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Enabling National Competitiveness

In addition to legislated and executive policies, concerns over national competitiveness have motivated calls to action by political and governmental players with regard to participation of the private sector and of the community in addressing the employment needs of military veterans. It is clear that the government is asking the private sector to take a role in hiring, e.g., VA Secretary Eric Shinseki engaging with the International Franchise Association (IFA) and its members, which have pledged 75,000 hires of veterans and their spouses by 2014. Other examples are the 100,000 Jobs Mission initiated by JPMC and partners, President Obama's call for private industry to hire 100,000 veterans, and others. Each is making progress; for example, the 100,000 Jobs Mission, at less than 12 months old, has reported that their 50 (and growing) member companies collectively hired 12,179 veterans through March 31, 2012. Even more important is that the coalition has begun sharing practices, tracking methods, and other resources with each other and with other interested employers, which may positively impact future veteran employment. However, private sector initiatives have not yet been sufficient, and with over 1 million veterans returning to the civilian sector over the next five years, more will need to be understood.

To date, the business case for hiring a veteran has been largely informed in the public domain by non-specific clichés about leadership and mission focus. While leadership ability and the strong sense of mission that comes from military service are characteristics that are highly valued in a competitive business environment, alone these generalizations are not enough to empower U.S. employers to move beyond art to science, and in doing so gain competitive advantage and fully benefit from the knowledge, training, and experiences represented by those who have served in the military.

Importantly, the business case validating the organizational value of a veteran is supported by academic research in a way that is both more robust and more complex than leadership and mission focus alone. Specifically, academic research from the fields of business, psychology, sociology, and decision-making strongly links characteristics that are generally representative of military veterans to enhanced performance and organizational advantage in the context of a competitive and dynamic business environment. In other words, the academic research supports a robust, specific, and compelling business case for hiring individuals with military background and experience.



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This competitive advantage must be communicated to business and industry, and demonstrated through the contributions of veterans to high-performing organizations. However, until that message is compellingly communicated and widely adopted, public/private and public initiatives will remain important in the direct employment context.



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