

# **Military Veteran Employment Guide**



**ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
& WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

# Veteran Employment Guide

## Purpose of this guide

Cultural differences between the military and civilian workplace impact the way businesses recruit veterans and can affect the performance, satisfaction and retention of these prospective and current employees. This guide will enable hiring managers and employers to better understand the military in order to effectively recruit, integrate, and retain veterans with valuable military skills.

## Understanding the military

The military has its own culture, language and ways of conducting business. A basic knowledge of the structure, policies, values and expectations of the military will help you better understand, communicate and interact with veterans.

## Military branches

There are five branches of the U.S. military in addition to their National Guard and Reserve components:

Branch	Function
Army	As the oldest and largest branch, it is the main ground force used to protect the security of the country and its resources.
Navy	Defends the right to travel and trade freely on the world's oceans and protects national interests overseas.
Marine Corps	The amphibious division of the Navy that serves as a lighter, faster, agile strike force for rapid response.
Air Force	Protects American interests at home and abroad with a focus on air power.
Coast Guard	Protects U.S. waterways and augments the Navy during wartime.

Each military branch contains both an Active Component (AC) along with National Guard and/or Reserve components. AC service members work full-time for the military while National Guard and Reserve service members perform part-time military service. Typically, they are obligated to serve one weekend per month and two weeks per year.

## Military rank structure

There are a number of jobs and levels of responsibility which a service member may hold. By knowing the military ranks and pay grades, you can better understand the type of experience gained by veterans.

- **Enlisted personnel:** Make up the majority of service members and are the specialists of the military. They are trained to perform specific hands-on tasks. As enlisted personnel progress up the ranks, they assume more responsibility and provide direct supervision to their subordinates.
- **Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs):** Enlisted members holding a position of some degree of authority, usually obtained by promotion for performance, knowledge and discipline. Additional testing and leadership schools are often required to achieve these ranks. Senior NCOs are typically mid-level managers/leaders who have great impact on the enlisted force and advise commanders/officer leaders.
- **Warrant officers:** Make up approximately two percent of the military. They are the highly trained subject matter experts who provide specialized knowledge to enlisted members and commissioned officers.
- **Commissioned officers:** Similar to executives or leaders at a company and have the primary functions of providing overall management, planning and leadership. They must have a bachelor's degree at a minimum, but many have advanced degrees.

**Military rank basics:** Enlisted personnel do, NCOs oversee the doing, warrant officers provide subject matter expertise and commissioned officers lead and plan.

Though rank names vary across the services, each rank correlates to a military pay grade that is standard across the branches. Please see the appendix for a table listing the military ranks by service branch and pay grade.

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## Military culture

In addition to having a distinctive function and purpose, each branch also has a unique culture of its own, which is instilled through the branch's core values:

Branch	Core values
Army	Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity and Personal Courage
Navy	Honor, Courage and Commitment
Marine Corps	Honor, Courage and Commitment
Air Force	Integrity First, Service before Self and Excellence in All We Do
Coast Guard	Honor, Respect and Devotion to Duty

The cultural differences between military and civilian life may present themselves in various ways. Listed below are some of the common cultural work differences between military and civilian culture:

Term	Military translation	Civilian translation
Authority	Single with a direct style	Matrix, team consensus
Timeliness	On time every time with a constant sense of urgency	Flexible
Organizational Structure	Formal command and control with a constant awareness of situation and surroundings	Less formal, matrix organization
Appearance	Strict clothing and appearance standards	Depends on the position and organization

In the military, authority is often delegated but responsibility is retained. Military leaders take responsibility for their subordinates while trusting them with authority.

## Recruiting

To avoid missing applicants with strong skills, abilities, and aptitudes, hiring managers may want to carefully review the military resume and take time to speak with veterans about their military experience. Doing so will help hiring teams understand how military service and experience translates into the civilian workplace, increasing the success of recruiting military talent.

### The military résumé

A military résumé may be very different from a civilian résumé. Many service members include military terminology, acronyms and other references that can be confusing. Many veterans have never had to compile their professional experience in a résumé format. As such, it may be necessary to dig into the experience listed in a military résumé to identify specific core competencies and skill sets. Recognizing the need to adjust recruiting practices will keep you from inadvertently screening out well-qualified veterans.

### Tips to consider

- The military operates on bases which are like self-supporting cities with more than 7,000 jobs across more than 100 functional areas, the vast majority of which have a direct civilian job equivalent. The online tool O\*Net ([online.onetcenter.org/crosswalk/](https://online.onetcenter.org/crosswalk/)) allows you to search by military occupational code (MOC) or job title to find the civilian equivalents.
- Compare the core values of the applicant's military service branch with the core competencies of the open position.
- Consider that a military career is more of a "trek" than a "track." The most recent job does not necessarily represent the highest level of accomplishment – positions move laterally over time.
- Consider military veterans even if the individual does not have direct industry experience. Focus on capabilities over equivalent job history. Generally look for an eighty percent or better job fit, with a twenty percent gap in industry knowledge which can be addressed through training after hire.
- Don't eliminate military veterans from consideration based on their location. The military offers relocation benefits to transitioning service members.

## **Interviewing**

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It is important to be aware of how cultural differences between military and civilian life may impact the interview. For example, military members are trained to be part of a team – they generally do not elaborate on or boast about their individual accomplishments. To someone who is not familiar with military culture, this may appear like the individual doesn't really want the job and isn't "selling him- or herself." Additionally, many veterans have never had a formal job interview. To successfully interview veterans, it is important to understand the cultural differences and be well prepared.

### **Tips to consider**

- Take the time to explain the hiring process.
- Clearly define job role and responsibilities, defining expectations and avoiding generalizations.
- Avoid questions that are likely to elicit information about a potential disability (e.g., "Did you see any action over there?") or which may seem to seek information on how often the applicant will need to be away from work (e.g., "You've been a member of the National Guard for a year. How often do you get called for duty?").
- Use behavior-based interview questions along with follow-up questions to find experience, skills or competencies that may not be apparent upon the initial response.
- Identify the connection between civilian and military work experience by asking questions about the military experience and actively listening to identify skill sets that correlate with the required job skills.
- Conclude by thanking the military member for his/her service. Remember, while you are trying to determine if he/she is good for your business, the individual is trying to determine if they want to work for you.

A 2008 study, conducted by the Wall Street Journal and SHRM, identified the Top 10 Critical Skills Needs and Resources for the Changing Workforce. Ninety percent of respondents to a survey tied to that study stated that their recent veteran hires possessed four of those skills sets: adaptability, problem solving, leadership and follow-through.

## **Integrating**

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To ensure the successful employment and engagement of military veterans, it is essential to assist veteran new hires in integrating and establishing a connection with your organization.

### **Tips to consider**

- Staff veterans together so they can share their experiences and have a sense of camaraderie. If you don't have any other veterans, consider placing a veteran near a staff member who has a family member or close friend in the military.
- Clearly communicate norms, roles, performance expectations, policies and expected timelines for promotion.
- Reiterate your commitment to veterans and the value they bring to your organization.
- Provide resources and/or training to assist with acquiring business acumen.
- Place a value on military service. Many veterans have leadership capabilities above and beyond the typical civilian employee. Value this characteristic and find ways to weave leadership responsibilities into the civilian position.

## **Performance management and career development**

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Veterans and service members are used to being provided clear direction for performance expectations, career advancement, and compensation growth. As such, it is important to reinforce open communication throughout the employment process.

### **Tips to consider**

- Provide clear information on how work will be measured and what work gets rewarded as well as how.
- Provide information about training and development opportunities. In the military, service members constantly train and attend schools to ensure they operate at the highest levels.
- Define lines of communication and management style.

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## Rank structure by service branch and pay grade

Pay Grade	Army	Marine Corps	Navy/Coast Guard	Air Force	Civilian Equivalent
<b>Commissioned officers</b>					
O-10	General	General	Admiral	General	Chief Executive Officer, Director, Chief Operating Officer, Deputy Chief, Chief Administrator
O-9	Lieutenant General	Lieutenant General	Vice Admiral	Lieutenant General	
O-8	Major General	Major General	Rear Admiral Upper Half	Major General	
O-7	Brigadier General	Brigadier General	Rear Admiral Lower Half	Brigadier General	
O-6	Colonel	Colonel	Captain	Colonel	
O-5	Lieutenant Colonel	Lieutenant Colonel	Commander	Lieutenant Colonel	
O-4	Major	Major	Lieutenant Commander	Major	Executive Officer, Deputy Director
O-3	Captain	Captain	Lieutenant	Captain	Operations Officer, Program Administrator, Supervisor
O-2	First Lieutenant	First Lieutenant	Lieutenant Junior Grade	First Lieutenant	
O-1	Second Lieutenant	Second Lieutenant	Ensign	Second Lieutenant	
<b>Enlisted personnel</b>					
Senior Enlisted Advisors	Sergeant Major of the Army	Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps	Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy/Coast Guard	Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force	Technical Advisor, Division Supervisor, Group Supervisor, Senior Advisor, Group Manager
E-9	Command Sergeant Major	Sergeant Major	CMD Master Chief Petty Officer	CMD Chief Master Sergeant	
	Sergeant Major	Master Gunnery Sergeant	Master Chief Petty Officer	Chief Master Sergeant	
E-8	First Sergeant	First Sergeant	Senior Chief Petty Officer	Senior Master Sergeant	
	Master Sergeant	Master Sergeant			
E-7	Sergeant First Class	Gunnery Sergeant	Chief Petty Officer	Master Sergeant	
E-6	Staff Sergeant	Staff Sergeant	Petty Officer First Class	Technical Sergeant	Manager, Foreman, Technical Supervisor
E-5	Sergeant	Sergeant	Petty Officer Second Class	Staff Sergeant	
E-4	Corporal	Corporal	Petty Officer Third Class	Senior Airman	Team Supervisor, Trainer
	Specialist				
E-3	Private First Class	Lance Corporal	Seaman	Airman First Class	Member, Technician
E-2	Private	Private First Class	Seaman Apprentice	Airman	
E-1	Private	Private	Seaman Recruit	Airman Basic	

## Legal considerations

There are various employment-related legal rights pertaining to current and former service members. As managers, employers or HR professionals, it is important to be aware of these rights and to take steps to ensure that these legal obligations are consistently followed. Below is a brief summary of the applicable federal laws, rules and regulations:

- The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) establishes reemployment rights for individuals who serve or have served in the military and who voluntarily or involuntarily leave employment positions to undertake military service. USERRA also prohibits employers from discriminating against those individuals based on past, present or future military service.
- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits discrimination in employment-related decisions against a qualified individual with a disability and establishes a duty for employers to provide reasonable accommodation to qualified individuals with disabilities who are employees or applicants for employment, unless to do so would cause undue hardship. These provisions may be applicable to disabled veterans and service members, such as veterans suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and/or physical conditions.
- Certain federal contractors have additional requirements regarding veterans and individuals with disabilities.

Employers cannot discriminate against an applicant or a current employee based on military service.

Family members of service members also have certain legal rights. For example, under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), the spouse, son, daughter or parent of a military member may be entitled to a leave of absence to address the most common issues that arise when a military member is deployed or to care for a service member who has been injured.

## Resources

Additional information on recruiting and retaining qualified veterans can be found at the following:

- [jobs.alaska.gov/veterans/employer](http://jobs.alaska.gov/veterans/employer)
- [onetonline.org/crosswalk/](http://onetonline.org/crosswalk/)
- [mynextmove.org/vets/](http://mynextmove.org/vets/)
- [todaysmilitary.com/service-branches](http://todaysmilitary.com/service-branches)
- [deploymentpsych.org](http://deploymentpsych.org)
- [dol.gov/vets/ahaw/](http://dol.gov/vets/ahaw/)

### If you would like to learn more

Center for Deployment Psychology offers a free online tutorial, *Military Cultural Competence*, which provides an overview of military culture including: organizational structure, rank, branches of service, core values and demographics. You can access this course by going to [deploymentpsych.org](http://deploymentpsych.org) > Training > Online Courses > Military Cultural Competence.

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- Savion, Dr. Sydney M. *Camouflage to Pinstripes: Learning to Thrive in a Civilian Culture*. Dallas, TX: Brown Books Publishing Group. 2012.
- [todaysmilitary.com/service-branches](http://todaysmilitary.com/service-branches)
- [deploymentpsych.org](http://deploymentpsych.org)
- [americasherosatwork.gov](http://americasherosatwork.gov)

## For more information on how we can assist you, please contact:

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Veteran Services employer website:  
[Jobs.alaska.gov/veterans/employer](http://Jobs.alaska.gov/veterans/employer)



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