



LEADING PRACTICE



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**INSTITUTE *for* VETERANS
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Leading Practices Brief #3: Assimilation, Retention and Advancement

The Challenge: Many veterans do not persist in their first—and often their second—civilian work role after leaving the military. One reason for this attrition is likely due to the challenges associated with “fitting in” to a corporate culture that is often vastly different from a military culture. Thus, the role of practices and programs, focused on both assimilation and employee assistance, represents a critical component of the employment process. Keys to successful veteran assimilation and assistance include the following:

Company Culture and Policy: Leadership plays a central role in bridging the divide in understanding related to the transferability of military skills to a private-sector firm. Those with “class-leading” veterans’ employment programs have leadership that has invested time to understand the relevance of military skills and experiences to the firm, and where leaders have communicated that understanding to non-veteran employees in a way that

The Home Depot allows military associates and their family members 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.



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addresses increasing business productivity and ultimately shareholder value. Firms pursuing veteran-focused employment programs should establish an executive-level champion who, along with a veterans' initiative advisory board, can plan a consistent and cohesive strategy for communicating veterans' issues to the firm. They should also develop goals and measurements related to the firm's veteran initiatives that are tightly related to the firm's overall strategic goals, which will help to focus veteran employment and career development within the firm. For example, Lockheed Martin has created its Military Relations Manager position where the four regional Military Relations Managers have the sole responsibility to help those transitioning from the military to Lockheed Martin.

Many companies recognize the mobility issues that some veterans and military families face. They offer flexibility in work schedules and accommodations, as well as additional training. 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, maximize their training and become better candidates for job advancement. Some veterans will not be able or ready to engage in full-time work all at once. They may need more time to effectively reunite with family, seek treatment for a physical or

Walmart recommends companies actively educate their staff, particularly senior leaders and managers, on veteran hiring and issues veterans face. This will assist companies in developing more effective and customized employee assistance services for their veteran employees.



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psychological disability, and otherwise reintegrate into civilian life. Phase-in programs where veterans begin working part time and slowly increase their hours as they prepare to shift to full time civilian work can provide veterans with a “slow entry ramp” to readjustment to the civilian workforce.

Staff Training: Leadership training programs can effectively leverage military and leadership skills, and provide opportunities for veterans to become part of the decision-making process related to where they will ultimately work and contribute. Some have formed training programs and materials focused on front-line and hiring managers, which help to link relevant military training and experience to the civilian work environment. Programs funded through the U.S.

Prudential has developed a feature film that is a three-part instructional video for hiring managers that addresses issues of PTSD, what veterans bring to the table, benefits, and much more. They are interested in sharing these tools with other companies.

Department of Labor-VETS are intended to assist veterans transitioning from homelessness to obtain jobs. Most of these Homeless Veterans Reintegration Programs (HVRPs) note that job retention is a key challenge for veterans who are or have been homeless. The Syracuse University-based National Veterans Technical Assistance Center is developing an online Job Retention Toolkit for veterans that could also be used by employers. The toolkit has modules addressing the most-recognized issues affecting job retention including training on: 1) How people keep their jobs; 2) Why people lose jobs; 3) Managing stress on the job; and 4) Identifying and using supports for job retention.



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Workplace Assistance: Veteran hiring falls often under diversity initiatives, due to compliance requirements, related to USERRA, VEVRAA, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the ADA. An additional reason for location in diversity initiatives is the ability to respond to the varied and differing needs of veterans, particularly wounded veterans, or to diverse veteran populations. Leveraging this infrastructure may provide facilitated entry, assimilation and employee assistance. However, in some businesses the diversity function is less integrated into the hiring manager's regular process, and this may create barriers to assimilation. Assimilation tools may include resource groups, affinity groups, mentoring and sponsorship, peer supports, and other focused activities, which provide opportunities to understand the company and the employee fit. For example, Cornell University has restructured its Faculty and Staff Assistance Program to include a counselor who has special training on issues facing veterans, including PTSD. Employee network and support groups aid in assimilation and the creation of a supportive working environment. 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

Sodexo's military employee network group, Honoring Our Nation's finest with Opportunity and Respect (HONOR), offers development opportunities, provides a forum to recognize and celebrate contributions made to our country, and establishes partnerships with community groups that support veterans, active duty service members, National Guard, and military Reserves. Sodexo also offers mentoring programs that facilitate a smoother transition for veterans into the civilian workplace and support their professional growth. Sodexo's comprehensive Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provides support and advocacy for jobs for veterans including ongoing counseling services to family members of employees who are deployed. The company provides pay differential for up to 12 months, from the start date of the military assignment; medical and dental benefits continue during active duty, provided employee contributions continue; and the employee returns to the same or like position when their military assignment is completed.. per the current military leave policy.



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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.

Address Assimilation and Retention by Supporting Veterans' Families:

Companies that have successful assimilation and retention services also recognize that support for transitioning veterans' families may also be needed. 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

Walmart leverages the existing network of health professionals, Resources for Living (RFL), to provide services to veterans. Through RFL, Walmart provides a free, confidential service to help give associates and their family members physical, mental, emotional, financial and career wellness coaching. The service is available 24 hours a day, 365 days/yr.

the needs of military families, as employees, potential clients or as consumers. The Aurora Mental Health Center Viewpoint Building maintains support groups for military family members. Walmart also recognizes the need to employ and retain military family members. They recommend recruiting family members of veteran employees, offering ample flexibility in the work environment for child care, veteran care, and other family needs resulting from military experiences and responsibilities.



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