

The background of the slide features two individuals. On the left is a man with dark hair, wearing a military camouflage uniform. On the right is a woman with blonde hair, smiling, wearing a light blue button-down shirt under a dark grey blazer. The entire image has a semi-transparent purple overlay.

*Hiring the service member or veteran.*

# Matching Quality Employees with Quality Employers

**SECOND EDITION**

*Hiring the service member or veteran.*

# Matching Quality Employees with Quality Employers



**The Military Family Research Institute (MFRI) at Purdue University is actively involved in community-based job readiness workshops, career preparation trainings, and job fairs to learn more from veteran job seekers and the employers who hire them.** This report describes what we are learning about their experiences. It also explains what job seekers and employers are telling us about their successes and challenges in connecting valuable skills and experience with high-quality jobs and employers.

Although the job market appears to be improving, challenges remain. Some are unique to military service; others are universal. The purpose of this report is to help promote better understanding and stronger links between job-seeking veterans and employers. We hope the information will help college advisors, hiring managers, and human resource professionals better appreciate the talents these candidates can bring to the workplace, and assist service members and veterans to more effectively communicate their abilities to potential employers.

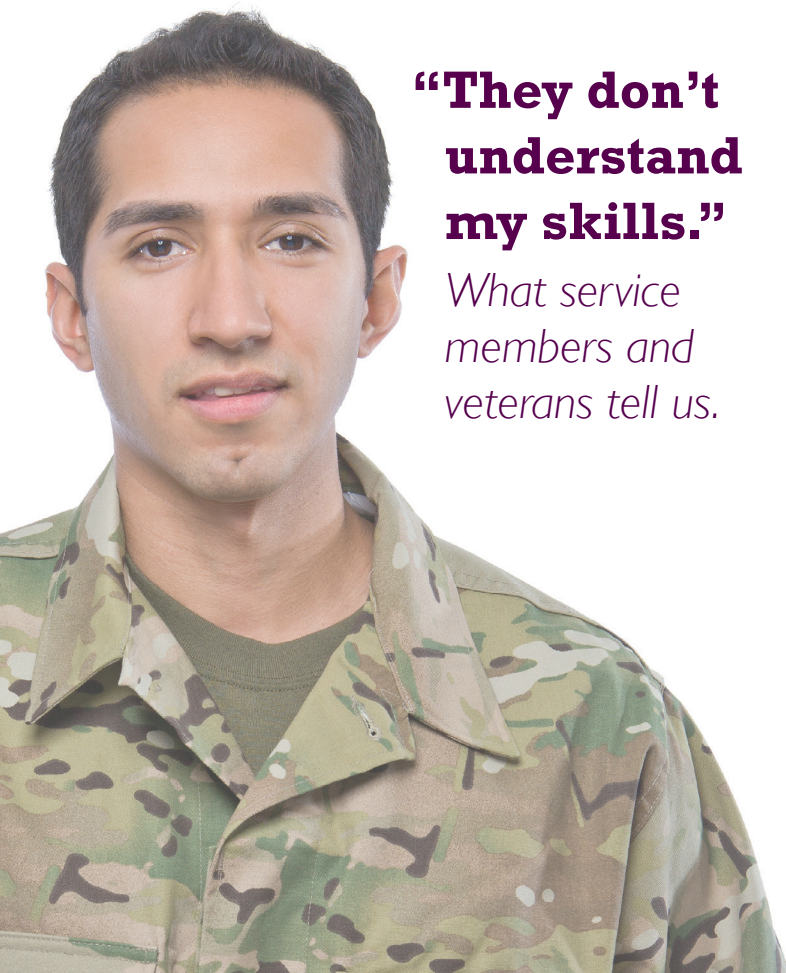
*Data:* Since 2009, MFRI has collaborated in many employment-related events for veterans and their families, including job fairs and workshops promoting career skills and job readiness. At these events, we ask veteran job seekers and employers to tell us about their expectations and experiences in the civilian job market. More than 1,000 service members and veterans have shared their job search and employment experiences with MFRI. The majority of respondents report being in the 35-45 year

old age range, but the proportion of respondents who are less than 35 years old grew from 21 percent in 2012 to 56 percent in 2013.

Since 2009, the proportion of reported unemployment among respondents has ranged from 49 percent to 70 percent, which means not all veteran job seekers attend the career fairs looking for jobs. Many are looking to improve their situation.







## **“They don’t understand my skills.”**

*What service members and veterans tell us.*

What the **unemployed** veterans tell us:

- » Thirty percent report being without a job for more than one year.
- » Regardless of length of unemployment, most (55 percent) believe that while they possess the necessary skills for the available jobs, companies are simply not hiring.
- » The remainder (45 percent) report they may not have the necessary skills, education, or both for the job.

Employed and unemployed veterans alike describe their frustration with:

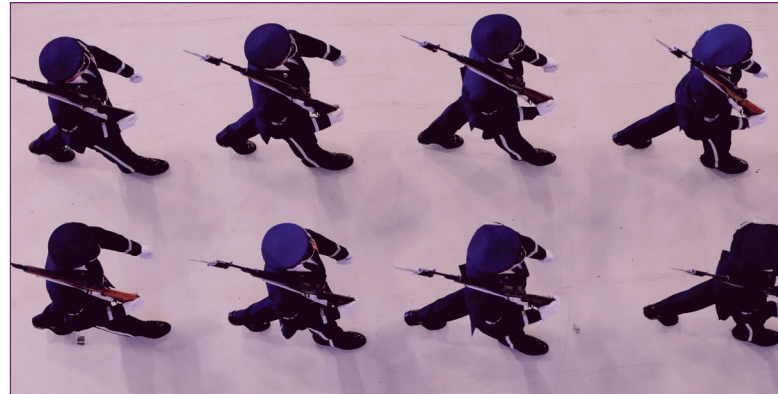
- » employers not understanding their military credentials and résumé;
- » navigating human resources web pages and employment portals for submitting applications and résumés; and
- » the heavy emphasis placed on interviewing skills, when they seem to be screened out before ever getting to an interview.

*Desirable workplace skills developed through military training.<sup>i</sup>*

- ✓ Organizational behavior
- ✓ Leadership and supervision
- ✓ Interpersonal communication
- ✓ Business communication
- ✓ Psychology
- ✓ Sociology
- ✓ Accounting

<sup>i</sup> American Council on Education. (2011, July). *Military Programs*. Retrieved from [www.acenet.edu/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Military\\_Programs](http://www.acenet.edu/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Military_Programs)

The perceived “mismatch” between job requirements and the skills and experience of the veteran may be the result of the veteran’s inability to communicate using civilian terminology, and the employer’s misunderstanding of the requirements of contemporary military service. Closer assessment of military training reveals that service members and veterans bring with them rigorous, mastery-based training and experience that often qualifies for college credit. Many of these skills translate directly to the work place. The list at left is an example of the many matches between the skills of quality potential employees and the needs of quality employers.

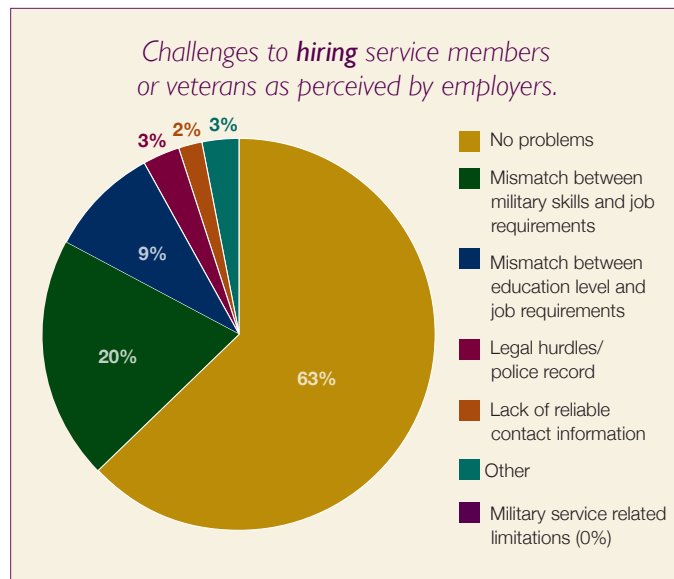




**“If I don’t see  
the skills and  
experiences for  
the job in the first  
7 seconds, the  
résumé goes to  
the bottom of  
the stack.”**

*What employers  
tell us.*

While MFRI was listening to more than 1,000 veteran job seekers, we also learned from more than 600 employers. The good news is as many as 63 percent of employers report no challenges in hiring veterans. Employers seem to agree with veteran job seekers that a mismatch between the necessary skills (20 percent) and education (9 percent) is a barrier to hiring the right veteran.



We also asked employers about challenges in retaining veterans once hired. What we learned is shown in the chart to the right. The satisfaction rate of 80 percent compares favorably to the 68 percent to 83 percent “quality of hire” rates for civilian employees (Institute for Corporate Productivity, 2010; NAS Recruitment Communications, 2005). So it seems once the right match is made, veterans make very good employees.

Sixty-five percent of employers tell us they prefer hiring candidates who are leaders, consensus builders, and problem solvers over those with more technical skills. These “soft” skills are emblematic of military service and are valuable assets to an employer. The key is to help veterans promote their valuable skills and to guide employers to look for the “hidden gems” in the candidate pool.

Employers also tell us:

- » 72 percent prefer e-résumés to paper versions.
- » Less than half (42 percent) take advantage of the Work Opportunity Tax Credit.
- » Of the 70 percent of employers who are eligible to take advantage of the tax credit, 38 percent tell us they don’t know enough about it.



- » Veteran job seekers have good interpersonal communication skills (rated 3.9 out of 5).
- » Veterans clearly articulate their employment objectives (3.6 out of 5).



## What can be done?

*A successful job search takes work. Preparation is key for both veteran job seekers and employers who want to hire them.*

## Résumé

- » Don't expect the civilian workplace (or hiring managers) to understand military terms and abbreviations; eliminate all that are nonessential. You are not disrespecting your military career; you are helping to translate it to others and enabling busy recruiters to see the qualities that set you apart.
- » Translate your military skills into language that employers understand. Think about the logistics, supply chain management, accounting, organizational behavior, and other valuable experiences you have. Put them in your résumé.
- » You may take your "soft" skills for granted, but employers are looking for them. Don't be afraid to remind potential employers of your initiative, responsiveness, inquisitiveness, accountability, and supervisory skills.
- » Tailor your résumé to the qualifications of each job. Generic résumés rarely speak to unique requirements of a specific position. Don't make the hiring manager hunt. You want your résumé to contain some of the same terms that are in the job posting or in the employer's hiring objectives.



- » Get up to speed with your word-processing skills. Nearly three-quarters of employers prefer e-résumés.
- » Polish, polish, polish your résumé. Ask more than one person to review your résumé and take their suggestions seriously.
- » If you provide references, be sure they are accessible during traditional business hours and avoid references who are deployed or otherwise difficult to contact.

## Preparation for veterans

- » If your computer skills are not strong, fix them. Today's workplace has no room for people who don't have basic knowledge of office software. You don't need to be an expert, but you must know your way around a keyboard and email.
- » Clarify your career objectives. Think about the industries in which you want to work and do your homework.
- » Check out the websites of the employers you want to target and be sure to speak their language when communicating with them.
- » Be prepared to offer specific examples of how you meet the requirements of the job or how you plan to train-up.

## Additional recommendations

While preparation, résumé revision and personal presentation were all identified as important areas for service members and veterans to consider in their job seeking and interviewing experiences, current literature and human resources experts provide many other insights that could be valuable in the search for meaningful employment.

### *Use social media and networking as search tools:*

While Internet job sites should be regular stops in the job pursuit, they are only the tip of the social media iceberg. LinkedIn and other such sites provide a useful foundation for professional networking. Contacts build geometrically, and professional acquaintances who share a common interest or organization membership can help extend a job seeker's reach. It also helps target the professions and industries you are most interested in.

*Keep it clean:* Take a close look at your public "face" and do some housekeeping if necessary. Be careful what you post and tweet, as well as what you make public and private in your online profiles. If a potential employer visited your Facebook page, would she be excited about offering you a job?

*Go to job fairs:* The top three benefits of job fairs, according to our survey responses, were obtaining contact information from employers, a better understanding of the job market, and the opportunity to interview. Of note, 31% received an interview and/or job offer as a result of attending the fair.

*Join a service group:* Civilian service groups like Altrusa, Eagles, Elks, Exchange, Kiwanis, Lions, Moose, Optimists, Rotary and Shriners provide a good way to contribute to the community and network for business as well. There are also a vast array of military veteran networks and affinity groups that provide social occasions, networking, and personal and professional growth opportunities. These contacts can provide a service member or veteran timely awareness of an available opening and important knowledge about the company posting the position. When contacts know the person in question is seeking employment, he or she can be on the alert for an appropriate opportunity.

## Preparation for employers

- » If your company wants to hire AND retain veterans, get “veteran competent.” Take advantage of the resources in this pamphlet such as the Department of Labor Veterans Employment Training Service (VETS), Veterans Hiring Toolkit.
- » Consider creating or expanding a veterans’ affinity group within your company.
- » Are there established management-level veterans in your company who are willing to be mentors? Do you currently employ veterans who might be willing to help the company learn more about military culture?

## Additional resources

- » *Cover Your Bases and Home Runs: The Job Pitch Letter* – TalentZoo. [www.talentzoo.com/news/Cover-Your-Bases-and-Home-Runs-The-Job-Pitch-Letter/11128.html](http://www.talentzoo.com/news/Cover-Your-Bases-and-Home-Runs-The-Job-Pitch-Letter/11128.html)
- » *Employer Partnership Fact Sheet* – Employer Partnership of the Armed Forces. [www.employerpartnership.org](http://www.employerpartnership.org)
- » *Military Employment Resource Page* – Society for Human Resource Management. [www.americasheroesatwork.gov/forEmployers/HiringToolkit](http://www.americasheroesatwork.gov/forEmployers/HiringToolkit)

- » *Summary Report: Joining Forces for Women Veterans* – Business and Professional Women’s Foundation. [www.bpwfoundation.org/index.php/contact/info/joining\\_forces\\_for\\_women\\_veterans\\_an\\_inaugural\\_summit](http://www.bpwfoundation.org/index.php/contact/info/joining_forces_for_women_veterans_an_inaugural_summit)
- » *Turning Disability into Business Advantage* – Society for Human Resource Management. [www.shrm.org/hrdisciplines/Diversity/Articles/Pages/BusinessAdvantage.aspx](http://www.shrm.org/hrdisciplines/Diversity/Articles/Pages/BusinessAdvantage.aspx)
- » *Veterans Employment and Training Service* – U.S. Department of Labor. [www.americasheroesatwork.gov/forEmployers/HiringToolkit](http://www.americasheroesatwork.gov/forEmployers/HiringToolkit)

- » *Veterans’ Employment: Improving the Transition from the Battlefield to the Workforce* – Hearing of the United States Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs. [veterans.senate.gov/hearings.cfm?action=release.display&release\\_id=697c6171-9598-4c23-9f6c-eb35ffb38dc7](http://veterans.senate.gov/hearings.cfm?action=release.display&release_id=697c6171-9598-4c23-9f6c-eb35ffb38dc7)

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**Developed by**



Hanley Hall, Room 210 • 1202 W. State Street • West Lafayette, IN 47907

[www.mfri.purdue.edu](http://www.mfri.purdue.edu) • 765-496-3403 • [mfri@purdue.edu](mailto:mfri@purdue.edu)

