



LEADING PRACTICE

Leading Practice: Measuring the Impact of Veterans in the Workplace

In order to measure both the effectiveness of a program's ability to attract, develop, and retain veterans and the impact veterans make within the organization it is important that an organization know which employees are veterans and where they work. The following are leading practice recommendations and highlights to determine veteran engagement within organizations:

- Companies like GE, TriWest, AT&T, and Merck have implemented ways to voluntarily track and incentivize veterans to self-identify by leveraging existing programs and initiatives such as employee surveys, veterans' affinity groups, and more. It's widely accepted that employee resource and affinity groups can be leveraged for both self-identification and engagement, and such groups positively impact companies, reinforcing the benefits of tracking and using the data for positive purposes. Finally, lack of identification may also result in missed opportunities for the firms to effectively train, retain, and empower veterans, opportunities which increase a firm's overall productivity and growth.
- GE developed the following examples of self-identification incentives 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.





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- 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 small act identified that the non-veterans were appreciative of the company for doing it, and they became more supportive of veterans.
- AT&T has mandated veteran tracking. The company has a new hiring policy which requires that candidates must be asked if they are currently, or have ever been, in military service after being given a job offer.
- Some veterans do not identify themselves as veterans. Asking new employees about military service captures the relevant data better than asking about veteran status.
- Merck used existing employee surveys to measure corporate culture related to people with disabilities which are also relevant to wounded warriors. Another method, shared by Walmart, is using data from military leaves of absence to identify and track military employees.
- In order for tracking to be effective and to get all members of a veteran community to participate, the company has to create a veteran-engaged culture. To create a veteran-engaged culture, the leadership has to demonstrate positive uses of tracking.





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- Veteran initiatives need to come from company leaders. For example, have social events with top management and veterans, have companies leaders send a letter of appreciation, and more.
- Leadership needs to educate company members about the importance and benefits of tracking veterans. For example: understanding the needs of veteran families to provide adequate accommodations, take advantage of tax credits (for example, VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011), understand veterans' productivity and work ethics to better the HR strategy and investments, and more.
- Educate veteran and military families about the benefits of tracking. For example: what the missed opportunities are for both the veteran and the company, how the company can assist the family during the deployment, how the company can recognize a veteran's skills and leverage them for meaningful career development, and more.
- Make tracking/employee surveys mandatory for all employees. Conduct the survey after the person is hired. This will help identify a veteran at an early stage and provide the company with opportunities to accommodate the veteran adequately. Furthermore, allowing employees to update their files on a regular basis may help identify veterans that did not self-identify initially and allows the company to recognize any changes in status such as deployment.
- Change the language in employment surveys; instead of tracking them as veterans, track current or past military service, since not all veterans will consider themselves veterans.
- Develop opportunities for veterans to self-identify. Some examples include social events for veterans, develop a company coin for veterans, the veteran memorial, and encourage and support a company veteran affinity group, among others.
- Organizations who track veterans are able to make the most effective use of the skills a veteran workforce possesses. This capability can have positive impacts internally and externally when unusual circumstances occur. For example, during the Hurricane Katrina catastrophe in Louisiana, GE was able to identify their veterans and leverage





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their military skills to set up camps, manage people, as well as manage their projects and efforts during and post-Katrina devastation.

- Tracking veteran employees within a company allows measuring veteran productivity within the company to demonstrate value through the rate of return on investments in veteran employment initiatives, and to prove business benefits from hiring veterans. Failure to track and measure veterans' performance within the firm may lead to a poor understanding and lack of recognition of veteran employee contributions, and inaccurate perceptions about the value veterans bring may result in lack of supervisor or HR flexibility, perceived discrimination, or other adverse effects for the veteran.
- Tracking veterans will allow organizations to identify different skills that veterans have in the workplace compared to their colleagues. Having veterans train others in those skills benefits both the company and the veteran. The veteran is seen as an important resource by other employees and the company is able to leverage existing skills and grow the talents of the entire workforce.
- Tracking veterans who are deployed, or going to be deployed, including family members, allows companies to effectively create and implement employee assistance programs that reach both the veterans and their family members.
- Understanding veteran networks may provide business opportunities in recruitment, collaboration between companies who hire and retain veterans, and building business relationships.



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