

MILITARY-TRANSITION.ORG

TRUTHS ABOUT THE MILITARY TRANSITION



ACTIVE DUTY

EVERYONE WILL TRANSITION

It's a fact that every service member will eventually take off their uniform and return to civilian life. Although true, many don't begin the planning process until after they decide to separate or retire. This delay could put you at a disadvantage.

So, why wait?

FACT: 100% OF MILITARY MEMBERS WILL BECOME CIVILIANS AGAIN

REGARDLESS OF BRANCH, RANK OR MILITARY OCCUPATION/SPECIALTY, THERE ARE A NUMBER OF OPTIONS AFTER SERVING:

1. Degree or training program (school)	4. Care for self or another
2. Work for someone else (employee)	5. Become a dependent
3. Work for yourself (entrepreneur)	6. Guard or reserves
	7. Unemployment
	8. Retirement

Always remember that choices made while serving will impact your future life and career options.

Throughout your career, the relevance of what you will do outside of the military should always be top of mind. Thoughtful planning doesn't change your duties. Instead, it can help gain experiences to enhance your resume leading to additional and better future options.

WHAT VETERANS SAY



“Learning how to take off my uniform was harder than learning how to put it on.”



“Transitioning from the military is a full-time job that you have to do part-time while still serving.”



“The amount of preparation directly correlated with the ease of my transition.”



“Network, network, network...80% of hiring happens via networks, not online portals. You’ve got to get your name and resume in front of a hiring manager so leverage your network to get looked at.”



“Treat the civilian world as a foreign country. They speak a different language, have a different culture and customs.”



“Realize that you will be competing for jobs with people who have worked their way up in a company or system; you are trying to move over from another system.”



“A civilian can’t step into an O4/5/6 or E7/8/9 position without military experience and be successful, so why should we think the same? Get a solid mid-level position, learn their world, and then use your training to outperform others. This is how you get into senior management roles.”

FACTS TO KNOW WHILE ON ACTIVE DUTY

2 YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR OWN TRANSITION

Regardless of what anyone says, you and you alone are responsible for your own transition. Preparation should begin long before the paperwork has been submitted. Get started now and ensure you have realistic options

FACT: 84% OF VETERANS RECOMMEND STARTING EARLY

MOST COMMON REASONS WHY MEMBERS WAIT TO BEGIN PREPARING:

- 1. I'm too busy
- 2. I don't know what to do
- 3. I'm focused on the mission
- 4. My position doesn't allow it
- 5. I don't want to disappoint others

Another reason is overconfidence. This comes from a perception that civilians are undisciplined which leads some members to think military training makes us better leaders and overall performers. As a result, veterans just need to apply and their dream position will be attained. As a hiring manager with two-decades of experience, I can assure you this isn't true. In all cases, organizations look for individuals that can perform the work required first and foremost.

After this, being a veteran equates to some type of extra credit. If you can't do the work needed, no amount of extra credit will get you the job.

As for the perception that civilians are undisciplined; please erase this from your thinking. I've encountered many individuals (non-veterans) that rival the most elite service members.

3 THE PROCESS CAN BE STRESSFUL & CONFUSING



FACTS TO KNOW WHILE ON ACTIVE DUTY

Many veterans say their transition was stressful and describe the process as if they were entering the unknown. Think about entering a dark room with obstacles and potential dangers. Would you enter before knowing the situation and how to avoid the obstacles? What about getting assistance or finding ways to illuminate the environment?

The more you can reduce the uncertainty, the more likely you are to be successful. The same holds true for the transition process.

FACT: 76% OF VETERANS SAY THEIR TRANSITION WAS STRESSFUL

After two-decades of mentoring and enabling service members, there are three transition groups I have identified:



Group 1

THOSE TOTALLY UNPREPARED TO ENTER AN UNKNOWN SITUATION

These individuals have some marketable skills, but often lack awareness regarding the relevance or value of these skills. The reasons for this might include lack of education, age or limited life experience, and exaggerated self-worth or expectations. This group tends to delay or avoid realistic preparation and is completely unprepared for what follows their military service.

3 THE PROCESS CAN BE STRESSFUL & CONFUSING

(CONTINUED)

 *Group 2*

THOSE WITH SOME PREPARATION TO ENTER AN ENVIRONMENT OF UNCERTAINTY

These individuals have marketable skills, but must learn how to translate these and demonstrate their relevance (value). This requires time and effort, and many under-estimate the difficulty associated with this process. The majority of service members fall into this group and the level of unknown is dependent upon their preparation and effort before, during and after the transition.

 *Group 3*

THOSE WHO ARE PREPARED TO ENTER A SOMEWHAT UNFAMILIAR SITUATION

These individuals have hard skills that translate directly into the workforce, which makes it easier to secure meaningful employment in their areas of expertise. Examples include health professionals, pilots, specialized technicians, and individuals that return as civil servants in roles consistent with previous military duties. This also includes members that find similar roles with government contractors.

Which group do you want to be in?

In all cases, understanding and preparation will help reduce the transition stress, confusion, and unknown. How you prepare is dependent upon what you want in your follow-on life and career.

4 UNDERSTANDING AND PREPARATION ARE ESSENTIAL



The military uses consistent processes to reduce the level of unknown and maximize the likelihood of success. We define mission objectives, understand unit capabilities, train/prepare, and execute.

Your transition should follow the same process:

Define your mission objectives

- ★ What are your post-military interests?
- ★ Are you researching all available options?

Understand your capabilities

- ★ What marketable skills do you currently have?
- ★ Are there additional skills or credentials you need?

Train/prepare

- ★ Are you building your network?
- ★ Can you communicate your value?

Execute

- ★ Are you contacting the right schools or employers?
- ★ Are you learning and adapting?

FACT: 48% OF VETERANS SAY THEIR TRANSITION WAS MORE DIFFICULT THAN EXPECTED

FACTS TO KNOW WHILE ON ACTIVE DUTY

WHAT VETERANS SAY



“Stop using military jargon – it confuses people and pushes them away.”



“Personal responsibility is critical during the transition.”



“It’s not easy and doesn’t happen overnight. Be patient and learn how to talk about your military career so that it’s relevant to the company. Demonstrate the value you bring through your resume and with interesting stories and examples during your interview.”



“Remember that your family also makes the transition and it can be difficult for them.”



“Think about what you want to do as a civilian LONG before you are nearing separation. Often times there’s not a one-to-one comparison to your military job, but the skills you have are valuable on the outside.”



“Just because you were a certain rank, don’t expect to jump into a civilian career that equals your military responsibilities. Have realistic expectations.”



“There is no one formula. No one is going to take an interest in your civilian career more than you. There is no detailer, career counselor, branch officer or assignment officer. You are the CEO of YOU.”

5 EVERYONE HAS A DIFFERENT EXPERIENCE



Everyone goes through the same process when entering the military. Daily activities are regimented and participation is mandatory. There's clear direction and members can watch others when unsure of what to do. Recruits are isolated from the outside world and individual freedoms are removed. Everyone performs as a team and there is a defined support network.

The transition into civilian life is the exact opposite.

You now get a choice in all activities and don't have a clearly defined team to assist. You must make all decisions, many with limited information, which ultimately determine your future path. You're expected to fit into both cultures (military/civilian) at the same time while relearning how to become a civilian again.

FACT: 83% OF VETERANS RECOMMEND HAVING A TRANSITION PLAN

To be successful, you need to have a plan to achieve your goals. The first step in this process is to learn about yourself and what you would like to accomplish after serving.

- ★ What are your post-military goals?
- ★ What do you want to do with the remainder of your life?

That's a tall order to fill and the answer should require time and effort to realize. Self-reflection and discovery can enable this process. During this process, consider talking with veterans who've already made the transition.

Ask them about their experience and what helped them learn, understand and adapt. Ask if they would make any changes.

5 EVERYONE HAS A DIFFERENT EXPERIENCE

(CONTINUED)

Consider the following exercises to get started and be sure to document your experiences in a transition journey. Yes, you should keep notes about your experiences and refer to these as you progress.

1. Find answers to important questions such as:

- ★ If money wasn't an issue, what would I do with my time?
- ★ What work situations or environments do I prefer?
- ★ Do I enjoy being around other people?

2. Make a list each day that includes:

- ★ 3 things that made you feel significant or valued
- ★ 3 things that made you feel insignificant or unappreciated

** Review after 60-days and see if there are themes that can help guide your thinking*

3. Evaluate every role you've had since age 16:

- ★ What did you learn in each role?
- ★ What did you like and dislike?
- ★ Who was your boss and what did you learn from them?
- ★ Did you have co-workers? What did you learn from them or about yourself when interacting with them?

Throughout these exercises, be honest with yourself. No one else needs to see your journal notes and honest answers to hard questions will really help guide important decisions. Use what you learn to help define post-military goals and start developing plans to achieve life and career goals.

6 THE BEST LESSONS COME FROM THOSE WITH EXPERIENCE



Learning from others is important and a strong network can help you understand and navigate the transition process.

FACT: 86% OF VETERANS SAY THAT NETWORKING IS IMPORTANT TO BE SUCCESSFUL

Don't allow the idea of networking to be intimidating. Start simple and just be yourself. Here are some ideas to get started:

- ★ Reach out to members you served with that are studying or working in the jobs or careers that interest you. Ask questions and learn from their re-integration experiences. When comfortable, ask them for introductions so that you can expand your connections and learn from others.
- ★ Get on professional networking platforms such as LinkedIn and listen to the discussions. Contact veterans and individuals who didn't serve in the military and ask questions about their industry, company, and career.
- ★ Find mentors through organizations like ACP (American Corporate Partners), Veterati, USO, Hiring Our Heroes and FourBlock. Join online and local community groups and talk with people you don't know. Learn from everyone you encounter (veterans, non-veterans, employers, and family).
- ★ Keep in-touch with your network, as time permits, and pay-it-back after you've completed your transition.

FACTS TO KNOW WHILE ON ACTIVE DUTY

7 SOME VETERANS AREN'T READY

The fact is that some veterans just aren't ready to begin their follow-on lives, and there are many reasons why. Some need time to address medical issues or have challenges dealing with less structured environments.

Some struggle with a perceived lack of commitment from co-workers and others miss being part of an extended family that takes care of its members.

Others need time and training to enhance their skills, while others require new skills, certifications, and degrees to achieve future goals.

Some need time to deal with family matters because of extended deployments and others require additional life experience or a realistic understanding of their true marketable skills and abilities.

FACT: 52% OF VETERANS SAY THEIR SKILLS ALIGNED WITH THEIR FIRST CIVILIAN POSITION

Regardless of the reason, you should take the time needed to adapt and navigate the process. Making sure you know your life and career goals (mission objectives) is a great first step.

Invest the time and set a course for success.

Don't be afraid to ask for help. There are thousands of veterans who've been there and organizations available to assist.

8 MOST HIRING MANAGERS 8 AREN'T VETERANS



FACTS TO KNOW WHILE ON ACTIVE DUTY

The military offers vital skills and life lessons for those who serve. However, these skills are only marketable when explained so that organizations understand and see relevance to their needs.

While this might sound easy, it continues to be one of the greatest challenges members face when re-integrating.

FACT: 83% OF VETERANS SAY THAT LEARNING HOW TO TRANSLATE YOUR SKILLS IS IMPORTANT TO BE SUCCESSFUL

There are three keys to successfully translating skills and experience:

1. Language

The military has a language of its own which most civilians don't understand. We use terms, acronyms, and jargon that are unique to our environment. Even in the military, there are different languages within and between branches. How can we expect civilians to understand if we can't understand ourselves? The first step in translating your experience is to de-militarize your words and stop using acronyms and jargon so others can understand.

8 MOST HIRING MANAGERS 8 AREN'T VETERANS

(CONTINUED)

2. Alignment

Employers only hire because they have a need. The fact that you served is interesting, but irrelevant if you can't satisfy their specific need. The goal of all communications with employers is to demonstrate how your skills and experience align with and satisfy their need. Telling war stories that have no connection to the position of interest will not advance your employment. You might get a smile, but won't land your dream job.

3. Impact

Being responsible for high-tech equipment, infrastructure, and personnel to support is good, but isn't going to get you hired. Achieving results and exceeding expectations with these resources will make you attractive to employers, only if you can demonstrate the value these experiences bring. Doing this can be a challenge, so don't wait until the end of your career to start thinking about what you're doing, how it applies and how to explain so employers understand.

9 COMPENSATION IS DIFFERENT OUTSIDE OF THE MILITARY



FACTS TO KNOW WHILE ON ACTIVE DUTY

A direct comparison of military and civilian pay isn't accurate because of the allowances and tax-free benefits given to service members. Another difference with civilian pay/salaries is the frequency and level of increases.

Do your research and understand the appropriate range for the position, skill set and location of which you are applying.

FACT: 38% OF VETERANS SAY THEIR FIRST SALARY WAS WORSE THAN EXPECTED

While in uniform, compensation was based upon rank and time-in-service. Promotion timing and pay increases were predictable.

In the civilian workforce, pay increases can occur at any point and amounts can vary from small to exceptionally large.

Compensation is based upon the value you deliver. The first action when starting a new role is to understand and integrate with the environment. Don't expect any increases until you've established yourself and begin contributing value. At this point, you might explore compensation discussions that weren't possible earlier in the hiring process.

Remember that pay or salary is just one factor in the total compensation plan and other elements such as health care and retirement plans should be taken into consideration.

10 PATIENCE & PERSISTENCE ARE REQUIRED

A successful military to civilian transition requires time and effort.

FACT: 59% OF VETERANS SAY THEIR TRANSITION TOOK MORE TIME THAN EXPECTED

Reconnecting with family, understanding life aspirations, and getting on the right path takes time. Don't expect this to occur overnight.

Don't overlook the fact that your family must also undergo the transition and include them in plans and decisions.

Military families endure challenges and the appeal of a more stable schedule or environment can be appealing, however the sense of community can be different on the outside. Talk to your family and make sure they are aware of what's ahead and prepared for the change.

As mentioned previously, have a transition plan that adapts as you learn more about yourself and the path that best aligns with your life and career goals. Expect setbacks and delays along the path.

Finally, don't forget to help others once you've successfully navigated the transition process!



WHAT VETERANS SAY



“If you don’t know what you want to do, that’s okay, but you need to have a plan for exploring. Don’t be aimless.”



“Be prepared to feel overwhelmed but maintain your composure. There are many resources available to help you succeed.”



“Get certifications (examples: IT or PMP) while on active duty. Take the time and walk away from your current duty assignment because the minute you walk out the door, you’re forgotten about.”



“Companies care about results, not effort.”



“It’s important to get your foot in the door. Once in a company, you can work to find the best fit for your skills, but you can’t do it from the outside.”



“Civilians do not understand the military (unless they served). Focus on what you can do for them and the experiences you have that relate to the position you are applying for.”



“Learn how to tailor your military skills into civilian skills. Recruiters cannot read between the lines.”

FACTS TO KNOW WHILE ON ACTIVE DUTY

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