

Tips for Transitioning Veterans

Congratulations on a successful military career, and welcome to civilian life. This transition from the military to civilian workplace may be puzzling and often difficult. You are leaving a regimented life to begin one full of choices and self-determination. You will face with many decisions and crossroads as you reintegrate and settle on a new path. Below are a few things to consider and remember as you take steps back into civilian life:

1. Prepare for a longer job search.

The work search can take time—longer than you might think. It's best to start thinking about transitioning well before the actual event. Pay attention to, and take advantage of, the programs and workshops provided to you in the final months of your service. They offer a wealth of information and tools. In the military, you are used to setting goals, developing plans and accomplishing a mission. Put those skills to use, but be prepared for a more chaotic, uncertain job market than in the past.

2. Assess your skills and interests.

An essential part of preparation can be taking a career assessment. Assessment tools aid those unclear about the next career move. They focus on specific areas that apply to future work, including skills, interests, or values. Assessments help you learn more about occupations that match your skills, identify skills and talents you bring to a job, and point to areas where you need more training. There are many different assessments. Talk to a work-force professional or visit the following sites. Remember to keep an open mind, and that these are only guides.

www.mynextmove.org/vets/

<https://va.careerscope.net/gibill>

www.onetonline.org/help/online/skills

www.careeronestop.org/ExploreCareers/Assessments/self-assessments.aspx

3. Translate military skills and experience into civilian skills and occupations.

One hurdle veterans face is determining what civilian jobs match their military experience, and how to inform a future employer what skills they possess. Military Occupational Codes (MOC) and jargon need to be translated into something private industry can easily understand. Hiring managers need to know how your skills will transfer to their companies. Luckily, there are a number of translators to help you. These websites can convert your MOC to a similar civilian occupation. They can also direct your well-earned skills into occupations on the outside that use those same talents, and provide a good place to begin planning your future and writing a resume.

www.military.com/veteran-jobs/skills-translator

www.careerinfonet.org/moc

www.vets.gov/employment/job-seekers/skills-translator

www.taonline.com/jobsaurus/

4. Use your Veterans Affairs educational benefits.

Before transitioning, get all the documentation on educational benefits available to you and your family. Employers are looking for both experience and education. Once you have determined the civilian occupations that match your military experience or the direction you would like to turn, determine if you need a vocational certificate or a degree to be competitive in the job market. Your local community college or university may have just what you need. Ask if your experience can translate to college credit. Don't forget to research apprenticeships as well. These are opportunities to earn money while you train and, in the end, make a good living. Also, check your branch's Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (COOL) site to see if you can earn credentials for your existing skills.

www.laspositascollege.edu/veterans

www.csueastbay.edu/veteran

www.veteran.berkeley.edu

www.chabotcollege.edu/veterans

www.sjsu.edu/veterans

www.cool.navy.mil

<https://www.calvet.ca.gov/VetServices/Pages/CA-Community-Colleges.aspx>

5. Use & build your networks.

The vast majority of jobs today are found through networking, not by applying online. It's not just what you know, but also whom you know. Just as in marketing, personal referrals carry more weight than resumes sent cold. It is critical that you get out and meet people through events, group meetings, one-on-one coffee, and informational interviews. You have established networks to build from, including your family, neighbors, and military contacts. Let everyone know that you are looking for work and in what field. They will be happy to connect you to others they know, which is how to grow your network.



6. Utilize and clean up your social media.

Job searching has changed in the last ten years. Social media is now used by job seekers to find work, and by employers to investigate potential employees. This includes social media sites such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. Thus, social media presence needs to reflect a professional image. Don't avoid social media outright, as companies want employees who are digitally fluent—just improve what you have or take the first step. Specifically, develop a dynamic LinkedIn profile to attract recruiters. (Hint: Veterans receive a free premier LinkedIn membership.) Use social media to network, find experts or affinity groups to follow, ask for informational interviews and research target companies. There are tips online or at local career centers.

7. Accept advice from workforce professionals.

Job hunting isn't rocket science, but it also isn't easy to do alone. Locate professionals in your community who can guide you through the process, help refine your search, and teach you job search skills such as resume writing, interviewing, networking and targeting companies. They can also connect you to employers and help grow that critical network. Many of these resources are available to the general public. Others are available only to veterans. It is important to use these resources, online and in-person. Here are a few:

www.trivalleycareercenter.org	www.calvet.ca.gov	www.careeronestop.org
www.edd.ca.gov/pdf_pub_ctr/de8714t.pdf		www.mynextmove.org/vets
www.edd.ca.gov/jobs_and_training/Services_for_Veterans.htm		www.workforwarriors.org
www.va.gov/vetsinworkplace/docs/em_fullVetResources.asp		

8. Find military-friendly employers.

Many employees appreciate the qualities former military personnel bring to a job. Additionally, where you find a military-friendly employer, you often find others who formerly served in the military. These new co-workers can mentor and guide you as in transitioning to the civilian job force. Large, multi-national companies are often good places to start, but you'll often need to find someone on the inside to refer you. Industries that are generally a good fit include: aerospace & defense, law enforcement, construction, education, healthcare, IT, and government.

9. Consider working in the public sector.

As a veteran, you have a leg up when it comes to public sector jobs. In the county, state and federal employment systems, veterans receive extra scoring points that move them ahead of the general public applicants. Disabled veterans can have added scoring advantage depending on the severity of the disability. It is important to know, however, that a public sector application differs from a private one. They are more detailed and extensive. See above to find a professional who can help you through that process, and search the following websites:

www.usajobs.gov	www.calcareers.ca.gov	www.calopps.org	www.governmentjobs.com
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10. “Demilitarize” your wardrobe.

Gone are the days of prescribed uniforms. The transition from military to civilian life is full of choices, including what to wear. Likely, your “liberty attire” is not a professional wardrobe. Thus, it is time to invest clothing suitable for interviews and on the job. Remember that different professions have different expectations, as do different regions of the county—so it is important to do some research before spending money. It won't be cheap. However, there are organizations across the country who want to help. Seek them out. Ask your workforce development professional for advice. Also, if money is tight, visit the local thrift stores.

11. Use resources available to you.

In addition to all the website links provided above, there are dozens of reputable organizations who want to help our returning and transitioning veterans on a variety of issues. Below are a few more to help with your job search. Use these sites to glean new information, new contacts, and help. Remember: don't job search alone. There are people out there who want you to succeed as much as you do, and employers who need your skills.

www.laspositascollege.edu/veterans	www.dol.gov/vets	www.vets.gov/
employmentwww.hiringourheroes.org	www.militaryonesource.mil	www.gijobs.com
www.helmetstohardhats.org	www.proudtoserveagain.com	www.corporategray.com
www.sba.gov/business-guide/grow-your-business/veteran-owned-businesses		