

# Talent Acquisition

Leading companies with vibrant Veteran recruiting programs offer consistent advice: Start small, with a strategy to build. Building a sustainable and scalable program necessitates approaching the process with intention, focus, and alignment with your company brand and learning from the challenges and opportunities of others in your industry.

Before you can hire Veterans, you need to make your company attractive to the Veteran candidate. Many businesses modify their website and online applications (“Veterans: Apply Here!”) or produce Veteran-facing marketing materials.

## Where Are All the Veterans?

Virtually every employer starting a Veteran hiring program has encountered this challenge: There is no one central database of all Veterans seeking employment in the U.S. While it might seem like an obvious issue to address – to facilitate the employment of Veterans into the companies that want to hire them – issues around logistics and privacy are said to have presented the development of a central repository for military job seekers.

Instead, employers must deploy creative, strategic and focused initiatives to source and attract Veteran job candidates, and develop criteria and applicant tracking systems for recruiting and hiring Veterans.

## American Job Center (AJC)

AJCs (also known as One-Stop Centers) are in virtually every community across the U.S. run by the state or territory. AJCs are places where Veterans (and all Americans) can look for work. Almost every AJC has someone who specializes in helping Veterans find jobs. As an employer, you can list your job openings at the AJC and attend Veterans-focused events at the AJC.

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## Job Fairs and Events

Job fairs and career events often produce lukewarm results for both sides. In some cases, they are crowded and overwhelming to Veterans, who lack skills in networking and asserting themselves in a self-promotional way. In the military, "sucking up" is frowned upon, and many Veterans perceive networking as disingenuously trying to work around a process.

If your Veteran talent attraction strategy includes participating in career fairs, hiring events, and networking gatherings, you can set yourself up for success with these tips:

- **Bring Veterans from your team to the event with you.** Veterans relate to and understand each other. They will recognize the struggles of another, and because service is ingrained in their DNA, they will want to help each other.
- **Offer other tools and resources.** If you can only hire a few people, and you are swamped with attendees, give something of value. Have a professional-looking tip sheet, handout, or book to offer Veterans who stop by your table. Be sure to reinforce your company's commitment to hiring Veterans and speak to what Veterans need. This "gift" can have a lasting positive impression on those candidates you meet today and may hire tomorrow.
- **Have jobs available that Veterans can fill.** Veterans are frustrated by hiring events where none of the jobs available fit a Veteran profile. Do the homework – in advance – to show how your job description suits a military background.

## Recruiting on Military Installations

Recruiting Veterans before they leave service works well for many employers. Many service men and women look to stay in the same community as their last assignment, so local employers have an advantage.

It should be noted that many service members return to where they grew up or where their spouse desires to live after their service is complete. This can be far from the installation where you are recruiting. A good contact at a military installation is someone in the Military and Family Readiness office or Transition Assistance Program (also called Transition GPS).

## Involving Veterans in the Process

Do you have Veterans already working for you? Enlist them to help you build or enhance your Veteran recruiting initiative. They can help by offering advice and insight and participating in the recruiting and onboarding process.

Ask Veterans in your company or network how they feel about your hiring and on-boarding process. This can help you identify blind spots and also areas where you are doing it right. For instance, when you talk to groups, do you take a Veteran with you or have a Veteran on a video or in some way let attendees hear from and see a person “like them”? We all like to feel like we’ll fit in. Current Veteran employees can talk to their jobseeker Veteran friends about the company and encourage them to apply because the company is seeking Veterans and has specific resources for them.

**28**

## Using Social Media

Social media is part of every hiring manager’s life. As you use online tools like LinkedIn, Indeed.com, Facebook, Craigslist, Monster.com, and others to attract and recruit talent, consider tweaking your strategy to find Veterans.

To attract Veterans and build visibility for your company in the Veteran community, consider the following:

- Understand the MOS (jobs) of the candidates you seek to attract. Using a government-developed tool or one of the privately developed “skills translator tools,” learn how the training, skills, and qualities that you are seeking would appear on a military resume or in an online profile.

The U.S. Department of Labor maintains a translator online at <https://tinyurl.com/LIDA360-MOS>  
Another popular online translator is found at <https://tinyurl.com/LIDA360-ONet>

- Look past the fact that many transitioning service members still post images of themselves in uniform. This does not mean they haven’t transitioned. Often, they are unsure about the “civilian” photo so they default to the military one.
- Create a Veterans group on LinkedIn for your company or engage in an existing group focused on Veterans’ issues. LinkedIn is a powerful business tool, and many Veterans are learning how to use it to their benefit. Seeing your company active on LinkedIn, particularly in the Veteran conversation, will reflect well on your brand and allow you to engage Veterans before they apply.
- Consider featuring posts about Veteran-related issues and concerns, calling out and writing about specific Veteran-related holidays (Veterans Day) and the like to build inclusiveness.

*“Seeing your company active on LinkedIn, particularly in the Veteran conversation, will reflect well on your brand ...”*

## Other Ways to Find Veterans

This is more of an investment in the community. Provide open houses and training for Veterans interested in your company or industry. Teach them how to position themselves for success in a company or industry like yours. Even if they don't get hired (yet), you are highlighting your commitment and building goodwill in the Veteran space.

For these events and efforts, ensure your internal team has a solid elevator pitch for the Veteran candidates. Be sure your recruiters, hiring managers and internal employees can articulate the company values, goals, and reasons for pursuing “Veteran friendly” status.

## Articulate Your Company Values

The military is a values-driven culture. From the first day of boot camp, service members are taught to adhere to protocol, process, and values that will not only ensure their own safety but protect those around them.

When seeking to attract Veteran candidates, articulate your business values and demonstrate how you live those values daily. Clearly show ways your company is living its values in how it operates, interacts in the community, and supports its employees. While some job candidates might not be turned off from a business that acts contrary to its values, a Veteran certainly will be. Of course, the Veteran should be able to translate their skills into what the employer is looking for, but the hiring manager must be committed to, not just interested in, hiring Veterans and helping them transition into the civilian workforce.

For example, the Army promotes an acronym, LDRSHIP to represent its seven basic values:

- 1. Loyalty.** Bear true faith and allegiance to the U.S. Constitution, the Army, your unit, and other Soldiers.
- 2. Duty.** Fulfill your obligations.
- 3. Respect.** Treat people as they should be treated.
- 4. Selfless Service.** Put the welfare of the nation, the Army, and your subordinates before your own.
- 5. Honor.** Live up to all the Army values.
- 6. Integrity.** Do what's right, legally and morally.
- 7. Personal Courage.** Face fear, danger, or adversity (physical or moral).

By contrast, civilian businesses often endorse diverse values. This is challenging for a Veteran candidate who is used to being loyal to stated values as part of their work.