has specific educational and experience requirements depending on the type of position and the nature of the job. Other pay schedules follow this same pattern, but as you can see, higher education leads to higher earning potential with each higher grade level. Promotions from one grade to another are strictly at the discretion of each federal agency, but the educational requirements for each grade level still apply.





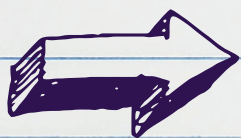
## SECTION 5:

# INTERVIEW HACKS THAT GET YOU HIRED



# HOW TO MASTER THE PHONE INTERVIEW

by Matthew Klobucher



**A common part of the hiring process** is a phone interview, which usually comes after résumé submission but before an invitation to meet with a hiring representative.

The purpose of phone interviews is to further screen the qualified applicants—the ones whose applications, cover letters or résumés stood out—usually with a goal of getting down to a certain number for regular interviews.

Also, if you're applying to a job at your home area while still in the military (and therefore stationed somewhere else) companies may conduct a phone interview in lieu of a face-to-face. This is especially common in industries that seek veterans, such as federal agencies or law enforcement.

It's easier to make a good impression face to face than it is over the phone. So remember these seven things to master the phone interview:

## 1. Don't act entitled

This goes without saying, of course, but between rumors that companies are desperate for veteran hires and the veteran's natural pride in service, former military applicants often imply they are intrinsically more qualified for a job than any civilian could be. Sometimes

this is talking about combat experience, or reminiscing about feelings of brotherhood, or implying that anything civilian-related is easier than what happened in the military.

Remember that you're not being interviewed for your stories. Also, while your military experience might be impressive, it doesn't guarantee that you'll do well in the civilian world. Let your past speak for itself, when the interviewer comes around to it. In the meantime, focus on what you can offer the company.

## 2. Don't monopolize the conversation

The point of the phone interview may be to find out about you and your qualifications, but if you ramble or talk constantly (maybe in an effort to list every single experience or qualification you have) then your interviewer will have a hard time getting the information he/she needs and will probably lose interest.

You have a limited amount of time on the phone, so leave the interviewer room in the conversation to ask questions and explain things, especially questions that spring naturally out of dialogue. Those questions may not be related to hard qualifications, but will certainly delve into the intangibles of

your character, which is where veteran candidates usually excel.

Besides, if you are considerate over the phone, you will come off as more likeable—which certainly helps make a good impression.

## 3. Don't speak in military lingo

Just as you "demilitarize" your résumé by removing acronyms and trying to find "plain-English" ways to explain your past jobs, make sure you speak in concise, plain English when you are talking about yourself.

As a technique, rehearse your explanations of job responsibilities so you can deliver them clearly, plainly, and in few words. This will present you as accessible and a good communicator, and will keep you from talking too much.

## 4. Refer to the job posting

Job postings provide detail about what the hiring company considers ideal in a candidate. You should absolutely make sure the experience you talk about matches the "experience required" section of the posting (also something you can rehearse), but you should additionally bring up the job requirements in your interview.

A phrase like, "I noticed you're looking for a candidate





with mechanical experience. Although I don't have direct mechanical training, I performed the PMs—preventative maintenance—on all the vehicles in our unit” will immediately perk an interviewer’s interest, because it shows you researched the job, that you’re genuinely interested and that you put some thought into whether you’d like the job and/or do it well. Further, even if you don’t meet ALL the interviewer’s requirements, he/she still has a reason to list you as qualified.

### **5. Be professional**

This covers a lot of things. First, a phone interview will likely be set up via email or a phone call. So have a professional email address (e.g. first-initial-last-name or firstname-dot-lastname at website) and a professional voicemail greeting (“You’ve reached XYZ. I’m not available, but leave a message and I’ll return your call”) to nail that first impression. An email like “usmcbadboy19” or a voicemail greeting like “Yo! I’ll hit you later!” will make the interviewer laugh at your expense ... and may make them pass for someone who seems more mature.

### **6. Protect your public image**

Any interviewer worth his/her salt will mine social media for information on you.


Scandalous, crude or aggressively political postings, especially photographs, will make you look immature and unprofessional, and will make your interviewer wonder whether you’d be a liability to the company.

The easiest way to protect yourself online is to jack up your privacy settings so that nobody can see you, but it doesn’t help you get hired. You can use your private page as a “social résumé” by removing the questionable stuff and letting the page display deployment pictures, family pictures and interests.

Those things will help the interviewer feel like he/she knows you better and put a face to the voice on the phone, both of which will make you an easier choice because you seem familiar.

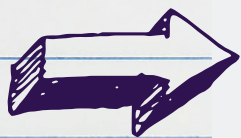
### **7. Be on time**

And make sure you contact your interviewer, if necessary, via phone or email. Don’t text unless they text you first. And if they miss their call, be tactful when reminding them.

The phone interview may be just a stage in the hiring process, or it may be your only interview for a position. Either way, you want to make sure you present yourself as qualified, articulate and friendly. That way an interviewer will feel like you meet his/her checklist effortlessly, and pass you along. 

# 4 TIPS FOR MASTERING THE VIDEO INTERVIEW

by James Payton Jr.



As the COVID-19 outbreak turned the world upside down and introduced us to our “new normal,” you may be wondering how you can conduct interviews during this unprecedented time. Luckily, we’re living in a time where remote communication tools are plentiful. Your interviewer may want to use Zoom, Google Hangouts, Microsoft Teams or another popular teleconference platform to conduct a visual, but virtual interview. Most companies that have the capability to conduct interviews using a collaboration tool will do so. However, don’t think that a remote interview doesn’t require the same preparation as an in-person interview.

## TIP #1: DRESS UP

I know it sounds silly, but you should absolutely dress up for the remote interview. Besides the fact that the interviewer will be able to see you, there’s something psychological about dressing nicely. It can help put you in the right frame of mind to successfully conduct an unconventional interview. Plus, you still have to make a good impression on the person interviewing you. Wearing a T-shirt and gym shorts is going to make the opposite impression.

## TIP #2: PRACTICE

I’m an advocate for mock interviews. Regardless of whether the interview is done remotely, you’ll still need to convince that interviewer that you are the right person for the

job and this takes practice. Before you log into the remote communication platform to interview, try to have someone do a mock interview with you. Take an additional step in preparation and do a mock remote interview with a friend and use the same platform slated for the real remote interview.

## TIP #3: RESEARCH THE COMPANY (AND THE INTERVIEWER)

This tip applies across the spectrum of interviewing. Set aside some time to research the company. Try to get a foundational understanding of what the company does. If possible, find some recent news about the company. If the company just released a new product or made a high-profile acquisition, this is something you’ll

want to bring up during the interview. It will show the interviewer that you’ve done your homework. Speaking of the interviewer, take time to do a little recon on them, too. I know it sounds “stalker-ish”, but it can help. This can be easily done by looking the person up on LinkedIn. Try to find some common ground. Perhaps you both like the same sports team or are from the same town. Finding commonality can be a good way to break the ice if things get awkward during the interview.

## TIP #4: TEST YOUR TECH

Just because this is the last tip on the list doesn’t mean it isn’t important. You will want to check, re-check and triple check your technology.

Make sure your internet connection is solid. You’ll also need to ensure the camera is positioned correctly and the microphone is operating efficiently. Choose a room in your home that won’t cause distractions for you or the interviewer. Do a test call with a friend or family member prior to the interview. Lastly, dial in early. Don’t be late to an interview that doesn’t require driving in traffic.

Remote interviews were already becoming more commonplace before the COVID-19 outbreak. Even as things are getting back to normal, there may be an uptick in this method of interviewing. If you master it now, you’ll be ready for whatever type of interview method comes your way. 📺

# 8 COMMON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS



Having been on both sides of more interviews than I care to admit, I've compiled a list of the eight most common interview questions I've asked and been asked, along with guidance on how to answer them. Note the word "guidance." There is no right or wrong answer. Rather, I aim to provide insight into why someone may ask these questions and what they're trying to learn about you.

## 1. Tell Me a Little About Yourself

**Translation:** I don't know how to start this interview, so I'll make you work at it.

**Guidance:** Give them a two- to three-minute "elevator speech" that starts with insight into you as a person, then moves into a brief chronological synopsis of your education and professional career.

## 2. What Did You Do in the Military?

**Translation:** How does being a helicopter mechanic train you to sell IT systems?

**Guidance:** Tell the interviewer how your military training translates into a civilian job (leadership, teamwork, work ethic, etc.). Sprinkle in some interesting stories from the military. Your interviewer may remember only a few other details from the session, but he or she will recall your stories of teeing off at midnight in Keflavik, Iceland.

## 3. Why are You Leaving the Military?

**Translation:** Are you a job-hopper?

**Guidance:** The interviewer really wants to know. Were you a poor performer? Were you a disgruntled employee or did you get out because you didn't want to leave your family for 12 months at a time? The latter is perfectly understandable. The former indicates someone they don't want to hire.

## 4. Are You Willing to Relocate?

**Translation:** Do you plan to grow roots, or will you give us the flexibility to move you where your skills will benefit the company?

**Guidance:** It's probably worth finding out in advance if the company requires relocation to promote. Be honest. If you aren't willing to relocate, not saying so in an interview will cause grief for you and the company down the road.

## 5. What is Your Biggest Strength?

**Translation:** Are you confident or cocky? Are you a team player? (And I'm setting you up for No. 6, too.)

**Guidance:** You have many strengths and the interviewer isn't looking for a laundry list. Pick the one that would most help the company and illustrate it with an example of how it would help. Make it a "we" answer, not a "me" answer. No one person can affect the stock price, and those who are most successful make people around them better.

## 6. What is your Biggest Weakness?

**Translation:** An intelligent person knows what they don't know. Are you intelligent?

**Guidance:** This is the mother of all interview questions. Everybody has weaknesses. Be self-effacing. It shows honesty, humor and confidence. Pick a negative trait and show how you've overcome it.


## 7. Why Should We Hire You?

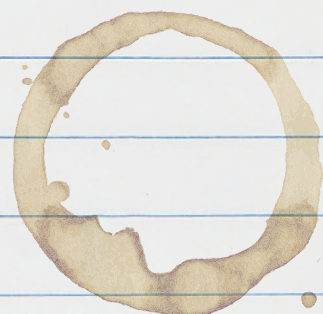
**Translation:** I'm feeling pretty good about hiring you. Just give me one last reason to close the deal and send you an offer letter.

**Guidance:** If you get this question, you're probably on good footing with the interviewer. Sum up your skills and how they translate into value for the company. Reinforce your reasons for wanting to work for them. Portray yourself as an excited employee who will add value.

## 8. Do you Have any Questions for Me?

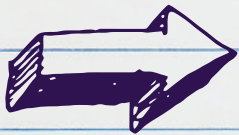
**Translation:** If you don't ask any, you may not have a pulse.

**Guidance:** You should ask more questions than you're asked. If this is a first interview, ask questions about the company, the market, the culture, the work, etc. Save the WIIFM (What's in it for me?) questions for later or final interviews. 



# 9 IMPRESSIVE QUESTIONS TO ASK IN AN INTERVIEW

by Matthew Klobucher



**That application you submitted** resulted in an interview, and now you're ready to land the job. You've researched the company, you've practiced [your interview answers](#) and [set out your suit and tie](#). But is there anything else you can do to get an edge, to further impress your interviewer? As it happens, there is: Nearly every interview ends with an opportunity to ask questions, and asking the right ones will put you ahead of the pack.

Because the purpose of a job interview is to figure out whether you're a good fit for the job, the interviewer will probably ask you scenario-based and some personal questions to confirm your qualifications and assess your attitude. However, there's a subconscious element too: If your interviewer likes you and responds well to you, he or she is likely to give you a much better score or recommendation than otherwise.

Interviewers tend to follow a script—asking the same questions helps make the process fair to all applicants—so there are limited opportunities for you to shine. But when the interviewer asks, “Do you have any questions for me?” then you have an opportunity to shine. Use it to show yourself as engaged, eager and a good (potential) co-worker. Failing to ask any questions makes you look uninterested and uninteresting (not to mention even lazy and/or entitled).

Also, asking thoughtful, interesting questions will lead the interviewer to invest in you by providing answers, and maybe even confide in you a little bit, which helps the relationship between you and your interviewer feel like, well, a relationship. The interviewer will subconsciously remember that positive connection with you when crafting his/her recommendations to the higher-ups. Here are nine impressive questions to ask in an interview:

## 1. “How long have you worked here? What do you like most about it?”

Obviously, if the interviewer has introduced him/herself and already told you how long they've worked with the company, skip that part. But the second part of the question lets the interviewer talk about him or herself (and who doesn't enjoy that?) and lets you know whether employees enjoy working there.

## 2. “Where else have you worked in the company?”

The word “else” is in this question because most interviewers will tell you their current job as a way to introduce themselves. Obviously, if they haven't told you where they work, just ask them. The answer can provide some insight into the broader culture of the company and provoke good follow-up questions like, “Which job was your favorite?” Ultimately, this question will give you a good sense of the company while letting the interviewer connect with you by talking about him or herself, building more rapport between you and maybe a more positive impression.

## 3. “How do you respond when an employee comes up with a good idea?”

It's important to ask this question innocently, because if you're not careful it will come off like a challenge. But it's an invitation to the interviewer to explain a bit of the company culture, namely how it values and responds to employees, and makes you seem like you're ready to start improving things right off the bat.

## 4. “Is there much opportunity for overtime?” or “Do you keep things running during weekends?”

Tailor this question to the type of job in question. “Overtime” applies to workers who earn an hourly wage, weekend work to salaried employees. It will make a big difference in your quality of life, so it falls in the category of things important to you. But this is the question of someone interested in the job.



### 5. “What are my advancement opportunities in the long-term?”

You probably want to add the “in the long-term” part because otherwise this question could be taken to mean you’re not satisfied with the job at stake in the interview (you may not be, of course, but don’t tell the interviewer that!). But this is another question that shows you’re thinking of committing to the job, because you’re thinking about an extended future with the company.

### 6. “Is there a chance I’ll be relocated?”

This is another question that shows interest in the company as a long-term career, and it’s good to know if you just completed your final PCS.

### 7. “Am I replacing someone? What happened to them? What did you like best about their work?”

These questions will provide some free mentoring upfront, along with an idea of the actual expectations of the job (as contrasted with the on-paper expectations of the job posting). Of course, you might get, “I’m not comfortable talking about that,” which usually means the former job occupant was fired, or they were promoted, which allows

you to follow up with a question about advancement. Either way, good information to have, and good searching questions from someone serious about succeeding in the job.

### 8. “What are common mistakes people have made in this position?”

If you’re serious about the job, make sure you note the answers by writing them down. This is another way to get some upfront mentoring, and will impress the interviewer by showing you take your performance seriously.

### 9. “What do you find most exciting about this company?”

A fun, feel-good question that gives the interviewer an opportunity to talk, and which will give you a practical look at daily life working there and/or an idea of the practical goals of the company.


### Bonus: Questions to avoid in an interview

Just as the right questions create a favorable impression of your eagerness and investment in the job, so also the wrong questions can sour an interviewer on you. If that happens, they can find any pretext to push other candidates ahead.

Avoid asking questions (or using a tone) that imply you aren’t impressed with the company, like “Do you have any community service initiatives?” or “Do you use [insert specialized software or system] at this company?”

Don’t ask about benefits, because it makes you seem entitled. Don’t mention your minimum required salary. When they offer you the job, then is the time to talk compensation and benefits.

Don’t ask if they’ve employed a lot of veterans—you don’t want to create the impression that you’re looking for a former-military environment, because they want someone to integrate into their culture, not impose another.

Just remember that you need this interview to result in a job offer, and that largely depends on the [impression of the interviewer](#). What will distinguish you in his or her mind from other seemingly qualified candidates is whether you seem like a good fit. The game here is to make them like and respect you while feeling comfortable that you’d be a good addition. You have a lot more leverage for negotiation when they finally offer you the job. 

# 3 THINGS YOU SHOULD NEVER ASK IN AN INTERVIEW

by Deidre Grieves



The interview process is a two-way street. The interviewer wants to find out about you and whether you will be a good fit for the position, but as a candidate up for the role, you should also be prepared to ask questions to figure out if the company is somewhere you want to work.

Prepping in advance and coming into the interview prepared to ask some essential questions is encouraged and expected by most companies, but there are a few things you should steer clear of asking altogether.

Here are three questions you should never ask in an interview:

## 1. “What does your company do?”

If you want the employer to kick you to the curb and disqualify you from the hiring process, this is the question that will do it. Companies expect applicants to do basic research about the company and come in with a general understanding of what the company does.

If you do research in advance of the interview, it shows that you’re willing to take initiative. It also proves that you’re interested in the position and the company rather than just getting a job anywhere.

## 2. “Will you check my Facebook page?”


If you’re worried about whether or not a potential employer is going to see your social media

accounts, you’re probably already at a disadvantage. Chances are, the interviewer will check your Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn accounts prior to meeting you or shortly after the interview. By asking whether or not the company will check social media accounts, you’re already admitting to some kind of incriminating behavior.

If you are searching for a job, make sure to comb your social media pages in advance and remove photos, posts, or interactions that may be detrimental to your job search. If you don’t want to delete items or accounts, set your privacy settings so that you have control over who sees what.

## 3. “What’s the salary?”

Although the salary associated with a specific position is one of the most important things to consider when deciding whether to accept a new job, it is never a good idea to bring up money during a first interview. You want to avoid sounding greedy.

Most companies will ask you for salary requirements with your application. If you get a call back for an interview, the job likely fits within your range. Find out about the company first, make the interviewer aware of your credentials and what you would bring to the table, and save the salary discussion for the second or final interview. 



# 3 WAYS TO AVOID COMING ON TOO STRONG IN YOUR JOB INTERVIEWS

by Luke Torrance



**It's a competitive world out there** post-military, and you know that.

Getting a job isn't as simple as sending in a résumé and waiting to be called back with an offer. When you apply for a position on [our job board for veterans](#), the company that is hiring could be receiving dozens, hundreds or even thousands of applications and résumés. In a way, it's like the lottery, except you have to keep working if you win.

But it isn't a lottery because hiring isn't random. There are ways to increase your odds, such as reaching out to your could-be employer. If this is not your first job hunt, you probably know this. There are millions of articles on the internet about how to best write a résumé, who to talk to and how to conduct an interview.

Those pieces make sure that you are doing enough to get noticed. In this article, I will tackle the opposite: if you are doing too much. Yes, it is possible to go over the top, so here are three pieces of interviewing advice for military veterans.

## 1. It's not all about you

You and the person doing the hiring are (most likely) not friends. Before an interview, to him or her you are just a name attached to a résumé. Whether networking or interviewing, you have to tell others who you are, what you can do and what you would like to accomplish, all in a limited amount of time.

But the conversation cannot be entirely self-centered; this is especially the case when networking. Ask the other person about themselves, and their careers. Networking is a professional relationship, and the best way to form a relationship of any kind is to ask about the other person and be genuinely interested. You might even pick up some free advice.

When it comes to interviews, ask about the company and the position that you are trying to fill. If you only talk about yourself, you will come across as someone who cares more about themselves than the company.

## 2. Give them time

One way to make sure that your résumé isn't falling into an endless pit of paper is to reach out to the hiring manager. Sending an email or (preferably) a phone call gets your name into the mind of the person conducting the hiring, making it more likely that your résumé will be saved from the endless pit.

Some people's fear of being overbearing prevents them from calling at all: this is a mistake. You should definitely call. Ask when it would be the best time for you to call back instead of frequently calling at random hours.

## 3. Relax

There is plenty of advice on how to interview well, and I'm sure that you will have memorized it long before you find yourself sitting in the hallway outside the room where the interviews are conducted.

This advice is good: give a firm handshake, make eye contact and prepare answers to basic interview questions beforehand. The key is not to take this advice as a robot would. You don't need to break your interviewer's fingers during the handshake. You don't need to look into your interviewer's eyes for the entire time. Have talking points for answers, but do not memorize what you are going to say and repeat it. It isn't a play, it's an interview. If you have not yet read our article on [how to answer the salary question](#), you should because they will probably ask and you want to be prepared.

This applies to everything else on this list: don't go overboard with advice. You should talk about yourself. You should make eye contact. The key is not to stretch it to a level in which you seem like a narcissist or unable to understand boundaries. It is a competitive world, but that does not mean you should do anything to get someone's attention. If you follow our advice, an offer will come!



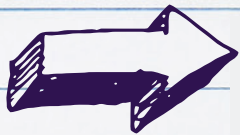
# SECTION 6:

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# AFTER THE INTERVIEW

# WHAT TO EXPECT FROM A JOB OFFER LETTER

by Matthew Klobucher



**When you're offered a job,** you usually receive a "job offer letter" which spells out the job, the compensation and any benefits. This is a courtesy from the hiring company so that you can make an informed decision.

Veterans often take a military attitude toward civilian job offers, accepting the first one without question because in the military, you take your orders and execute. Besides, the salary and benefits are pretty much the same in the military, no matter what the duty station. In the civilian world, compensation can vary widely, so consider these elements of the offer letter well, because they'll have a big impact on your civilian life.

**Salary, bonuses and other forms of compensation.** If you're like most applicants, the first thing you look for in an offer letter is the salary. How much money will you make? However, be prepared to see a lower salary than you're expecting (in some cases). Many companies make bonuses part of their compensation package as a way to ensure full effort from their employees. Or, they expect you to work a certain amount of overtime, which "makes up" what you were expecting. Some companies provide stocks as part of compensation, usually reserved

for you and transferred to your name on a schedule (so you have to remain with the company for a certain period of time to get their full benefit).

In any case, before you get upset or crack the champagne, make sure you understand the entirety of the offer. Then you have to consider if you're still interested.

**Time investment.** Military veterans very often fail to consider the work hour expectation of a civilian job, usually because they have worked long hours during deployments, training exercises and busy periods in their military service. There's also a general perception that military sacrifices are much worse than anything in the civilian world. Unfortunately, that's not always true. And recruiters often target veterans for jobs that are military-like in terms of time sacrifices and field work.

Some jobs require being on call and traveling a lot. Others require (or expect) a great deal of overtime. The military actually offers a fairly generous holiday package (days off on every federal holiday? Absolutely unheard-of in the civilian world, outside grade schools) and four weeks of vacation a year, which lessen the sting of long hours, overnights

and time away from home. Civilian jobs offer nowhere near the benefits, and without the esprit de corps of a military unit, those sacrifices may seem like a huge burden and make you very unhappy.

Don't accept a job without figuring how much of your own time you'll have to invest. And augment the expectations spelled out in the job description and offer letter with a bit of research on sites like Glass Door, which posts reviews of jobs from current and former employees. The commitment may be worth the money, of course, but you'll want to make that decision yourself before saying yes.

**Health care.** The Affordable Care Act mandates that you have health insurance. The offer letter should tell you whether your company provides it, and if so, what your options are. Generally you'll have to pick between a high-premium, low-deductible option and a low-premium, high-deductible option (if not others as well). The decision on which one you'll use depends on how often you think you'll need health care: usually, you'll pay out-of-pocket all costs up to your deductible limit with certain exceptions (like checkups). So if you will be going to the doctor's office



often, choose a low deductible and suck up the high premium.

Also, keep in mind that you may have access to [TriCare Reserve Select](#) if you remain in the reserves. Often that's a better plan and less expensive than what a company can offer.

**Relocation expenses.** If you're going to have to move to take this job, will the company help out? How much will you pay out-of-pocket? You can use your final PCS for a relocation, but only if you have the job lined up several weeks before you EAS. It's a good reason to get started early on that transition.

Considered less often is the commute implications of the job offer. Many veterans are so excited to get a job they sign on immediately, thinking nothing of an hour's commute. But all that time in the car can come at a cost to health and family life. If the offer is more than an hour away from your current house, considering asking for a relocation package from the company. Or, consider whether you need to invest in newer, or more fuel-efficient, transportation.

**Vacation and personal days.** Trendy tech companies like to provide creative benefits like "personal days" and generous vacation packages. Old-school companies often make you "earn" your benefits by working for a year. But if you've got plans over the summer, or an annual trip that you take with you family, or you just want to have time to hunt in the fall, you should consider whether your new job will allow it, and under what conditions. It may or may not

be a deal-breaker, but don't allow yourself to be unpleasantly surprised after you take the job.

**Retirement.** Military veterans often have a lot to learn about retirement. Of course, by exiting the military, veterans no longer have access to the 20-year fixed-benefit retirement. And many veterans, exiting the military young, think they have time to "figure it out." But because most civilian retirement plans rely on investment, it's vital to start putting in money immediately.

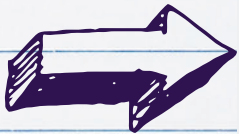
The "gold standard" of retirement plans is a company-matching 401(k). The identifier "401(k)" refers to the paragraph and subparagraph of the federal law that establishes such accounts and authorizes the tax structure. [Visit this article to learn more about these accounts and how they match up with the TSP.](#) Your offer letter should specify exactly how much the company will contribute to your retirement account, if at all, and you should consider that when figuring if you intend to use their plan, or find something else.

Now it's time to decide. Realistically, you may not be in a position to simply refuse a job if you don't like the salary structure, benefits or work schedule. The job market can be tough. But knowing what to expect, and planning for it, can make the difference between a good life and a miserable one. What job you take may influence where you live, what your spouse does or at least how you plan your finances. So pay attention to the offer letter and accept it—or refuse it—with open eyes. ☐



# 5 TIPS FOR VETERANS WORKING REMOTE

by Jennifer Farrell



**The COVID-19 pandemic made work from home jobs much more common.**

Veterans and transitioning service members are known for their ability to succeed in austere environments while adapting along the way. Put those same traits to good use as you figure out how to effectively work from home.

First of all, accept the fact that working from home is a learned skill. During this global pandemic, many organizations had to quickly adapt to a remote workforce.

Collaboration looks (and sounds!) different when you are working as part of a virtual team. There's no "water cooler conversation" in a remote work environment, so you will have to find other ways to build and maintain relationships.

Here's another solid fact. The time you save commuting you will spend troubleshooting. The sooner you get good at basic tech support, the more effective you will be. Remember, everything works better after a hard restart. Also, if you are having trouble accessing a program, playing a video or connecting to conferencing software you may want to try a different browser.

I've worked remotely for the better part of the last 14 years. Without the ability to telework, there's no way I could have maintained a career while my spouse served our country.

Here's a few tips to help you establish an effective WFH experience:

## 1. ESTABLISH A DEDICATED WORKSPACE

Claim your space and make that the place where you go to get in your zone. You may be dealing with physical constraints and a spouse who is also working from home. These factors make a dedicated workspace even more important. Ideally, your workspace will have a door you can close, some natural lighting and good connectivity to the internet. I've successfully established an "office" in six homes over the past 14 years. Veterans usually have awards and memorabilia (an "I love me" wall!?). You might want to integrate some of those items into your dedicated workspace to help make it your own and feel more like an office. With the move toward Zoom and other virtual collaboration services, be mindful of the background and lighting in your workspace. Avoid being "backlit" or your web cam will never be able to calibrate properly, and all your colleagues will see is your silhouette.

## 2. LOOK SHARP TO BE SHARP

Stick to your regular morning routine. Get ready for your day in the same way you would if you were going to the office. Your productivity will suffer if you spend the entire day in pajama pants or PT gear. We all sit up a little straighter and speak a little clearer when our pants don't have an elastic waistband.



### 3. MANAGE EXPECTATIONS

First and foremost, manage your own expectations. It will take time for you and your colleagues to find a rhythm, especially if you are forced to work in a virtual environment for the first time. I remember the first few months I started teleworking—we lived in base housing in Okinawa, Japan, and my desk was exactly 17 steps from my bed. I'm a workaholic, so a lot of mornings I would go straight from my bed to desk and begin working (I was violating #2!). Before I knew it, I'd been at my desk for hours without a proper meal. At some point I realized that I was spending 12-14 hours at my desk, and usually my first real "break" was around dinner time. This is not a good habit and could have led to burnout. Create some boundaries and manage your own expectations regarding availability, productivity and work/home boundaries.

Next, you need to manage

the expectations of your family members and/or roommates. If you have multiple people working from home, you could end up with internet bandwidth issues. Perhaps your spouse is on conference calls all day and you need to deliver a technical edit on a complex document—the two of you will have to communicate about who needs what, and when.

Finally, turn to the expectations of your organization. If you are leading a team through this time you will need to work with each member to establish expectations. Clearly communicate about your expectations and be sure to listen to the employee's needs. You will need to manage the expectations of your supervisors, as well.

### 4. FIND YOUR RHYTHM

One of the advantages to remote work is that you have more control over your schedule. Figure out what times of day work best

for you to do deeper, more focused work, and what times of day are good for video conferences and collaboration.

### 5. END THE DAY

Creating an "end of the day" ritual will help you create boundaries between work and home. It will signal to your mind and body that you are done with work and now "going home." A great end of day ritual could be drafting your to-do list for the next day and cleaning up your workspace. And, if your workspace has a door you can close, go ahead and walk out of that space and close the door behind you.

*Jennifer Farrell is a Certified Workforce Development Professional (CWDP) and a Job and Career Transition Coach (JCTC) who has assisted thousands of service members and military spouses through the career transition process. *

# 5 RULES EVERY TRANSITIONING VET NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT HOW TO NEGOTIATE A JOB OFFER

by Melanie Brassfield



**Let's be candid.** You may have negotiated a hostage release, brokered a major agreement between organizations, and mediated a dispute between workmates. But chances are you have NEVER negotiated your own salary. It's time to learn how to negotiate a job offer!

The military very conveniently offers a fixed-price salary. No performance-based pay, no overtime—you need a promotion to garner a pay raise. Are you starting to get excited? Your post-military job will pay you what you are worth and proactively reward you for your progress, achievements and accomplishments. Or will it?

Contrary to popular belief, the majority of companies will not deliberately set out to lowball you on a salary offer. But this doesn't mean the offer they give you is THE MOST they are willing to pay. Are you willing to miss out on thousands each year just because you didn't feel comfortable asking for more?

There is a lot of research you need to do before talking salary with your potential employer. You should understand the market, your professional worth and the scope of the position on offer. Once you are ready to go, it is crucial that you keep these five rules in mind.

## 1. Your new employer couldn't care less how much the military paid you

That's right. The salary you earn this year probably won't factor into an employer's offer. While military compensation calculators are valuable tools that help you understand what you earn, it is important to recognize that your military salary compensates you for your military job. Your future employer will base your salary offer on three factors: the scope of the new position, the relevant value and experience you bring, and your market value in the local area.

## 2. Timing is everything

The ideal time to discuss salary is when you have

a job offer in hand. If you start talking salary prior to an offer, you can price yourself out of consideration. Perhaps worse, you may reveal that you are willing to work for less than the company was planning on offering.

## 3. He who mentions money first loses


Salary negotiations strategies are just like poker, salary negotiation rarely favors the candidate who plays their cards first. If you are the first to mention a number, it is unlikely you will receive more than that. If the employer provides you with their monetary offer first, you can probably negotiate an increase.

## 4. It is a business negotiation

Don't get personal, even if you feel offended by the offer. Remember that the people you are speaking with are part of the team you will be working with next week. Don't get emotional, make sure you justify your requests, and be prepared to give a little and not just take.

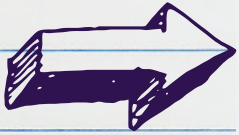
## 5. Money isn't everything

Perhaps the company doesn't have room to move on the salary. Perhaps they know their offer is slightly below market average, but they have a world-class professional development program. Factor in the benefit package when considering the salary offer. If the company can't meet your salary request, you may be able to negotiate added extras such as additional leave, a hiring bonus, flexible work arrangements, or a course that you want to take.

Learning how to negotiate a job offer can be a daunting process for transitioning veterans, but rest assured, it will feel more comfortable each time you do it. As added motivation to start the conversation, imagine how you will feel six months from now if you learn that most people in your position started on a higher salary. Study the rules and get ready to negotiate. 

# 5 GOOD ANSWERS TO 'WHAT'S YOUR DESIRED SALARY?'

by Matthew Klobucher



**You applied to your dream job**, received a call-back for an interview, and the company offered you the job. Congratulations!

Now they've asked you what you want to make—and you don't want to either jeopardize the job offer or undersell yourself.

Here are five good interview questions and answers you can give:

## 1. "I'm asking for [amount] a year"

This is the most straightforward answer, and it may be the most difficult thing to say in a discussion about a job offer. There's a little art to the number you throw out first and the conversation that follows, but remember this isn't a negotiation to buy a used car. Of course you are going to try to get the highest salary you can, but being unrealistic, pushy or acting entitled will contribute to your reputation. As a general rule, start about 10 to 15 percent above your desired number to give yourself some room.

A question about salary should never take you by surprise. Once you get called

for an interview, you should begin considering your minimum requirements for working at the company that called you. After your interview, [calculate your required salary](#), which should be based on your military salary, the cost of living (including rent, which was previously covered by BAH), civilian expenses like healthcare, and any adjustments for paying taxes on your whole income rather than a salary or additional responsibilities. That way you have a number in mind if someone offers you the job—and when you tell them your number, you can explain how you got there so you don't look like you're asking for the moon.

## 2. "I'm looking for [amount] an hour"

Many jobs in manufacturing, service, and industry pay their employees hourly. The advantage of this payment method—for both employer and employee—is that it compensates for the amount of work. Also, you get extra money if you're working overtime, which you won't get with a salary.

Before you accept a wage,

however, you need to make sure it's enough. Full-time employment is technically 36 or more hours a week, though in the vast majority of cases it's 40 hours. Make sure that you know what the full-time schedule is, so you can calculate what your wage should be. A good rule of thumb is to count on working 2000 hours a year (50 weeks at 40 hours a week), which gives a little cushion of about 80 hours for those days you won't be able to make it to work—and therefore won't get paid—due to sickness, various appointments, car trouble or weather.

Also, ask whether overtime is available. Some companies award overtime to good employees—they get the chance to make more money. Other companies plan to work 15-30 hours of overtime a month. If there's steady overtime available, you may factor that into your calculations of the minimum wage you plan to accept—but be careful that you don't assume more than half the overtime the company promises you. Overtime is a higher expense for the company, so they try to avoid it.







### 3. “I’m looking for [specific benefits]”

Most veterans think only in terms of money when they transition: Will my job provide as much money as the military did? But the military provides a lot more than salary—in fact, the actual salary portion of military pay is quite low. It’s the allowances and benefits that make military compensation so competitive (and it certainly is compared to equivalent civilian positions!).

Remember that your military compensation included free or low-cost healthcare, with no premiums; it provided a cost-of-living-adjusted tax-free allowance for housing; it granted a positively European four-plus weeks of vacation. Companies may allow benefits like these as bargaining chips to keep their labor costs down. If they do offer sponsored healthcare and lots of vacation or generous holidays, or something like childcare, then you may be willing to accept less money than you originally thought. But don’t assume that company healthcare is free! Even company plans come with premiums you have to pay, so be sure to ask what the costs are of those benefits and factor that into the discussion.

### 4. “I can’t accept less than [amount]”

Many veterans are nervous about negotiating salary because they’re used to the “take it or leave it” attitude of the military, and maybe they’re afraid that if they try to negotiate, they’ll seem ungrateful and cause the company to rescind the job offer. Nothing could be farther from the truth! A company does not offer a job lightly, and the worst that will happen is they’ll give you a “hard ceiling” at the most they can (or are willing) to pay you. But they will look out for their bottom line, too—if they can convince you to work for less money, they will.

It’s arguably worse to end up in a job that doesn’t pay as much as you need than it is to be unemployed for a few more weeks, chiefly because it’s much harder to search for a job when you already have one. So at least be ready to tell whoever’s offering the job your “hard floor,” the minimum you’re willing to accept.

### 5. “I think [amount] is a fair salary”

Sometimes the job you’re being offered is a step above what you’ve done before. In fact, the easiest way to get a raise is often to change companies—if they think you can make a difference, employers are willing to pay a premium to lure you away from your previous job. Contrast that to the company that already employs you, which is fighting the temptation to continue to get good work without paying any more. An answer like this only works, however, if you know you’d be difficult to replace.

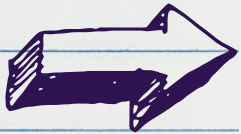
Some of your leverage in this type of salary discussion is lost if you’re coming straight from the military, which has a fixed pay scale. Companies in this case don’t need to lure you out, you’re transitioning already. But you can point out that the job you’re being offered is the equivalent of a rank up from what you had, and that you deserve more money than you received in the military. You can also note that the military relocated you for free, and that the company saved that cost and therefore can afford a higher salary (or at least a signing bonus). Just be prepared to “split the difference” with the company as far as savings—they have a skin in this game too. Why would they take a chance on you in an important position if they could pay someone who’s already done it successfully? Because you’re less money, of course! So remember that you might get more in that situation, but you won’t get as much as someone more qualified or with more experience than you. 📌

# CAREER TRANSITION: REACH OUT FOR A BATTLE BUDDY IN UNCERTAIN TIMES



Rachel Sanders, MBA

by Rachel Sanders, MBA



**Transitioning out of the military has its challenges**, but the last couple of years brought challenges we've never experienced before.

I expected uncertainty after separating from the U.S. Army, and I prepared for it. But no one expected a global pandemic to affect every aspect of our lives, from career choices to family visits.

It was a learning experience in many ways. I was fortunate to wrap up four years of service in the Army, including a deployment to Afghanistan, and find transitioning resources like Soldier For Life Transition Assistance Program (SFL-TAP), Hiring Our Heroes (HOH), and Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP). Each organization has contributed to smoothing my path to civilian life.

I started preparing a year in advance. I lined up an internship through HOH with a great health care company. I prepared myself to apply to a rigorous doctorate program and spend a good part of the next three years working on a Ph.D.

Thankfully I was able to complete my HOH internship and begin Ph.D coursework despite the uncertainty of the 2020 pandemic.

What I am still learning is that you can prepare for every scenario, yet there are things you cannot predict: a global pandemic, an uncertain job market, and

starting your civilian career with a degree of distance between you and the people you planned to network with.

Even during economic boons, most people find it challenging to transition out of the military. After all, you're going from military service, where your career path is a bit more predictable, to a less structured civilian world with no guarantees.

I don't have all the answers, but I've learned three things that helped me get through my unique transition.

## **1. Start your transition process 18 months out.**

This is what SFL-TAP and other organizations recommend. It does take about a year and a half to effectively prepare for your new chapter in your life.

## **2. Prepare financially.**

I didn't realize the importance of this until I attended an SFL-TAP class on financial budgeting. List all your bills, and determine your ideal job after the military, your expected salary, and where you'll be living.

## **3. Know your path and ask for help.**

As you lean on others for advice, you'll figure out the path that works best for you. There are many options: pursuing an academic degree, going into the workforce, or becoming an entrepreneur and being your own boss. Each path is good, but you have to have a plan.



Please know there are resources to guide you. Feel confident asking for help—there's a lot to work through when you transition. Not only do servicemen and women have to relearn how to apply for jobs, interview, and build a civilian résumé, but the salary and benefits we take for granted in the military are things you negotiate in the civilian world.


Offered free to warriors and their families, WWP's career counseling program, Warriors to Work®, empowers participants to translate military experience into a civilian résumé, develop career skills, prepare for job interviews, get connected at job fairs and networking events, and facilitate relationships with potential employers. The teammates at WWP have been in our shoes. They understand that most of us took salaries and promotions for granted and can use help practicing negotiation skills. Your transition out of the military doesn't have to be a lonely road. Talking to like-

minded people at WWP reminded me that I'm in good company.

With WWP by my side, I knew when I officially stepped away from the Army, I had someone rooting for me, empowering me, and encouraging me. It's not always going to be easy, and there are challenges ahead. But there's somebody there—like a battle buddy. When you're in the Army, you have someone to your left and your right. I feel that moving forward, I have that same support to rely on.

I'm excited about the road ahead, whatever the challenges may be.

***About the Author***

*Rachel Sanders transitioned out of active duty as a sergeant, U.S. Army, Fort Campbell, Kentucky. She completed a doctorate in business administration at Trevecca University. *



# SECTION 7:

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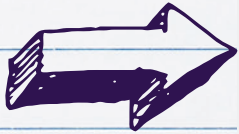
# SHOULD I GO BACK TO SCHOOL?



Section 7:  
Should I Go Back to School?

# YOUR FIELD GUIDE TO THE GI BILL®

by Ryan Connolly, U.S. Coast Guard Veteran



**That fateful form...** DD-214 leads to a life of freedom and confusion. After having everything in one place for so long, the daunting task of contacting so many people and filling out so many forms can be overwhelming. That is why we put together an easy step-by-step guide for using your GI Bill®. This is your field manual.

## Step 1: Do I Want to Go to College?

If the answer is no, then based on service requirements you may be able to transfer your Post-9/11 GI Bill® to your dependents. If you decide college is the right step for you, then you owe yourself a pat on the back.

## Step 2: Where Do I Go?

This is a tough question. With so many schools and such a price variation among them, navigating several schools can be difficult. But don't worry! The first thing to keep in mind is the payout cap for the Post-9/11 GI Bill®. As of Aug. 1, 2022, Chapter 33 will pay all tuition and fees to any state university for an in-state student, or up to \$26,381.37 per academic year for a private university or out-of-state student (this amount is recalculated each year to adjust to cost of living, similar to basic pay in the service).

Another thing to think about is the veterans population on campus. Maybe you want to just blend in with the rest of the student population; but for those of you who wish to get a little extra help and maybe make some friends with common backgrounds, a school with a thriving veterans community is a big factor. Ask if there is a faculty member dedicated strictly to veterans. Ask if there is a student veterans organization, and if so, whether that organization is part of the Student Veterans of America (SVA).

Do you want to go to a large school or a small school? This is a crucial question. Student population can be a big part of your experience on campus.

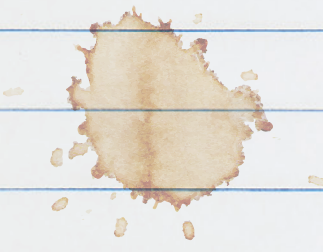
## Step 3: Contact the VA

There are a few ways you can do this. The easiest is to call 1-888-GI BILL-1 and ask that they mail an application to you. You then fill it out and mail it back. Applications can also be found at [va.gov](https://www.va.gov).

Once the VA has received your application, staffers will get back to you with the amount of benefits you are allotted. It is important to note that if, for example, you are entitled to 80 percent benefits, it is 80 percent of the full or cap tuition for the full 36 months, not full tuition for 80 percent of the time. Also note that the percentage of GI Bill® benefits is independent and completely separate from your disability percentage, if you have one. You can file an appeal if you feel the VA has given you an unfair or incorrect percentage. The appeals process is outlined on the document with your percentage allotment.

## Step 4: Apply to School

Find your school's application (usually online) and fill it out. While schools may not explicitly ask if you are a veteran, it is not a bad idea to self-report that information. A good place for that may be in the essay portion if it is relevant to the question. Schools want vets on campus.



### **Step 5: What If I Don't Get Accepted?**

Maybe you failed your first PT test at boot camp, maybe you got lost during a field exercise, maybe you needed assistance in a terrible situation. Did you give up? No! Keep trying. If you had your heart set on that particular school, apply again as a transfer next semester.

### **Step 6: How Do I Prepare?**

Stay in touch with your school; staffers will notify you when you need to go in for advising, orientation and class selection. Get a notebook and a few pens; find the book requirements for the classes you will be taking. (Your Post-9/11 GI Bill® benefits include a \$1,000 a year book stipend.) Always be ready. Your benefits also include a living stipend equal to the BAH for an E-5 with dependents for the school location. Take that into account when deciding whether you will be working during school.

### **Step 7: Visiting the Financial Aid Office**

Do this during your orientation visit; you will need to complete this paperwork before your first day of classes. Some colleges have a veteran's officer in the financial aid office. If that is the case, ask to meet with her or him. If they do

not, almost all schools still require a form to be filled out just for vets. It is usually a short form that asks which type of benefits you wish to use (in this case, Chapter 33, Post-9/11 GI Bill®). You will also need to list the classes you wish to take for the upcoming semester. Don't worry, if your classes change you can go back at any time and change the form. For some states where tuition is waived for vets, this same form will act as your tuition waiver. From there the school will bill the VA directly and you do not have to do anything! The VA will pay tuition and fees to the school, and BAH and a book stipend to you.

### **Step 8: Your First Day**

Your first day may be a stressful one, but just like any other mission, get in and do what you have to do. Acclimating to a college setting can be a difficult task, but it is well worth the battle, and in the end you will find yourself to be a stronger, better person. Don't be afraid to reach out to friends, people from your last unit, or even fellow vets or your instructor on campus. I recommend you arrive early and get yourself situated before class starts. Having time to get your head in the game is crucial. Remember these people you are with now are not soldiers.

You may see things that are different: long hair on men, subculture clothing, etc. A lot of these people are going to be young as well, just out of high school. Remember to be polite and respectful, even if you are confused or shocked.

### **Step 9: Get Involved!**

When I was discharged with a 60 percent disability rating, I thought my days of helping people were over. At 22 years old, with the prospects of being a police officer or a firefighter over, I felt like I received a life sentence. Then I became involved with the student veteran's organization. Suddenly, I realized I can do as much, if not more, good than I ever have before. College is a cauldron of opportunities. Find your area of interest and participate!

### **Step 10: Enjoy the Ride and Congratulate Yourself**

College can be an amazing experience. It is a fantastic way to assimilate yourself back into the civilian world, and you will learn a lot along the way. You don't have to stand duty or answer to your superior. Enjoy school and get as much from it as you can.

You have successfully become a college student. Congratulations on your drive, ambition and unwillingness to quit. Give yourself a pat on the back. Remember, if you ever need help there are resources available both through the VA and your college. 🇺🇸

# POST-9/11 GI BILL® AT A GLANCE

The Post-9/11 GI Bill® provides financial support for education. You've earned it, but do you really know it? Here are the basics. For details, visit [VA.gov](http://VA.gov).



## What are the benefits?

The Post-9/11 GI Bill® provides up to 36 months of education benefits. The benefit levels range from 50% to 100% depending on your time in service. If your release from active duty was before Jan. 1, 2013, there is a 15-year time limit after separation. If your discharge date is on or after Jan. 1, 2013, there is no time limitation.



## Who's eligible?

- Served at least 90 days on active duty service on or after Sept. 11, 2001
- Honorably discharged with a service-connected disability after 30 continuous days
- Received a Purple Heart on or after Sept. 11, 2001, and were honorably discharged after any amount of service
- Are a dependent child using benefits transferred by a qualifying veteran or service member


## What does it pay?

- **Tuition and Fees:** If you qualify for the maximum benefit, the Post-9/11 GI Bill® will cover the full cost of public, in-state tuition and fees. The rates for private and foreign schools are capped, and the rates are updated each year.
- **Monthly Housing Allowance (MHA):** If you're in school more than half time, you can receive a monthly stipend for living expenses equal to the Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) of an E-5 with dependents in the same ZIP code as your school. For details, visit [VA.gov](http://VA.gov).
- **Books and Supplies:** You can receive up to \$1,000 per year.

## How is it paid?

The US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) makes tuition payments directly to the school.



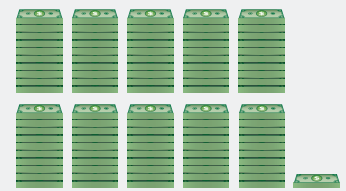
 = 100,000 people



**2.4 Million\***

# of veterans and dependents who have used the Post-9/11 GI Bill® since its inception on Aug. 1, 2009.

 = \$1 Billion



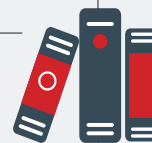
**\$122.3 Billion\***

Post-9/11 benefits paid by the VA since Aug. 1, 2009.

*\*As of December 2021*

## How much is available for books/supplies?

The VA will pay an annual books and supplies stipend of up to \$1,000 directly to full-time students, including active duty service members.

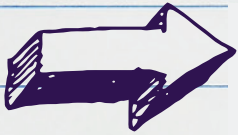


## Where can you apply for your benefits?

Applications are available through [VA.gov](http://VA.gov).

# CHOOSING A SCHOOL OR PROGRAM

by American Corporate Partners



**Choosing between various higher education programs** can be difficult. Use the guidelines below to make sure you are asking yourself the right questions.

## How will you fund your education?

**Military Funding** – The Post-9/11 GI Bill® entitles eligible veterans to affordable public higher education or equivalent funding to attend a private institution. You can also research schools that provide additional funding through The Yellow Ribbon Program.

- Read up on the Post-9/11 GI Bill® at the [VA's website](#)
- Check if your [ACE credits](#), [CLEP testing](#) and other college credits transfer

- Find VA-approved programs at [Military Friendly® Schools](#) by degree, location, or area of study

**Ask Your Company** – Many companies are willing to sponsor further education of their employees. Find out if this is a possibility, and if so, write a formal proposal. Remember to frame your request in terms of the corporation's interest.

**Scholarships and Grants** – Many schools offer scholarships to incoming students, but there are also a number of grants and scholarships given by external organizations that you can look into. Research

the different awards that are out there, the amounts they offer, and see if you're eligible to apply.

**Student Loans** – Consider the pros and cons of federal student loans, private student loans, or building a portfolio of multiple loans to pay off your debt strategically.

## Which type of program do you want to enroll in?

- Do you want to take a full-time, part-time, or online program?
- What would you immediately rule out and what are the pros and cons of your best options?






### **Do you know where you'd like to live and work after you graduate?**

- Which schools have a strong network of alumni in your ideal industry?
- Are internship opportunities available at specific companies?
- Universities put their prospective employers' recruiting schedules online. Go to the career services website of the university you're interested in to see which companies are recruiting.
- Call a college's career services department and ask for their recruiting records to get a sense of employment outcomes for recent grads.
- Would you live in the prospective city/town upon graduation? This is not necessary but an option to consider.

### **What is the return on investment?**

- Look at the tuition of the schools you are considering. Are certain programs significantly more expensive? If so, what do they offer to make up for this price increase?
- What is the average salary for someone in your desired field? Will you need additional schooling after taking the first step?
- Accrediting bodies evaluate the quality and credibility of programs. Can you find an accreditation rating for your school of choice? 



# TOP 5 REASONS WHY MILITARY VETERANS SHOULD CONSIDER OPENING A FRANCHISE



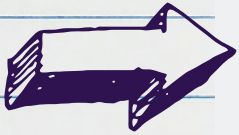
By Chris Hale, Navy Veteran



The new year is a popular time to reconsider your professional future. Let's talk about an option that doesn't get enough air time with veterans. It's something different than getting a new job or going back to school. Let's talk about starting a franchise.

Owning a business through franchising is a perfect hybrid between working for an organization and starting your own business from scratch.

Here are five reasons why you may want to see if you have what it takes to be your own boss.



## 1. You're already trained for it!

A staggering one in seven franchises is owned by a military veteran. No surprise. Especially when you consider that a franchise operating manual is pretty similar to the operating manuals we used to operate military weapons, tanks, aircraft, ships, submarines and drones.

That franchise operating manual took lots of time and money to perfect. When you buy into a franchise, you benefit by learning from someone else's mistakes.

## 2. You don't need business or industry experience.

Never owned a business before? Don't have experience in the industry? No problem.

Franchises train you. Then they follow up with a franchisor team that provides services like marketing, accounting set-up, vendor relations, operating, pricing and more. On top of that, you have a team of fellow franchise owners who support one another.

Unlike a stand-alone business where it can be lonely at the top, the franchising model is being in business for yourself, not by yourself. Franchising is a business in a box, with a tremendous support network.

## 3. Veteran benefits.

Many franchises offer a discount on the franchise fee to veterans. Plus, many veterans have access to VA disability payments and military retirement pensions. All of this provides greater financial stability while you are starting your franchise. This gives you more financing options and allows you to focus on running

your business, not worrying if you have enough working capital.

## 4. There's a franchise for everyone!

Franchises are all restaurants, right? Wrong! If you can think of a service or product, there's probably a franchise for it.

Franchises run the gamut from home services, senior care, fitness, childcare, tutoring, real estate and much, much more. There are even franchises for removing junk, painting lines in parking lots, mobile flooring retailers and yes, dog-walking!

All told, there are over 2,000 different franchise brands available today.


## 5. Free franchise coaching services for veterans.

From deciding if you're cut out for franchising to selecting the best fit to walking through the due diligence and purchase, getting into franchising can be an intimidating process.

But you don't have to go it alone. Our franchise coaching team will walk you through the entire three- to four-month process from discovery to opening the business.

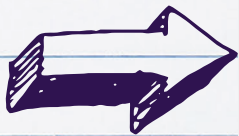
Our services are free to veterans and your cost to the franchisor is the same whether you use our free consulting services or not.

So if you think you have what it takes to be your own boss, schedule a call with our team today!

Simply go to [vetpreneur.com](http://vetpreneur.com) and schedule a free, 10-minute no obligation call. 

# SELECTING YOUR FRANCHISE

By Andrea Downing Peck



## Evaluating the wide variety of franchising opportunities can be a daunting task.

Options are available in many business categories—from fitness concepts to food outlets, equipment repair to elder care, employment services to home services. With thousands of franchise options in the United States today, there is a concept to fit most any desire.

“It gets overwhelming and people end up giving up on thinking about investing in a franchise,” said Steve Miller, a franchise consultant. “People often ask me, ‘What’s the best franchise out there?’ and I tell them, ‘It all depends.’ There’s not a simple answer to that question because it depends upon a multitude of factors which must be taken into consideration.”

## What’s Your Lifestyle?

Identifying what kind of franchise would suit the individual starts with self evaluation. According to Miller, one of the first steps is deciding the hours one wants to work in a business. Someone who does not want to manage or be “on call” weekends, evenings or holidays, for example, should avoid food service franchises. Home services businesses are “great lifestyle businesses,” according to Miller, because working hours are typically 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. “Oftentimes these businesses are home based, therefore the start-up costs are a fraction of having a retail location,” he said.

Other important considerations include whether the franchise is business to business or business to consumer, your personal interests, family support, and what you can afford to invest.

“You might say ‘I can’t work on things at my own house, how am I going to fix someone else’s?’” Miller said. “That has little to do with the owner of a franchise of this type. The role of the franchisee is to work ‘on’ the business and not ‘in’ it. You’re not looking to buy yourself a job, you’re looking to manage and scale a business.”

## What’s the Cost?

Initial investment cost is an important consideration when selecting a franchise, as is your willingness or ability to borrow money to finance the purchase and start-up expenses. “The days when people were literally mortgaging their homes to buy a business, whether a franchise or not, are gone,” said author Mitchell York, who wrote “Franchise: Freedom or Fantasy?” “These days you either have to have the capital to buy into a franchise or you have to find some other source of capital. There are franchises that cost a million dollars and franchises that cost \$10,000. You need to understand what universe you can play in.”

## Franchise Disclosure Document

Purchasing a franchise means acquiring a proven business model to follow and execute, but buyers must know what to ask in order to select a winning formula.

Prospective owners need to know what they’re buying before signing a franchise agreement, and the Franchise Disclosure Document (FDD) provides this transparency.

The Federal Trade Commission requires franchisors to provide the FDD to prospective buyers at least 10 business days before a contract is signed or money



exchanges hands. The FDD contains valuable information about the franchisor ranging from the initial investment to the franchisor's obligations to franchisees and the company's financial statements. In total, 23 disclosure items are covered.

### Learn the Territory

Crafting a proper territory is vital to the potential for success of the franchise. "When Quiznos was the really hot franchise, everyone was buying into Quiznos," York said. "They had territory definitions where you could have an exclusive in your town, but you wouldn't have the exclusive in the next town. You might have thought it's not going to be a problem and then lo and behold another store opens up a few blocks away."

### Does Everybody Know Their Name?

With hundreds of new franchises debuting each year, another factor is determining whether a concept has staying power. Investing in a new


franchise concept, which oftentimes has lower investment costs, might be a good idea, but it has risk. "If you buy a franchise that is brand new and no one has ever heard of, you take on all the risks of that franchisor potentially not being very good at what they do in terms of operations," York said. "They may have a good idea, but they haven't established any brand equity. They haven't tested their operating procedures for any length of time."

### See for Yourself

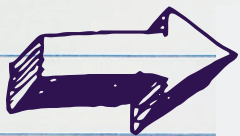
Because franchisors cannot make earning claims outside the information disclosed in the FDD, York said, they might be limited in their ability to give direct feedback on profit and loss projections. For that reason, York said, anyone looking to buy a franchise should "get a reality check" and spend time studying existing franchises. "If you are going to buy a cupcake store, go into the cupcake store and count how many cupcakes get sold per hour," York said. "You can't

just go in on Saturday. You have to go in on a Tuesday, and you may have to camp out there for a while and take a lot of notes." Before buying a franchise, a potential owner should talk to current and former franchisees to get a sense of whether the organization delivers on its commitments, if they conduct themselves in a professional manner and determine if operating the business is worth the investment of time and money.


### Retain a Coach

G.I. Jobs, through Vetpreneur, offers a complimentary service to veterans which takes the guesswork out of evaluating franchises. A Vetpreneur Franchise Coach will walk you through a comprehensive process, including selecting the right franchise for your situation, understanding funding options, and learning about benefits available exclusively to veterans. Visit [Vetpreneur.com](http://Vetpreneur.com) to join the other veterans who found their franchise with the help of our coaches. 

# FRANCHISING CHECKLIST



Use this checklist to determine if you are cut out to buy and operate a franchise:

- ✓ You can follow a system.
- ✓ You are willing to work long hours.
- ✓ You've done your research on the business.
- ✓ You know the market for your business.
- ✓ Your skills match the franchise need.
- ✓ You can afford to buy and operate the business.
- ✓ You are prepared to manage people, often younger workers.
- ✓ You're passionate! 

**We sincerely hope** you enjoyed the MOAT as much as we did putting this beast together. More importantly, we hope that you picked up some golden nuggets of intel that you can use to help advance your civilian career! We've got a pretty awesome team of veterans and civilians working hard every day to provide YOU—our service members and veterans—the tools and resources you need. Join us and gain immediate access to an arsenal of training, tools and other kick-@\$\$ info, including our magazine.



GET EVERYTHING YOU NEED FOR LIFE AFTER THE MILITARY HERE:

**JOIN THE RANKS**

