



CASE STUDY

Leading Practices Model: General Electric -- Junior Officer Leadership Program

GE currently employs 10,000 veterans, and the company has made a significant effort to create a supportive work environment for veterans through the creation of the GE Veterans Network. The network provides an internal platform for veteran employees to interact with fellow veterans across different GE businesses, provides referrals and mentorship, opens the door to different career paths within the firm, and is positioned to support career development training and assistance. A key dimension of the GE Veterans Network is a program called the Junior Officer Leadership Program (JOLP).¹ The JOLP program consists of a two-year rotational experience through which Junior Military Officers (JMOs), hired by GE, are exposed to the firm's different lines of business and receive both on-the-job and formal classroom training. Each business within GE has a JOLP champion, a high-ranking person whose job description includes leading the JOLP within their respective business.

Approach & Innovations: Rotational Experience, Holistic Development

The JOLP is focused on providing a broad range of developmental experiences, while cultivating knowledge, skills, and abilities central to succeeding in GE's business culture. Furthermore, the JOLP provides veterans with broad business experience and exposure to various core systems that make up GE businesses. Typical training curricula include: Finance for Non-Financial Managers, Six Sigma Quality, Business Dynamics, Advanced Managers Course, Power Systems Product Knowledge Course, and Interview Training. Walking participants through the three-month rotations in different job fields allows GE to identify the strengths and interests of the junior officers, so that they may work and grow within that particular field once they graduate from the JOLP.

GE suggests that the program gives participants the opportunity to make an impact on GE in the near term, while at the same time creating the foundational knowledge necessary for a career at the firm. The JOLP program also provides participants with visibility to senior-level technical and business leaders, while fostering personal development



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through mentoring and coaching. The rotational assignments provide valuable contacts and experience that accelerate the development of technical, business, and professional skills.

In line with GE's JOLP, Shell Oil has created "Career Transition Opportunity" (CTO),² a unique program that aids the transition of top-performing JMOs with four-year degrees and less than six years of military or private-sector experience from the military into corporate life at Shell. CTO combines on-the-job learning, training for recognized professional qualifications, personal development programs, and direction and support to assist JMOs with their transition.

Implementation and Generalizability

- The program is high-touch and participants benefit from personal mentoring and executive-level support. Such a model practically dictates limitations on scalability. Currently, only 50 individuals per year are accepted into the JOLP.
- Adapting the model to small and medium enterprises may represent a challenge, given the commitment of resources, and also based on limitations with regard to the diversity of a given firm's lines of business.
- The current program is focused on military officers, and the applicability of the model to prior enlisted employees is clear, but untested in the context of GE's experience.

Recommendations

- 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.



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- To the extent possible, leverage existing veteran employees in a mentorship role. These individuals represent exemplars, and uniquely understand the socialization challenges facing new veteran hires.
- 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.
- Assessment and evaluation throughout the program is critical, and should be so that insights into the veteran's strengths, talents, and skills become clear, making linkages between those skills/strengths and prospective work roles evident.

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Citations:

¹ General Electric. (2012). *Junior Officer Leadership Program (JOLP)*. Retrieved from

<http://www.ge.com/careers/veterans/jolp/index.html>.

² Shell. (2012). *Military Veterans*. Retrieved from

<http://www.shell.us/home/content/usa/aboutshell/careers/military/>.



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