



VETERANS AND MILITARY SPOUSES

Job Search Toolkit

**Leverage Your Military Service, Skills, and
Experience to Navigate Your Career Transition**

aarp.org/vetsjobcenter



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Get an Edge in Your Job Search

When you're a military veteran with more than 40,000 organizations trying to help you, it can be difficult to find the right information. That's why AARP brings together valuable resources to help Veterans, Military, and their Families navigate life's transitions, including the most up-to-date work and job tools to make them career ready.

This **Veterans and Military Spouses Job Search Toolkit** and AARP's **Veterans and Military Spouses Job Center** at aarp.org/vetsjobcenter offer valuable information to build marketable job skills and find meaningful employment, whether as part of a military transition after service, or changing careers well after leaving the armed forces.

As a nonprofit organization serving nearly 38 million members and their families, we are especially proud to serve over five million veterans and active-duty service members with free resources focusing on family caregiving, fighting fraud, finding employment and accessing service-related benefits. For more, please visit aarp.org/veterans.

BACKGROUND

There are nearly 8.5 million veterans in the United States workforce. One million more are expected to join them by 2025. For a variety of reasons, service members can find themselves ill-prepared to conduct a successful job search. For some, the constant pressure in the military to accomplish the mission at hand, often right up to their separation date, means you haven't had a chance to look ahead and set up a promising job-search strategy. Military transition services can be inadequate; it can also be difficult to find the career path you're best suited for. A 2019 **Military Families Lifestyle Survey**¹ conducted by Blue Star Families (BSF) found that more than two-thirds (67%) of all veteran employees were underemployed or reported they were not using their military skills and experience effectively in meaningful post-military careers.

If it has been a while since your last civilian job search—or you've never embarked on one—you will find that many aspects of the search and recruitment process have changed or are very different from career paths in the military. Case in point: Without question, technology has had the largest impact on employment. Creating a resume, finding and applying for jobs, and even interviewing have shifted largely to online.

While employers and veteran job seekers say digital platforms are useful for networking and finding job vacancies, many employers report that more detail is needed on veterans' resumes and that military candidates need to improve their in-person interviews skills.

A 2017 survey of veterans by Military.com² found:

- **62% of veterans** indicated they feel that hiring managers and recruiters do not understand their skills and experience.
- **56% of employers** want more detail on veterans' resumes and **48%** want better translation of military skills into jobs.
- **51% of active-duty service members** said their spouses' ability to find work was very important to their decision-making process.

HIRING MILITARY SPOUSES

Military spouses face a range of challenges when it comes to securing full-time or flexible employment, including frequent relocations and extended periods of family separation due to deployments.

A 2019 Military Families Lifestyle Survey³ found that of the 1 million military spouses in the U.S.:

- **642,000 are married to active-duty service members.**
- **47% are unemployed**, a rate 25% higher than “civilian spouses.”
- **Three-fourths of those with jobs say they’re underemployed** or want full-time jobs but are unable to obtain them.

Despite the frustrations and bumps in the road, the resiliency of military spouses combined with smart job-seeking strategies can help those on the front lines of support secure meaningful employment.

PURPOSE

This toolkit can help transitioning service members, veterans and their spouses who may have some experience in the civilian sector but are seeking new opportunities. You’ll learn how to prepare a job-search strategy, home in on your unique talents, leverage your networks, and perform well in a job-winning interview. **The U.S. military is one of the greatest job training programs on Earth, teaching special skills, adaptability, and leadership.** You possess a singular knowledge base, and range of abilities acquired in one of the most respected of professions. This guide can help you spotlight those strengths and prepare you with the intel you need.

This is not a stand-alone resource. We offer free tools and resources such as the **Veterans and Military Spouses Job Center** digital platform at aarp.org/vetsjobcenter and the **AARP Job Board** at jobs.aarp.org to connect veterans and their spouses with military-friendly employers and drive their careers forward faster.



Career Readiness

SELECTING A PATH

When starting a career search, take the time to formulate a plan, deliberately and strategically. Avoid the temptation to take the first similar-sounding job to your military one. This phase of your job search may be the best time you have to pause and consider what you want out of your professional life. By doing thorough research and considering what is most important, you'll better identify your course of action. Take your time; after all, it takes time for anyone to find a good job!

- **Assess your values and motives.** Be honest with yourself. Why did you join the military and why did you get out? Identify what worked for you in the military and what tangible and intangible characteristics resonated. Did a structured routine work, or was that what ultimately caused you to look elsewhere? Did you enjoy being part of a team, or did you crave more individual responsibility? Or was it a call to your nation to serve, but now that the mission has ended for you, you still want to serve a greater good? These are important considerations in identifying the right job, the right cultural organizational fit and the right purpose for you.
- **Assess your skills and comfort level.** Take note of the activities that give you the greatest feelings of fulfillment and what roles you dislike. Identify your hard skills (e.g., technical) and soft skills (e.g., interpersonal). In the military, you may have taken assessments like the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery Exam. Look for **similar online aptitude tests**⁴ for your needs. The **Johnson O'Connor Research Foundation**⁵ provides a respected series of tests. And **Pymetrics**⁶, like several other such applications, does testing in the form of a video game. Some industries have dedicated assessment tests. A good (and very rigorous) example is engineering.

- **Explore your options.** Many online assessment tools can help you identify career fields that align with the characteristics you discovered in your self-assessment. Draw up a list of all the occupations you wish to explore, then narrow the list down to your top three or four.
- **Find a Purpose.** Another big factor in selecting a career path is having a sense of purpose in your career. Some jobs may clash with the U.S. military's focus on selfless service, so selecting a job that gives you a purpose you can embrace with pride is important.
- **Identify Skills Gaps.** What knowledge, skills and abilities are required that you lack? If your new career field requires postsecondary education, seek information on **G.I. Bill Education Benefits**⁷ and learn the best way to get that education. Corporations may also offer programs that pay for your education while you work, and states offer grant programs for certificates and training for veterans at little or no expense. Start at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs **Grants.gov homepage**⁸. Understand your options, read the fine print and conduct a risk assessment of each course of action for the top five areas you've identified as a potential future job.
- **Develop a Plan.** Once you have listed the career fields that fit your skills, values, interests, and personality, you're ready to create an action plan. Make an actionable list of education, training, volunteer opportunities, and other activities that increase your qualifications and marketability in your new career field.

CRAFTING YOUR BRAND

Today's job market is highly competitive. Employers and HR managers receive hundreds or even thousands of resumes for each job posting, leaving little chance for applicants to rise above the pack and show off their true value. A key step to being noticed is to establish a meaningful personal brand that tells your story clearly and unmistakably to all. Your brand calls out your military experience in a way that connects with potential employers.

Your brand is more than just what you put on a resume. It is a calling card you can perfect and leverage throughout your career. In the short term, it helps in transitioning to civilian life and calls out your military experience in a way that connects with potential employers. In the long term, it builds on an evolving and successful career. Take a good, honest look at your personal history and shape a compelling profile of you and your attributes. Write it out. Shape it and make it sing. Get to the point at which you can recite it by memory with a confident smile.

Your brand is composed of several things:

- **Expertise:** your key talents, skills, and abilities
- **Your story:** achievements/how you have made an impact
- **Authenticity:** doing what you love and how it's infused into your work
- **Value/point of view:** what you offer that employers need
- **How you show up:** professionalism, confidence, work ethic, overall presence

Where do you use your brand? Everywhere—but nowhere is it more important than in your elevator speech and your resume. In the former, you give voice to your brand, literally delivering it to a person standing close to you or listening on the phone. And in your resume, your brand shines forth in the way you shape your account of your experience, skills and special talents.

YOUR ELEVATOR SPEECH

An elevator speech is a quick (30-second) summary of your brand that you can use in all phases of your job search, from networking and writing resumes and cover letters, to your LinkedIn profile to job interviews. Elevator speeches are built on your strengths. For veterans, they should include some aspect of your military service. In a crowded field of applicants, your military experience can set you apart from the 90% of Americans who have not served. A good elevator speech, connecting the lessons of military service with the needs of employers, opens doors, draws in recruiters, and lands interviews. Build it, practice it aloud, perfect it and be ready to give it whenever the chance arises.

Your elevator speech answers the following questions:

- What makes you unique and what do you do best?
- How have you made an impact?
- What type of work are you seeking?



EXAMPLES OF VETERAN ELEVATOR SPEECHES

Financial Officer, Seeking a Position as an Accountant

“I am not only a numbers person, I am also the solutions person. I have a proven track record of consistently meeting and exceeding performance goals. I am familiar with a variety of accounting specialties from my experience in the public and private sectors. My ability to work with a wide range of clients and industries has been a valuable resource to my employers. As a financial manager in the Air Force, I supervised a staff of information systems specialists and other financial personnel. That highly technical work gave me the attention to detail I need to be a great accountant. Now, I work closely with managers and partners to help support our clients and identify new business opportunities. I am a self-starter with an eye for detail and pride myself on quality work.”

Logistics Officer, Seeking a Position in Management

“I was involved in project management in the military, managing more than 150 people to meet varying organizational objectives that included complex concepts and processes. I oversaw our entire supply chain, from ordering and warehousing to delivery of materials. This experience has given me the ability to bring disparate teams together to achieve collective success. My military service also taught me the value of coaching and mentorship in managing any organization’s most precious resource—its people.”

FILLING IN SKILLS AND CERTIFICATION GAPS

You may need to learn skills to enter the field of your choice. Education or training may be necessary for veterans to launch a new career once they leave the military or during a career change.

Many veterans identify high-growth career opportunities, such as information technology (IT) or cybersecurity, but may lack the technical skills or certifications required to break into the field. There are several military/veteran training programs available for free to help bridge the training and certification gap. These include:

- **AARP Skills Builder for WorkSM**⁹ – AARP and **MindEdge Learning**¹⁰ have developed free courses for veterans and their spouses. The introductory course helps job seekers navigate their career change using their military experience as a plus.
- **Onward To Opportunity (O2O)**¹¹ is a free career training program that provides professional certification and employee support services to transitioning service members, veterans and military spouses. O2O combines industry-validated curricula, strong partnerships with leading veteran service organizations and private-sector companies, and comprehensive career coaching services to prepare you for and match you with your next career.

Showcasing Your Talent

RESUMES

A well-written, understandable resume is central to a successful job search. Yours needs to convey your brand—the combination of skills, achievements, and abilities that clearly demonstrates your singular value to an employer. Your resume can determine whether you get a job interview, so treat it as the most important tool for opening doors to potential employment.

Military Spouses

Creating a job-winning resume as a military spouse can be difficult. The on-again, off-again nature of some military service, along with frequent changes of address, may lead to an employment history of multiple jobs, short tenure, and employment gaps. This, in turn, can make employers question your stability. It's important to be honest and explain to recruiters and would-be employers the “duty calls” nature of military life. In some cases, you may be able to turn this perceived negative into a positive: in your resume, stress your professional persistence while living and working in an unconventional situation. Be sure to include relevant volunteer service. Helping manage spouse support activities during the unit's overseas deployment is an impressive job. Take credit for your hard work, sacrifice, and service, and ensure your resume reflects your efforts.

AARP can help. The **AARP Resume Advisor**^{SM 12} can give you comprehensive feedback on how your resume communicates your skills and expertise, as well as personalized recommendations on how to make it stand out. And at **AARP Work & Jobs**¹³, there's wide-ranging content for job seekers, including tips on navigating the job market, using social media, dealing with tough interview questions, writing cover letters and more.

SHOWCASING YOUR TALENT

Align the resume to the job. Each position you apply for may require a different set of skills and abilities, and a different knowledge base; these will be designated in the job description. Be ready to explain, in each job application, the skills and activities you performed in the military that fit the specific requirements of that job announcement.

Crack the code. There's one special challenge for service members writing a resume: translating military language to fit specific jobs in the marketplace. If your resume is full of military jargon, the recruiter or HR representative may not connect, and you're that much less likely to land the interview.

Translate. Show how soft skills, such as leadership abilities, translate into management skills. Your specialized military training can also be described using terms like adaptability, resourcefulness, and unparalleled work ethic—all values and abilities employers want.

RESUME TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Learn **which types of resumes are best**¹⁴ and which style fits your needs, including chronological, functional, and digital resumes.

Your resume should:

- Be free of grammatical errors and typos.
- Be no longer than two pages.
- Be formatted in a simple black 10-to-12 point font.
- Should include awards, professional memberships, and volunteer work—if relevant to the job.
- Have your contact information, including phone number, email, and LinkedIn profile URL.

A winning resume includes:

- Your most recent relevant jobs within the last 15 years. If you've served the same role in two different assignments, for example, try to keep them together instead of separating them by duty station.
- Education, skills, and experience most relevant to the job you are applying for. Include digital and IT skills.
- Transferable skills from both work and non-work settings (such as volunteering). This is especially important if you are changing careers.
- Results and outcomes. Quantify your achievements and use action verbs. For example, "increased sales by 40%," "expanded program," or "exceeded 97% of targets."

Keywords—the key to success:

- Look at the specific job posting for keywords to use in your resume. Include relevant keywords for both your target industry and the job you are applying for in your resume.
- Use keywords when referring to job titles, accomplishments, experience, skills, and career objectives.
- Use exact language for online resumes to make sure they clear any electronic applicant tracking systems.

SHOW, DON'T TELL

If you are not getting results from your resume, the cause could be more than a poor job market. You have had years of experience and a stellar job record. So why don't employers look at your resume and want to hire you on the spot?

The answer may lie in one word: accomplishments.

Accomplishments focus on results. While your resume might be loaded with previous experiences, it won't stand out without compelling achievements.

You can also distinguish yourself from non-veteran counterparts by highlighting the elements of military service that make you a strong candidate.

How to Measure Your Accomplishments

Use data whenever you can—money saved, efficiencies created, decreased costs, achieving more with less. If it is not possible to provide precise numbers, try to quantify your wins in other ways.

Examples: number of people affected, redundancies eliminated, amount of time saved, percentage of reduction in customer complaints, or similar measures. If you cannot quantify, use terms like “significantly” or “substantially.”

Summarize Your Accomplishments

Draw up a list of accomplishments and compile all your evaluations with duty assignment dates, locations, and job descriptions. Also include any relevant volunteer work and military or civilian education.

Ask yourself how you had an impact. Have I:

- Accomplished more with the same or fewer resources?
- Received awards or special recognition?
- Increased efficiency?
- Managed a work group or department?
- Managed a budget?
- Identified problems others missed?
- Developed a new system or procedure?
- Been promoted or upgraded?

Try the Challenge-Action-Results Approach

For each accomplishment, write down the answers to the following questions:

- **The Challenge:**

What was the problem, need, or situation?

- **The Action(s):**

What did you do about it? Be specific. You can also include any obstacles you overcame and the skills you demonstrated.

- **The Results:**

What results did you produce? Quantify the results (use numbers!).

After answering the questions above, summarize your answers in an accomplishment statement to include in your resume.

Examples of Accomplishments

- **For a Job in Customer Relations:**

Developed communication strategy to respond to military customers regarding a new 150-item product list, resulting in a 20% decrease in returned orders.

- **For a Job Managing Computer Operations:**

Consolidated computer operations from three centers to two, saving \$200,000 without interrupting processing.

More Tips

Accomplishments are specific; they are concrete actions and results. The following kinds of information are not accomplishments, and it is best to avoid them:

- **Your job description.** Eliminate the phrase “duties included” from your resume. Instead, translate your job duties into specific accomplishments.
- **The number of years you served, or good attendance.** Instead of how long you served, focus on what you accomplished. It is your list of achievements that will demonstrate your future value to the employer.
- **Soft skills,** such as “team player,” “good communicator,” or “detail orientation.” As good as it is to have these traits, leave them out of your resume. Instead, cite accomplishments that show you have these qualities.
- **Vague statements about your career objective.** This is vague: “Seeking to use my broad range of skills in a challenging position.” This is concrete: “Seeking to leverage my experience as a medical orderly in battlefield situations into a position as an emergency medical technician.”

COVER LETTERS

Today, many large companies forgo the cover letter and instead screen resumes electronically for keywords that connect to their job descriptions. That said, some employers still require a short letter of interest that explains how your skills pertain to the position.

Your cover letter should also address your interest in the position and how you are qualified for it. Take time to think about your personal brand—the unique skills and strengths that make you attractive to employers. Cover letters are particularly important if you want to describe aspects of your work history you couldn't explain in your resume. For example, maybe you took some time out of the paid workforce to provide family care. Or perhaps you are choosing to apply for a position with considerably less responsibility than in your previous jobs. There are plenty of reasons for such choices (e.g., the desire to spend more time with family); talk about yours.

What to Do

- Address cover letters to a specific person, not just a title or department.
- Refer to the job you are applying for, including a position or reference code if there is one.
- Use exact keywords from the job posting.
- Get right to the point: Describe why you are uniquely qualified.
- Share something engaging about yourself.

What to Avoid

- Too much information! Three to four paragraphs are plenty.
- Military-speak. Keep the letter in layman's terms.
- Generic language. Be as concrete and specific as you can.
- Salary requirements. Save this discussion for the interview.



Job Boards

Use them to search open positions, access free information, and upload your resume for search by employers. Many are available on mobile apps, giving you immediate access to the latest news and job announcements.

There are a lot of good general job boards out there. Especially useful, however, are those for employers specifically looking to hire military veteran talent. These include **Hire Veterans**¹⁵, **G.I. Jobs**¹⁶, and more (see below). Because these job boards are designed with veterans in mind, they anticipate your skills and experience and may be more likely to connect you with desirable work.

Some Job Boards You'll Want to Consult

- **AARP Job Board**¹⁷

The AARP Job Board allows employers to specify jobs for which they are looking to hire military veterans. That has a great flip side for the job seeker: You can filter your search to look for employers looking for veterans! You can also filter your search according to your special skills and background. Match your years of accomplishment with the needs of thousands of employers, many of whom have taken the AARP Employer Pledge to achieve an age-diverse workforce.

- **Military.com**¹⁸

Powered by the massive job search organization **Monster.com**, **Military.com** has millions of job postings by employers in the U.S. and worldwide.

- **ClearanceJobs**¹⁹

ClearanceJobs is the largest career network for professionals with federal government security clearance.

- **Indeed**²⁰

Indeed is a Google-like search engine for jobs that aggregates information from job boards, news sites and company listings.

- **LinkedIn**²¹ **for Veterans**

LinkedIn is the world's largest professional social networking site where users can connect with other professionals and employers. It offers veterans a free one-year Premium Careers Subscription, including access to LinkedIn for Learning, which provides a huge array of open online courses taught by industry experts in software, creativity and business skills. It's a powerful way to expand your learning and acquire new skills.

- **USAJobs**²²

USAJobs is the federal government's official site for jobs and employment information.

Seek Out Military-Spouse Friendly Employers

Many employers recognize the added value military spouses bring to their workplaces. Some may even have programs that specifically recruit military spouses. These programs are often a good way to get a foot in the door and get your resume in front of a hiring manager. Use the filters in job search engines to look for such employers.

Find other military-spouse friendly employers at:

- **MilitaryFriendly.com**
- **MilitarySpouse.com**
- **Military-Transition.org**

Networking Strategies

Networking involves activities that enable you to connect and interact with other people who might be able to help you (and you them) in your career search.

Your network may include personal acquaintances, professional colleagues, military and veterans' groups, and professional associations. You'll create these networks in several ways: in person, by phone and via social media networking. Veterans can connect based on service, branch, unit or military specialty. The best networking strategies often combine all these aspects.

Take Advantage of Military Family Support Organizations

There are many veteran and military spouse support organizations out there. They offer services that include resume writing, interview preparation and job referral support. Find the organization that's right for you. You may also be able to connect with other military spouses for mutual advice and support.

• Personal Friends and Acquaintances

For most people, reaching out to close friends and family is the easiest way to start networking. Personal bonds generally are strong motivators for those in a position to support your job search efforts.

• Professional Friends and Colleagues

As a current or former member of the armed forces, you likely have an extensive network of professional friends and colleagues. Former service members looking for work often find that veterans who have established themselves in civilian employment are more than willing to help another veteran. Multiple online sites such as LinkedIn and Facebook can help you find and connect with other veterans.

• **Military Associations**

There are seemingly countless military associations, such as the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars, through which you can connect with other veterans and military-friendly employers. The cost of membership is generally small, and the benefits of networking opportunities can be big.

• **Professional and Trade Associations**

Professional and trade associations are often military veteran-friendly and can be good resources for those with requisite professional qualifications.

• **Volunteering**

The opportunity to build your network while volunteering cannot be overstated. Find volunteer roles that give you a chance to meet people in career fields you seek or that offer you ways to develop your skills.

• **Job Fairs**

Virtual and in person. Have your elevator pitch ready and speak to recruiters.



SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media sites such as LinkedIn, **Twitter**²³, and **Facebook**²⁴ can be great career networking resources to help you connect with people, companies, and job opportunities.

Many recruiters will look in detail at your social media presence; it is a window into who you are as a candidate. This is not limited to LinkedIn and job-related sites but also includes your personal social media accounts. Before you begin your search, make sure your online presence represents what you want prospective employers to see.

Military spouses may have access to extensive social media networks. Use the power of your online network to help in your career search. Leverage connections to help identify opportunities, recommendations and assistance. Cultivate these networks when you search for post-military jobs. People who have been military spouses and are now working in the civilian workforce are especially promising connections: They are often more than willing to help a fellow “MilSpouse.” Never be afraid to ask for help and be ready to help others.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the largest social medium for professional networking. Harness its power in your job search. As of 2021, it had 740 million users posting profiles, news or jobs, some looking for employment and some looking for job seekers. Take some time to learn the search features that let you drill down into networks of people, companies and job postings to use it effectively. Here are some methods of making the most of its features:

- **Create an accurate, detailed, and polished profile.** Most recruiters look at the LinkedIn profiles of job seekers, so put time and effort into writing and setting up your profile and edit it frequently so it stays up to date.

NETWORKING STRATEGIES

- **Go shopping in the vast virtual job market.** Search for jobs posted on LinkedIn, and set up job alerts to notify you when something pops that matches the search criteria you create in your profile.
- **Network with other veterans.** Veterans often welcome the opportunity to help another veteran and are great sources of referrals and recommendations.
- **Follow and connect with people in your field and with companies in which you are interested.**
- **Connect with former colleagues, commanders, unit-mates, or classmates.** You never know where a good recommendation letter or job lead might come from!
- **Follow thought-leaders in your field and find people who have jobs you're interested in, especially those who are veterans.**
- **If you get a job interview, learn about your interviewers via LinkedIn.**
- **Consider joining military and veterans' groups to connect with other veterans.**

TIP: Veterans may include their military service in their profiles. You can search LinkedIn by service, unit, even country of service.

LinkedIn Best Practices

•Work Your Profile

Your personal profile is the basis of your brand on LinkedIn and may be your first introduction to prospective employers and contacts. LinkedIn's algorithm places those who have the most complete profiles highest up in search engine results.

•Be Active

LinkedIn is a social medium, so be social; it could help get you a job. Write thoughtful posts about the news and trends in your field and post them. Use relevant hashtags and provide links if interested readers want to learn more. Take part in relevant professional groups. Avoid overtly political or partisan posts: Your job search is the point here. Post and repost plenty of industry-related content, things that you like, or find thought-provoking about your chosen field.

•Connect, Connect, Connect

Leverage LinkedIn's powerful tools to connect with those who can help you in your career search. You should connect with:

- » Companies, organizations, and people who can put you in a good position to find a job. Make a list of companies that interest you and follow them all on LinkedIn.
- » Professionals and thought-leaders in your field, especially people who have jobs you would like to have. Peruse their skills and backgrounds.
- » Alumni/ae from your school. Your school appears to the right of your profile picture. Click on it. That brings you to LinkedIn Alumni, one of the platform's most powerful tools. There, you can search for people who attended your school and find those who work in your field. Add them to your network. Reach out and ask them thoughtful questions about their jobs and company culture.
- » Professional organizations, to show you are active and passionate about your field.

•Get to the Jobs

If you navigate LinkedIn with confidence and attention, you will be creating a network of institutions and people, many of whom you have contacted with questions and comments. So how do you and the job get together?

- » A company or recruiter reads your profile and reaches out for more information or to schedule an interview.
- » You see a job post on a company or recruiter's page or a professional organization's page. From there, you can follow appropriate steps to send in your resume or apply for the job.
- » Make a list of your target company(ies). In Advanced Search, find out which of your contacts is associated with them. (Try LinkedIn Alumni above: This has a high rate of success.) Reach out to them. If they are employees, ask questions about the company culture. If they are clients or service providers, ask what it is like to do business with them. When you feel ready to do so, you may ask one of these contacts to introduce you to someone in the company.
- » People on LinkedIn have gotten jobs based on their posts, or publications, or a combination of skills (petrochemical engineering and Chinese, AI and podcasting, etc.), or a recommendation or endorsement (which is why you should ask friends, associates and other contacts for them!). The more skills and accomplishments you put out there, and the bigger your network, the better your chance for LinkedIn success.

Interviews

Interviews are a critical part of any job search. Some recruiters have preconceived notions about veterans, so the interview is your opportunity to talk to them directly to dispel any myths about the military and sell the idea that you are the right person for the job.

IN-PERSON INTERVIEWS

Make the conversation two-way. In other words, ask questions. This is your chance to learn more about the organization and whether it's a good fit for you. What opportunities exist for training and career development? How does the organization recognize performance? What does career progression look like in the organization? (In the military, you may have grown accustomed to clear definitions of success and well-established criteria for promotion, but not all companies offer them.) Use the interview process to better understand how the prospective employer recognizes performance opportunities and if those answers support your short- and long-term goals.

A successful job interview begins with careful planning. **During your preparation, keep the following key points in mind:**

- **Develop a list of your achievements, skills, and abilities that to in the interview.**
- **Do your homework.** Research the company and its industry. What are its major initiatives, products, and services?

TIP: It's good to refresh your memory on each of your assignments leading up to the interview to help keep answers to these types of questions fresh in your mind.

INTERVIEWS

- **Dress appropriately.** Wear professional attire, not a uniform. For formal companies or federal interviews, a suit might be in order.
- **Take several copies of your resume with you to hand out as needed.**
- **Be ready to answer scenario and behavior-based questions.** Examples include “Explain how you have handled conflict with a difficult colleague.” You may wish to rehearse a few with a friend.
- **Show up 10-15 minutes early.**
- **Use the STAR format (Situation, Task, Action, Result) to communicate your military experience related to the position.**
- **Prepare three good questions specific to the job and/or the organization.** Examples include: “What’s your definition of job success in the first year?” or “What are the first main goals you seek to get done with me onboard?” or “Do you offer training and educational opportunities for your employees so we can continue to hone our skills?”
- **Thank the interviewer and others with whom you interact.**
- **Send thank-you emails or notes the day after your interview.** Restate your interest in the position and thank the interviewer(s) for their time.

VIRTUAL INTERVIEWS

The following tips can help you navigate them:

- **As with in-person interviews, be presentable.** Dress in the same type of attire you'd wear if the discussion were in-person.
- **Each video conferencing platform, whether it's Zoom, Google Hangouts, or Skype, work a little differently.** Once you know which platform will be used in your interview, try it out and familiarize yourself with how it works. Practice by doing mock interviews.
- **Select an appropriate background.** It should be clean and uncluttered. Remove anything likely to draw the interviewer's attention away from you.
- **Your face should be well-lit.** Put a light in front of your computer monitor that focuses on you for optimal lighting.
- **Maintain eye contact with the interviewer.** Unfortunately, that means looking at the camera lens, not the interviewer's picture on your screen. This can be difficult, so be sure to practice.
- **Be aware of the limits of video conferencing.** Lag times can cause people to speak over each other. If glitches happen, maintain your composure and work with the interviewer to help resolve any issues. Try to speak at a moderate pace avoiding quick movements or hand gestures.

TIP: Write encouraging words and key points you want to make on a sticky note just by the computer monitor. This can help jog your memory if you're nervous and remind you that you've got this!

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