



Supervisor NEWSLETTER

Employee Assistance Program
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Working With Veterans: 7 Ways to Create a Military-Friendly Workplace

Adapted from Indeed For Employers

Working with veterans and those with military experience is an effective way to add diverse skillsets to your company—former service members offer unique skills, perspectives and experiences. With a few adjustments, you can build a workplace culture that attracts and retains these valuable employees from the military community.

Why hire veterans and former military candidates?

Hiring veterans and military-experienced candidates makes good business sense. A military career provides people with transferable skills and values, like leadership, integrity and adaptability that can benefit your company, often regardless of the industry or specialty. These workers are often disciplined, organized and accountable for their actions. Since military units require high-level teamwork, veterans and those with military experience often thrive in collaborative environments.

When you hire military veterans, you may be able to take advantage of Veterans Affairs (VA) programs. They're designed to help offset the cost of training or workplace adjustments that former service members need to adapt to a new professional environment.

There are also a number of benefits and incentives for hiring veterans, including potential tax breaks from the federal government for companies that hire individuals who serve or have served in the Uniformed Services.

7 ways to build a military- and veteran-friendly workplace

It can be challenging to move from the military to a civilian job. Some veterans and former military members are actively managing the lingering psychological effects of combat, while others need time to adjust to a different type of workplace culture. As an employer, you can ease the transition with strategies that help integrate military talent seamlessly into your workforce.

1. Understand the expectations of “military-ready” companies

Employers who are eager to attract job seekers with military experience often claim to be “military ready.” However, a 2023 study by Indeed and Hiring Our Heroes discovered that job seekers’ and companies’ expectations don’t always align.

In the study, veterans reported that the most important aspects of a workplace culture are:

- Veteran-specific onboarding practices
- Understanding of military experience
- Commitment to hiring former service members
- Company leadership team that includes veterans
- Mentorship opportunities
- Service opportunities
- Affinity groups

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When your company meets these expectations, our research shows that 81% of veteran job seekers and 75% of veteran employees are more committed to joining or staying with the organization. The opposite is true for companies that fail to meet military-ready expectations—veteran employees and candidates are less likely to stick around.

2. Explore the military-to-civilian transition

Before you begin hiring military talent, take time to research what it means to leave the military and enter civilian life. It's especially important to be aware of common difficulties that veterans and former service members face when they enter the workforce, including:

- Explaining military skills and experience in the context of a civilian job
- Organizing and managing company and VA benefits
- Working within a less-defined reporting structure
- Fitting into the social life of an organization
- Adapting to a competitive culture
- Adjusting to a standard civilian work schedule

Understanding these challenges—and communicating them to your team—can create a more welcoming work environment. When everyone is informed about the realities of the transition to civilian life, they can be more empathetic and supportive when working with veterans and military-experienced employees.

3. Research military jobs

Members of the military community may struggle to explain their military experience in terms that make sense to civilian hiring managers. The process can be so challenging, in fact, that many service members actively look for companies familiar with the Armed Forces. In the Indeed/Hiring Our Heroes survey, veterans report that when they're evaluating a workplace culture, finding an employer who "understands how military experience translates to civilian jobs" is a top priority.

To assess candidates fairly and ask the right questions in interviews, ensure your HR employees and hiring teams have a working knowledge of:

- Military job titles, also known as MOS (military occupational specialty) codes
- Job duties
- Military training courses
- Career progression

- Leadership responsibilities
- Military awards

Your goal isn't to become an expert but to understand basic military roles and skills. That way, you can meet military talent halfway.

4. Offer comprehensive onboarding and training

Effective onboarding is critical when working with veterans and those with military experience, especially if you want to join the ranks of military-friendly employers. Per the Indeed/Hiring Our Heroes' study, nearly half (48.4%) of former service members say they "expected" or "definitely expected" veteran-specific onboarding programs from companies that claim to be "military ready." However, just 9.4% of employers had the same expectation.

A veteran-friendly and military-ready onboarding process introduces new hires to your organization's professional and social norms. It helps them understand their role and orients them within the team, department and company.

The onboarding curriculum looks different at every business, but generally covers:

- **Training.** Train former military members in the technologies, workflows and equipment they need to do their jobs. Provide benchmarks to help them self-assess their progress and skill development.
- **Expectations.** Explain the duties and goals of the job in detail so employees with military experience know exactly what's expected of them. Keep in mind that service members often work tirelessly toward mission objectives in the military. Help them avoid burnout and overwork on the job by offering realistic timeline expectations for different tasks or projects.
- **Reporting structure.** Lay out the organizational hierarchy for new employees, and let them know who to contact with questions, concerns or problems.

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- **Communication workflows.** Discuss how the new employee's team handles communication. What are the preferred channels? How does the team approach projects? When should employees loop in managers? It's also helpful to talk about appropriate communication styles.
- **Autonomy.** Let veteran and military hires know how much autonomy they have to make decisions. Set specific boundaries so they know when to get approval from a supervisor and when to proceed independently.
- **Cultural norms.** Chances are, your company culture is considerably different from the military's. Help veterans and former military members understand your traditions, social norms and common practices so they feel more comfortable during their transition.

Even with comprehensive onboarding, military hires are sure to have questions. Consider pairing them with a more experienced employee who can provide answers, advice and friendship.

5. Provide regular feedback

Military members are often accustomed to regular, direct feedback from superiors. Without this, they may feel adrift in a civilian workplace.

As your former military employees get up to speed, make a point to check in often. Let them know what they're doing right, and explain how they can improve. Encourage them to ask questions or share concerns at any point. These conversations help you monitor the transition and adapt your managerial style to bring out the best in each person.

6. Encourage creation of a veteran Employee Resource Group (ERG)

Once you have a few veterans and military-experienced employees on your team, help them establish an employee resource group (ERG). These employee-led affinity groups provide extra support for people who have something in common—in this case, military service. ERG meetings are a safe place to ask questions, express frustrations, share resources and build social connections. For veterans and military talent, who may feel isolated after leaving the Uniformed Services, these groups can help build a sense of belonging.

As you create an ERG for veterans, keep these tips in mind:

- Get support from company leaders
- Partner with an enthusiastic veteran employee to recruit members
- Ask members to create a mission and vision for the group
- Allocate a budget for meetings, volunteer events and company-wide initiatives
- Hand over group administration to the employees running the ERG

Once the military and veteran ERG is up and running, encourage members to find ways to educate or involve nonmilitary employees. This can be an effective way to promote understanding and acceptance. You might also ask ERG leaders to act in an advisory capacity to help company leaders build a more military-friendly workplace culture.

7. Provide mentorship

When surveying veterans, Indeed and Hiring Our Heroes found that 53.9% expect military-ready organizations to connect new hires with military-experienced mentors. However, only 16.5% of employers share the same perspective—a disconnect that creates an interesting opportunity for your company. If you have former military employees who are willing to serve as mentors, it may help you recruit and retain military-experienced job seekers.

Your company's mentorship program will depend on the makeup of your workforce. If there are no veterans or former military members on the leadership team, consider a peer-mentoring system. As military employees move into higher positions, it's easier to match senior workers with new hires.

FAQs about working with veterans

What are the benefits of working with veterans and military-experienced individuals?

For many employees, benefits that promote well-being are more important than ever. According to a February 2022 Gallup poll, 64% of U.S. employees ranked pay and benefits as very important when deciding whether to take a job with a different organization. Further, 61% cite work-life balance and better personal well-being as "very important." Employees are looking to employers for support.

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What does it mean to be a military-ready employer?

In general, military-ready employers are invested in recruiting and hiring military talent. They understand the unique needs of former service members, and they're willing to make accommodations to help these job seekers transition successfully into civilian employment.

References:

https://www.indeed.com/hire/c/info/working-with-veterans?gad_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCQjwtsy1BhD7ARIsAHOi4xabJlzykY_eZqyFYzcqOf0ItoGq4xCxnJN27MxXeJwH4_4ewzM90SAaAvggEALw_wcB&aceid=&gclidsrc=aw.ds