



CASE STUDY

Leading Practices Model: Prudential -- VETalent Program

In 2010, Prudential partnered with a local community college and Workforce Opportunity Services (WOS),¹ a not-for-profit organization, to replicate an Information Technology (IT) training program for veterans that was originally developed for disadvantaged youth. The program, called VETalent,² provides formal education combined with on-the-job training to prepare veterans to succeed in IT-focused careers.

Approach & Innovations: Collaborative and Proactive Workforce Development

The innovation represented by the VETalent program is a collaborative approach to workforce development, which importantly acknowledges the unique situation of veterans. Prudential provides a scholarship to the veteran, which covers the cost of formal training (provided by a university partner). Further, Prudential provides each participating veteran a stipend of \$500 per week, allowing them to fully focus on the program without the burden of additional employment. The goal is to help the veteran achieve certification, obtain experience, and open the door to the opportunity for fulltime employment. Prudential invites any enlisted veteran to participate in the program.

The work-study portion of the program spans nine months, and is based on providing onsite work experiences for veterans, as a tool to socialize them to the civilian work environment. The program was originally managed by the IT department at Prudential, as it was the department that drove innovation; but today, the initiative is managed by Prudential's veteran-initiative team, a group that reports to the company's chairman.

VETalent is expanding, and Prudential is reaching out to other Fortune 500 companies to collaborate and open training and employment opportunities through the program. Initiated in 2010, the program now has the capacity to train 65 veterans per class.

Challenges to Implementation and Generalizability

- The current program is geographically constrained. Participation requires relocation to the New York or New Jersey area, and some candidates may not be



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willing to move. However, to address this constraint, new offerings are being developed in Jacksonville and Philadelphia.

- Capacity to absorb all graduates of the program (with employment opportunities) is an ongoing concern. To address the capacity to hire, the program has partnered with Johnson & Johnson, and is cooperating with additional firms on the effort. Prudential welcomes companies who want to partner in the initiative, provide job openings for VETalent veterans, and those expressing an interest in financially sponsoring interns.
- Awareness of the program among the veterans' community is an ongoing challenge.
- Assessment over the long-term program efficacy is another focus area.

Noteworthy actions on the part of Prudential to address some of the cited challenges include a willingness on the part of the firm to sponsor a VETalent student, if other partner companies become available to offer job training on site for the veteran. In addition, the VETalent program has evolved in a way that can be customized to any work-role position; that is, it is not solely an IT program, but the curriculum can be customized to fit the company's needs with regard to disparate work roles.

Recommendations

- Prudential recommends that companies focus on developing career path programs, rather than job programs, focused only on initial hiring. Career path programs provide the opportunity for further development, training and certification, which results in meaningful careers for program participants.
- Prudential recommends that businesses partner with each other to leverage training and career programs across industries, and to gain the capacity to serve different veteran stakeholders and different geographic locations.



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- When approaching workforce development, create flexible programs that can be customized to meet the needs of veterans and the sponsoring firm.
- Don't reinvent the wheel. Remain alert to opportunities to expand, move, repurpose, or refocus existing programs to serve the veteran community.

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Citations:

¹ Workforce Opportunity Services. (2011). A Nonprofit that's putting America Back to Work. Retrieved from <http://wforce.org/>.

² Workforce Opportunity Services. (2011). Veterans. Retrieved from <http://wforce.org/index.php/veterans>.



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