



LEADING PRACTICE

Leading Practice Examples: Retention

Companies have highlighted issues or specific approaches to support retaining veterans in the civilian workforce. The following are leading practice recommendations and highlights:

- Identify those work roles within your organization that require state/federal licensure or certification, and concurrently identify those military occupations that assume similar skills, training, and experience. Many of the available Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) translator tools can assist with mapping civilian work roles to military occupations.¹
- Firms with operating locations across multiple states may be positioned to leverage state-specific reciprocity agreements with regard to the licensing/certification opportunities for prospective veteran employees, where a given state has taken steps to provide licensing/certification opportunities to veterans (given military education/training/experience).
- Leverage internships, job shadowing, and similar initiative as an opportunity for veterans lacking the experience dimension of a licensing/certification requirement, to acquire the required experience. Additionally, if possible, provide these opportunities by putting existing veteran employees in the trainer capacity.
- Leverage local workforce development organizations, many of which provide training that will contribute to fulfilling certification requirements for many work roles. This training is often without cost to the employers.
- Leverage private-sector training programs such, as JPMC's "GET-VET" (Global Enterprise Technology Training for Veterans) at Syracuse University (SU)² or Prudential's "VETalent" program (technology training),³ as a workforce development opportunity for veterans. Both programs can lead to civilian sector certifications.



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Similar efforts exist in “green” jobs, forestry, firefighting, and other sectors in both government and the private sector.

- Examples of self-identification incentives that GE has developed within their tracking program include:
 - Social events & cocktail hours specific to veterans to recognize and honor their service. During these events, computers are available so that veterans can physically update the employee database and self-identify.
 - GE Appliances has developed a challenge coin and makes the announcement to the top management level that a veteran is getting a coin, which is given by the CEO as means of recognizing and honoring veterans companywide. This incentivizes other veterans to self-identify.
 - GE sends a message to identified veterans and asks them if they know any other veterans who have not self-identified and to help with that effort.
 - The veterans’ affinity networking group attracts veterans who usually do not come to veteran-specific events. The network provides many resources and initiatives such as professional development. The affinity network group has been the most effective initiative at GE (which is typical of affinity groups in a diversity context).
 - GE has created a veteran wall to honor veterans within the company.
- According to GE, in order to be successful, the company needs a “veteran-loving culture,” and the veteran initiative needs to come from their leadership. For example, during Veterans Day, GE invites Vietnam veterans to a social event with their top management. Furthermore, the company places service flags and an appreciation letter on each veteran’s desk, which reinforces positive recognition of veterans in the workplace and motivates other veterans to self-identify. This



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small act identified that the non-veterans were appreciative of the company for doing it, and they became more supportive of veterans.

- Compensation is important, but in many cases veterans are also focused on benefits related to their family and their well-being, given disability issues and family concerns. Highlight such benefits at the time of hire, and continue throughout their tenure.
- Pay attention to employees' personal needs and offer more flexibility where possible. Consider offering telecommuting, compressed schedules or onsite or back-up daycare when required. Offer benefits coordination to ensure transparent coordination between military, veteran, and civilian programs, particularly health and mental health care.
- By increasing veteran employee engagement with non-veteran employees, the firm will help veterans form organizational attachments, positioned to engender loyalty.
- Symbols, artifacts, and ceremony are the means through which the military engenders organizational commitment. As such, awards, recognition, and praise might just be the single most cost-effective way to maintain a committed veteran workforce.
- Provide a vision for the future, and help the veteran understand where they fit within the firm. Communicate that you are willing to invest time and money in order for them to achieve mutual goals.
- At JPMorgan Chase the Military Human Resources group (MHR) created a data strategy working group, responsible for continuously studying the recruitment process, in order to ascertain the efficacy of the tools and practices used by hiring managers. Assessment is also focused on retention/attrition, as a means to understand the correlation between military work roles and those characteristic of JPMC. A monthly status summarizing the broad range of metrics,



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representative of the firm's veteran-focused recruiting efforts, serves as the basis for efforts to continuously improve the MHR practice and process.

- GE has found the value of a rotational training program, with regard to professional development, correlates directly with the quality and availability of mentors supporting the initiative. Rotational programs without a solid and dynamic model of mentorship can be counter-productive. Throughout the rotational process, provide broad-based experience, but also assign the veteran specific tasks that are meaningfully related to the organization's mission. Make explicit the connection between the veteran's role on the team, and the impact on the organization.
- To the extent possible, GE leverages existing veteran employees in a mentorship role. These individuals represent exemplars, and uniquely understand the socialization challenges facing new veteran hires.
- Leverage internship/apprenticeship opportunities. Training and experience programs targeted to veterans and run, or supported by, business and industry provide opportunities to veterans to gain entry into the civilian workforce, and to engage with potential future employers. Creating internships may enable companies to enhance the training and preparation of these veterans, who will be positioned as qualified applicants once they complete the internship/apprenticeship experience.
- Sodexo leverages its Sodexo University⁴ to offer veterans the training they need to succeed and grow through tuition reimbursement, self-study training modules, instructor-led classes and online learning opportunities. The program leverages online tools that assist the veterans with career development, keep track of their performance goals, and make use of thousands of resources within the company that allow them to shape their own future and grow with the company. Tools such as real-life work scenarios and online simulations link the veterans immediately to



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other resources within Sodexo, and the training opens opportunities for internal mentoring and growth development.

- Some veterans may need additional skills training to round out their skill sets or to refresh existing skills weakened through inactivity while in the military. Many employers already offer skills training programs to other employees and can extend such programs to include veterans. These initiatives can be employed for new hires or to help prepare veterans for a job search. As with most training programs, offering them in a variety of media (e.g., live, written, recorded, online) and at multiple times may be necessary to provide the most effective support for veterans, who have to fit these developmental efforts into their other reintegration activities. For example, SunGard Public Sector provides live and on-request skills refreshers for veterans returning from deployment.⁵
- Many companies recognize the mobility issues that some veterans and military families face. As a result, they offer flexibility, work accommodations, and additional training. The Home Depot allows military associates to transfer to other stores and distribution centers throughout the country, in cases of reassignment of duty stations, retirement, or separation, depending on store and job availability. The Home Depot also supports military spouses, as a proud corporate member of the Army Spouse Employment Partnership (ASEP), they strive to help military spouses reach their full potential and realize their career goals by making available meaningful and rewarding employment opportunities and transfer options.⁶
- A number of veterans continue their service through membership in the National Guard and Reserve components. These veterans not only have civilian job responsibilities, but they are also required to attend regular training exercises and may be deployed, again. Employers have already begun inventing processes tailored to supporting employees with ongoing military service, including the provision of assistance with maintaining their skills that are relevant in both civilian and military settings, facilitating easier transitions between military and



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civilian responsibilities, and offering support with maintaining two careers, along with a personal/family life.

- Relocation is a common requirement for continued advancement in military positions, and veterans with ongoing military responsibilities will benefit if their civilian employers can accommodate multiple workplaces over the course of their employment. Relocation and remote work arrangements can enable such employees to relocate for their military jobs, while still working for the same civilian employer. Streamlined job transfer policies and multi-location employment postings can also enhance veterans' abilities to stay with their civilian employers. Companies, such as Skylla Engineering Ltd., allow veterans to work remotely so they can remain employed, while furthering their military careers.
- Veterans with civilian jobs and ongoing military responsibilities may have civilian salaries that exceed their military wages. This can lead to economic instability if their military wages are not sufficient to cover expenses during deployment. Some employers help employees with ongoing military responsibilities remain economically secure by paying the difference between their civilian and military salaries during deployments or training exercises.⁷ Many organizations, like Ryan LLC, AES Alamitos, Western National Mutual Insurance Company, and Rio Salado College, offset any difference between military and civilian wages.
- While veterans with ongoing military responsibilities are deployed, some employers assemble care packages and letters to show their support. When care packages and letters are sent to military members who are known to the senders, the contents can be tailored to meet their specific needs and interests. For example, Bon Secours celebrated Military Appreciation Month with Operation Care Package, collecting toiletries and personal items for active military loved ones of Bon Secours employees who were currently serving overseas. Thanks to donations from employees at Bon Secours, about 75 care packages were sent to deployed U.S. troops, of which about 35 packages went specifically to Bon Secours employees.



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- TriWest's CEO sends letters once a month to TriWest's deployed National Guard and Reserve members, and the letters include a telephone card, so that they can stay connected with their loved ones. Some companies, like the MorganFranklin Corporation, report paying to fly military employees back home to deal with critical personal issues.
- Employers are making use of workplace flexibility to give military family members more options concerning how they get their work done in the face of increased caregiving demands, support for injured veterans, managing multiple benefits systems, and the emotional and physical stress of meeting these demands. Options like part-time work, flexible schedules, and telework all help military families care for their family members, while remaining employed. An employee at SunGard Public Sector temporarily relocated from Florida to Georgia to care for her grandchildren while her son was deployed. She retained her position and remotely managed her team. She notes that, "It was SunGard Public Sector's willingness, understanding, and flexibility, along with their technology, that allowed me to care for my grandchildren in a time of distress for my family and effectively continue in my role as a team leader."
- Military families benefit from being given time during the workday to communicate with their loved ones. Many military members are deployed in different time zones or have very restricted opportunities to communicate with home. Allowing employees to take calls during work hours can help them stay in touch with deployed family members. Also, allowing families with limited access to telecommunications technology (e.g., no computer or video conferencing technology at home) to use company communications networks during down times is very valuable. McGladrey notes that one of its employees used informal flexibility in order to keep in contact with her husband when he was overseas. Due to the time difference, the only time for them to connect virtually was during normal working hours, and she extended her workday to get her work finished on time.



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“This flexibility gave her the peace of mind, in knowing her husband was safe, so she could continue to be focused and productive while at work.”

- Military careers often require frequent relocation to assign the best person to each mission and gain necessary experiences for promotion. As a result, military spouses can experience frequent career-disrupting relocations. In addition, injured veterans may not be able to receive the treatment they require in their hometowns and may need to reside elsewhere, to complete medical procedures or therapy. Some employers provide relocation support, so families can attend to their injured family members and keep their own careers on track. Transfers to other offices, extended telework, or full-time remote workplace options can give families the flexibility they need to stay together while still contributing to their employer’s success. Booz Allen supports employees that have to move by seeking opportunities in new locations for them and by providing the opportunity to telework from the new location.
- Military families may find that they cannot easily maintain the same economic status they had before a deployment or developing a disability. As a result, they benefit from employers who provide discounted products or services to their military employees, veterans, or families. Other employers organize gift drives to supply holiday presents to children in military families. For example, KPMG’s Montvale, NJ office provides more than 200 children of soldiers, returning from Iraq, with holiday gift packages containing new books and new teddy bears (assembled by their partners and employees).
- Allowing family members to participate in employer-sponsored social events (like company picnics or awards dinners), when the military employee is unable to work (because of deployment or disability), can help keep the family from becoming isolated and provide opportunities for informal support. Nelson Laboratories invites and welcomes the families of their military employees to all company events, even while employees are deployed. While one employee was deployed, Nelson Laboratories purchased and installed a play set in the employee’s back yard so his children would have something to play on.



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- Some employers provide administrative support to families to help them file necessary paperwork to apply for grants, benefits, or services from other organizations. Cornell University's Child Care Center helped a family file a grant application for the National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (NACCRRA) Military Services Program. NACCRRA then provided the family with a much needed financial award.
- Military family resource groups can also be used to help military families pool resources and experiences to support one another, both at work and at home. These groups can also be used to help employers better understand and meet the needs of military families, both as employees and potential clients or consumers. The Aurora Mental Health Center Viewpoint Building maintains support groups for military family members.
- Veterans' Technology Program is a non-credit certificate program offered by the School of Information Studies at Syracuse University, in partnership with JPMorgan Chase. This is a free program, available to both employed and unemployed post-9/11 veterans with a minimum of a high school diploma, and is comprised of four certificates: Career Skills for Global Enterprises, Microsoft Office Fundamentals, Applied Education, and Applied Practicum. To learn more, visit <http://get-vet.syr.edu>.

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⁴ Sodexo. (n.d.). Our innovative training programs clear the path for achievement, recognition, success and advancement for veterans, reservists and members of the National Guard. Retrieved from <http://www.sodexohiresheroes.com/train.html>.

⁵ Matos, K., & Galinsky, E. (2011.) Employer support for the military community. Families and Work Institute. Retrieved from http://whenworkworks.org/research/downloads/www_military_support.pdf.

⁶ The Home Depot. (n.d.). Military Commitment. Retrieved from <http://careers.homedepot.com/our-culture/military-commitment.html>.

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