

The Importance of Veteran Hiring Programs: Why Hiring Veterans Without Them Doesn't Work

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Employers, hiring managers, and talent acquisition professionals are all human. And being human, most tend to succumb to human nature when confronted with the opportunity to hire former members of our nation's military. They likely ask themselves: "Why should I invest time, resources, and money to address an ever-shrinking minority of my workforce?" They ask with good reason. Some facts:

- Veterans represent a mere 5.2% of the civilian labor forceⁱ
- Their population is expected to dwindle by 34 percent over the next 25 years.ⁱⁱ

I would come to the same conclusion if that were all I understood. And that conclusion is often compounded by the *traditional stereotypes* that this talent pool engenders:

- *Veterans are uneducated.*
- *All veterans served in combat capacity and have no applicable skill sets.*
- *All veterans suffer from PTSD.*
- *The military is not diverse.*
- *All veterans are disabled and require costly accommodations.*
- *Veterans are neither plentiful nor available.*
- *I have no control over Guard or Reserve employees being activated and deployed.*
- *Veteran hiring programs have no quantifiable outcomes.*
- *Hiring veterans has no direct impact on national security.*
- *Most organizations already have veteran hiring programs in place. Why bother?*

However, reality presents another picture entirely.

- **Veterans are more educated than their civilian peers.** 96.4 percent of veterans have a high school diploma versus 90.6 percent of non-veterans. Also, veterans are *160 percent* more likely than non-veterans to have a graduate or other advanced degree. Moreover, veterans with bachelor's degrees have *three times* more work experience than non-veterans.ⁱⁱⁱ
- **~85 percent of veterans served in career fields identical to your organization's functions.** Only ~15 percent of veterans served in a combat specialty. The balance served in occupational specialties that mimic civilian career fields – Logistics, Engineering, Electronics, Mechanics, Protective Service, Healthcare, Administration, Human Resources, Machine Operator, Media and PR, Construction, and Support Services.^{iv}
- **There are more than five times the number of civilians in your organization that have PTSD.** In a notional 1000-person organization, veterans comprise 6 percent of the

workforce (60 people). Between 11-20 percent of post-9/11 veterans suffer from PTSD (60 x 20% = 12 people). Between 7-8 percent of the balance of your workforce (940 non-veterans) also suffer from PTSD (940 x 7% = 66 people).^v

- **The military's diversity is a strength and continues to change.** Women now comprise 17 percent of our active-duty military (up from 11 percent in 1990), and racial and ethnic minority groups make up more than 31 percent.^{vi} Moreover, as a protected employee class, veterans help insulate DEI programs from legal challenges following the Supreme Court's affirmative action case for college admissions this past summer.
- **Most veterans do not require disability accommodations, 58 percent of which cost nothing.** Thirty-seven percent of surveyed employers said they experienced a median one-time accommodation cost of \$500. Only three percent said the accommodation resulted in an ongoing, annual cost to the company.^{vii}
- **Veterans are plentiful and available.** Two hundred thousand veterans matriculate into the civilian work sector annually. And unlike their peers on college campuses, they are available year-round and on demand.^{viii}
- **All employers have the right to limit the impact of the activation of Reserve Component (RC - Guard and Reserve) employees.** By law, the Department of Defense must limit the cumulative absences of RC members. Additionally, employers may request that some workers be named "key employees" who cannot mobilize. To educate and protect themselves, all employers should join the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), a DoD program that promotes cooperation between RC members and their civilian employers and helps resolve conflicts arising from an employee's military commitment.^{ix}
- **Veteran hiring programs have direct and quantifiable outcomes.** Start with the fact that the nation's military community comprises 37 Million individuals who wield \$1.2 Trillion in annual buying power. Add to that the fact that organizations with the most inclusive and best talent management approaches, including veterans, realize several advantages:
 - 22 percent increase in productivity
 - 13 times higher mean cash flow from operations
 - ~4 times more able to deal with personnel performance problems
 - ~3 times more likely to identify and build leaders^x
- **Hiring veterans has a direct and quantifiable impact on national security.** If military service is not seen as a gateway to successful civilian careers, future recruits may be dissuaded from serving. Moreover, the Department of Defense (DoD) must pay Unemployment Insurance for Ex-Servicemembers (UCX) to states whose veterans are not employed. These funds, whose amounts have varied from \$200-900+ Million in recent years, subtract from DoD's operating budget and thereby sacrifice funds that could otherwise be spent on our common defense.^{xi}
- **Most organizations do not have veteran hiring programs in place.** According to the US Chamber of Commerce, 90 percent of small businesses, which make up > 99% of the companies in the country and enable 42 percent of new jobs, do NOT intentionally hire veterans. According to a Korn Ferry survey of 700 large businesses:
 - 80% of organizations do NOT have veteran-specific hiring programs

- 71% of organizations do NOT provide talent acquisition professionals training on hiring veterans
- 52% of organizations do NOT provide onboarding or transition support to veteran hires^{xii}

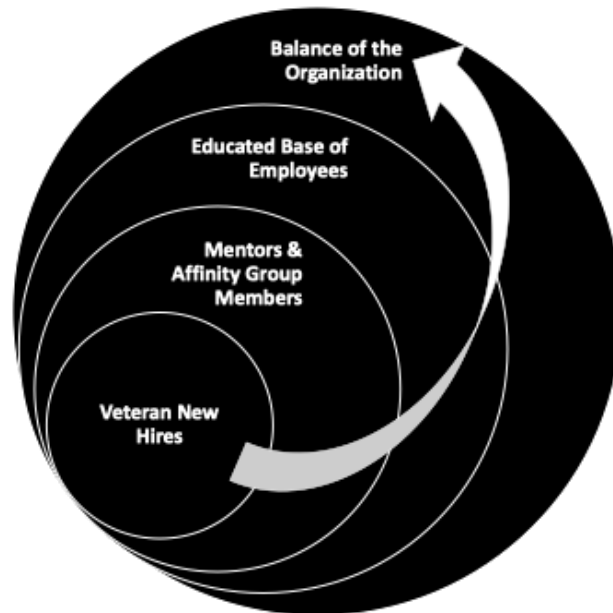
In fact, veterans bring precisely the skills cited by civilian employers needed for success in the workplace:



In addition, hiring veterans may beget your organization valuable work opportunity tax credits and recognition in the marketplace, burnishing your organization’s brand and bottom line.

And yet, I've heard many employers tell me the same story when I ask them if they hire veterans: "We have tried hiring veterans, but they just didn't work out for whatever reason." When I ask if they had a formal hiring program, the answer is inevitably "No." It’s a missed opportunity.

Formal veteran hiring programs serve several purposes whose ultimate outcome is your organization’s improved productivity and competitiveness. As veterans already within your workforce will likely drive these programs, they enable a built-in source of expertise that you might leverage for tasks that comprise essential aspects of the program: veteran business resource group leadership, marketing, talent identification and recruiting, onboarding training, mentoring programs, and training of your existing employee base. Moreover, these “tribal peers” enable new veteran hires’ rapid assimilation into the organization’s culture, which largely determines their tenure and success in your organization (see the Veteran Networking Assimilation Process below).



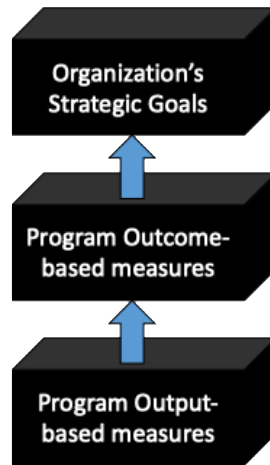
Veteran Networking Assimilation Process^{xiv}

A formal program need not necessitate a prodigious expenditure of time and resources. I suspect you may have much of the staffing already available in your organization in the form of veterans in your workforce. You may simply have yet to identify and mobilize them.

Now is your opportunity. Not leveraging this talent pool's value will short-change you, your organization, and other segments of your employee population that would benefit. Getting started is easy. Some simple steps for initiating a program include:

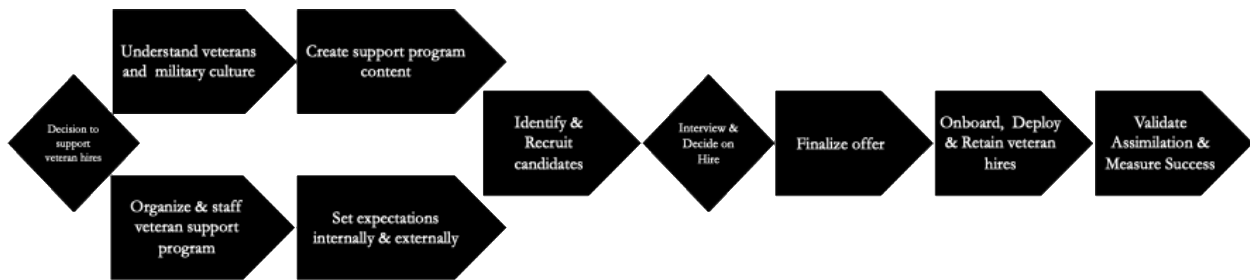
- Ensuring top-down executive-level leadership support
- Initiating a veteran Business Resource Group (BRG), whose leaders will help implement the balance of program requirements
- Implementing onboarding and mentoring programs

In doing so, it's vital to enable a direct relationship between your program's outcome-based measures and your organization's strategic goals to ensure accountability and demonstrate how the veteran hiring program improved organizational outcomes (see Relationship Between Program and Organizational Metrics below). Also, organizations will want to ensure compliance with all applicable regulatory obligations (i.e., USERRA, VEVRAA, ADA, FMLA, and OFCCP)



Relationship Between Program and Organizational Metrics^{xv}

These simple steps will quickly get you out of the starting gate and down the path. You will find additional details for implementing a world-class veteran hiring program in my book **Hiring Veterans: How To Leverage Military Talent For Organizational Growth**, which uses the below Hiring Veterans Assimilation Process as its basis. It has rapidly become the most awarded book of its kind ever written.



Hiring Veterans Assimilation Process^{xvi}

For hiring managers and talent acquisition professionals who may still struggle to understand where they might find veteran talent and how to translate their backgrounds, please visit my award-winning website at www.matthewjlouis.com, which is chock-full of valuable resources and video courses and our Purepost business at www.purepost.co. Purepost products will instantly match the skills and competencies your available job openings require with the translated job histories of individuals in our profile database.

In short, the resources, support, and guidance to enable your organization to improve its competitiveness and productivity by leveraging military talent are at your fingertips. Please take advantage of them for your sake and that of the nation. Just don't "wing it."

About The Author

[Matt Louis](#) is one of the nation's leading experts in career transition for military community members. He coaches individuals on their transition efforts and advises employers on hiring programs designed to assimilate this valuable talent pool successfully. He is the author of the award-winning¹ and Amazon best-selling HarperCollins book [Mission Transition](#), a practical guide for veterans in career transition, their families, and their employers. His second book, [Hiring Veterans](#), is an award-winning² practical guide for organizational leaders on how to build programs to assimilate members of the military community successfully.

Matt serves as the veteran Transition Assistance officer for his West Point class, is a National Speaker for the US Chamber's Hiring Our Heroes program, serves JPMorgan Chase's external advisory council for military and veterans affairs, and advises the board of Soldiers To Sidelines.

During active commissioned service in the US Army, Matt served in the Southwest Asia combat theater and in the 194th Separate Armored Brigade. During reserve commissioned service, Matt served on the staff of the Army's Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and commanded multiple regions around the country for the US Military Academy's Admissions Office. He is a retired Lieutenant Colonel from the US Army and serves on the Service Academy nominating committee for his local Congressman.

Matt holds an MBA in Operations and Finance from The Kelley School of Business at Indiana University, a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering from West Point, and a US Army Command and General Staff College graduate. He is also a certified Lean Six Sigma Master Black Belt and holds the ASCM organization's Certified Supply Chain Professional designation.

Matt is also the President of [Purepost](#), which is the optimal means for matching talent to available roles in the US economy. He previously led global strategy and transformation projects at Deloitte, the largest professional services firm in the world. Before Deloitte, Matt held global operational, production, and quality roles in multiple divisions of both General Electric and Procter & Gamble.

¹ 2022 International Readers' Favorite Gold Medal for Non-Fiction Military; 2021 eLit Book Awards: Gold Medal for Business / Career / Sales, Gold Medal for Current Events (Foreign Affairs / Military), Gold Medal for Best Author Website; 2023 American Book Fest Best Book Award (Legacy Nonfiction), Award Finalist (Legacy: Self-Help / Spirituality); 2023 Independent Author Network Book of the Year Award winner (Outstanding Career/Occupational), Grand Prize (Nonfiction Award, Third Place), Award Finalist (First Nonfiction), Award Finalist (Nonfiction Military/War), Award Finalist (Nonfiction Self-Help/How-To); 2021 Nonfiction Authors Association Silver Book Award; 2022 Global Book Awards (War & Military); 2021 Axiom Business Book Bronze Medal (Career); 2021 Living Now Book Awards Bronze Medal (Motivation / Improvement); 2023 North American Book Awards Bronze Medal (Military Nonfiction); 2023 Maincrest Media Book Award Winner (Military Nonfiction); 2023 Book Excellence Award (Career); 2023 Book Fest Book Awards: Website / Overall Design, 2nd place; Nonfiction Business - Careers, 3rd place; 2023 Outstanding Creator Awards: #21 Best Non-fiction Book; Best Military Book, 1st place; Best Self-Help & How-to Book, 1st place; Best Educational & Reference Book, 1st place; 2023 International Firebird Book Award (Career & Military Nonfiction); Pinnacle Book Achievement Award (Career) Fall 2022; 2022 Incipere Book Awards (Self-Improvement, 2nd place); 2022 Chanticleer International Book Awards (Military & Front Line, 1st Place; Instructional & Insightful Nonfiction, Finalist); 2023 Goody Business Book Award Winner (Self-Help / Personal Transformation), Award Finalist (Career Success); 2023 Four Seasons Book Awards Finalist; 2023 BooksShelf Nonfiction Writing Contest Finalist (Top 5%); 5-Star reviews: The Book Commentary, Readers' Favorite; #1 for Job Markets & Advice – Amazon, November 2022.

² 2024 Nonfiction Authors Association Gold Book Award; 2024 Chanticleer International Harvey Chute Book Awards 1st Place (Business & Enterprise); 2024 Independent Press Award (How-To); 2023 American Writing Awards Winner (Business Sales), Award Finalist (Business General), Award Finalist (Business Management & Leadership); 2023 American Book Fest Best Book Award Winner (Business Reference), Award Finalist (Business General), Award Finalist (Best New Nonfiction); 2023 Independent Author Network Book of the Year Award Finalist (Military / War); 2023 Goody Business Books Award Winner (Self-Help / How-To), Award Finalist (Leadership / HR & Employee Development); 2024 Axiom Business Book Awards Bronze Medal (Business / Human Resources / Employee Training); 2023 Incipere Awards – Third Place (Self-Help / Personal Development); 2024 Book Excellence Award Winner (Human Resources); 2024 BookFest Book Awards - First Place (Nonfiction, Business Labor); 2024 American Legacy Book Awards Finalist (Best New Nonfiction, Business: General, Business: Reference); 2024 International Book Awards Finalist (Business: Reference); 2023 Global Book Awards Finalist (War & Military); 2023 Pinnacle Book Achievement Award (Business Reference); 2023 Chanticleer International Book Awards (Military & Front Line, Shortlist); 5-Star reviews: Maincrest Media, Readers' Favorite, The Book Commentary; Amazon #1 New Release (Job Hunting) September 2023..

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- ⁱⁱⁱ U. S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, Table 3: Employment status of persons 25 years and over by veteran status, period of service, and educational attainment, 2021 annual averages. <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/vet.t03.htm>. Accessed August 26, 2022. See also: Melissa Boatwright and Sarah Roberts, “Veteran Opportunity Report: Understanding an untapped talent pool,” LinkedIn, accessed September 1, 2022, <https://socialimpact.linkedin.com/content/dam/me/linkedinforgood/en-us/resources/veterans/LinkedIn-Veteran-Opportunity-Report.pdf>.
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^{xv} Matthew J. Louis, *Hiring Veterans: How to Leverage Military Talent for Organizational Growth* (Newburyport, MA: Career Press, 2023), p 53.

^{xvi} Matthew J. Louis, *Hiring Veterans: How to Leverage Military Talent for Organizational Growth* (Newburyport, MA: Career Press, 2023).