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BUILD THE BEST TO HIRE THE BEST

9 RECRUITING TIPS & PRACTICES OF MILITARY FRIENDLY® EMPLOYERS

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Commitment ▪ Alignment ▪ Training ▪ Support ▪ Presence

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This year nearly 400,000 active duty, National Guard and Armed Forces Reserve service members will transition their skills to campuses and companies nationwide. Most military transitioners have been in a uniform since they were 18. Now, they're 22 or 42, brimming with talent but lacking information or a plan to take the next step in finding a job in the civilian world.

For years the question for companies was “*why should I hire military?*”

That question was answered long ago.

Leadership, diversity, team skills, performance under pressure and being physically healthy are just a few of the reasons why veterans and military employees are such attractive candidates regardless of business line, industry or region. Joseph Pennington, National Military Program Manager, of Combined Insurance Company of America, sums it up best:

“[THEY] HAVE AN INDEPENDENT WORK ETHIC, LEADERSHIP AND DRIVE THAT YOU CAN'T TEACH.”

WHAT MAKES MILITARY FRIENDLY® EMPLOYERS DIFFERENT?

This year's roster of Military Friendly® Employers are companies and organizations nationwide across a range of industries that know the value of having veterans on staff and are leading the way in providing civilian job opportunities for veterans and military spouses. These employers have moved the needle in their own organizations.

Today, they are asking “How do I recruit? How do I retain, support and develop military employees even more *efficiently* and *effectively*?”

Employers committed to adopting veteran-friendly practices can differentiate themselves in the marketplace by focusing on three main areas: hiring practices, employee training, and brand awareness and response among service members, veterans and military families. This paper highlights best practices in these areas as demonstrated by the top three Military Friendly® Employers for 2016:

1. **Combined Insurance Company of America**
2. **Booz Allen Hamilton**
3. **USAA**

IN REVIEW:

A holistic, integrated approach to hiring, training and mentoring veterans and military spouses is a must to compete for military talent—and to enable military employees to succeed in the civilian workplace. Top Military Friendly® Employers agree on a number of best practices that drive success in recruiting from the military:

- Top-Down Commitment
- Aligned Programs and Practices
- Staff Training
- Robust Onboarding and Support
- Awareness and Branding

These elite companies were selected from a pool of more than 200 companies nationwide based on their excellence in and commitment to military recruiting efforts, including their percentage of new hires with prior military service; number and type of retention programs for veterans; and formal policies on National Guard and Reserve service. Information about the companies' programs and policies was obtained by Victory Media during its annual, quantitatively-driven Military Friendly® Employers survey in the fall of 2015. While they represent different industries, regions and customers, all three companies agree on one thing:

A HOLISTIC, INTEGRATED APPROACH TO HIRING, TRAINING AND MENTORING OF VETERANS AND MILITARY EMPLOYEES IS A MUST IN ORDER TO COMPETE FOR MILITARY TALENT—AND TO ALLOW MILITARY EMPLOYEES TO SUCCEED IN THE CIVILIAN WORKPLACE.

ALIGN WORDS AND ACTIONS IN RECRUITING PRACTICES

Companies wanting to compete for the attention of military talent and to stand out from the crowd of potential employers must not only talk about their commitment, they need to show it. Our top three Military Friendly® Employers each reiterated that a **top-down commitment to hiring from the military** is critical and must be the norm, not the exception, for HR professionals. More specifically, Military Friendly® Employers offer the following tips.

I. Set a Goal.

Military Friendly® Employers set specific military hiring goals for their companies—goals that come from the executive suite. For example, Brad Bennett, President of Combined Insurance, the 2016 #1 Military Friendly® Employer explains, “There’s an incredible talent pool with Veterans. Their uniqueness fits nicely with us.” Perhaps more importantly than his words, though, is the fact that Combined has hired more than 2,500 veterans since the company launched their veteran recruiting initiative in 2010; 34% of Combined’s new hires in 2015 alone have a military background. The company has also made a public commitment to hire 2,800 veterans in the next two years.

“Our brand promise is ‘going above for those who have gone beyond.’ One way we live out our brand promise is by hiring veterans and military spouses. Veteran hiring isn’t a new commitment – it’s in our DNA. Our military members and their family members make outstanding employees. They are loyal, mission-oriented and make natural leaders.”

Mark Reid, Chief HR Officer, USAA

Similarly, USAA, a financial services company well-known in military circles for its military background and focus, establishes a hiring goal each year and has made military recruiting part of its culture. Today, 22% of USAA’s new hires are veterans or military spouses; the company is working towards a goal of increasing that number to 30%.

A final note about goal-setting: Military Friendly® Employers don’t simply “set it and forget it”—they review goals and programs on at least an annual basis. Today, 30% of Booz Allen Hamilton’s workforce is former military, but the company continually re-evaluates their goals and does not stop at the numbers. They review and evaluate the company’s Veteran’s Agenda through their leadership council, a team of executives and stakeholders who meet to discuss successes and areas for improvement.

This council is ultimately held accountable for understanding and addressing veteran employee issues, and supporting military employees in their development at the consulting firm.

2. Train Your Existing Staff.

Leading employers develop and require special training of their HR and talent acquisition staff, so that those recruiting (including business line hiring managers) *understand* the military candidate. That is, how the military is structured, including how individuals are evaluated and rise through the ranks. How skills and job experiences through military service can translate to the employer's and industry's needs, including how to interpret a military candidate's resume. Candidate demographics—who they are and where they come from. Even the “culture” and lifestyle of military families who are accustomed to moving every three to four years and living in a community that uses acronyms foreign to most civilians!

A critical part of military program development is training your employees to understand and comply with federal regulations around hiring practices, policies and benchmarks. Specifically, veterans are considered a protected class of applicant and employee by the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP), an agency of the U.S. Department of Labor. The OFCCP ensures that federal contractors and subcontractors comply with non-discrimination and affirmative action laws and regulations, including those affecting the recruitment and hiring of veterans. Companies and their employees must engage in nondiscriminatory hiring and employment practices, take affirmative action to ensure equal employment opportunity to all applicants, including veterans, and follow proper steps to evaluate candidates and make hiring decisions.

Finally, companies should focus on getting staff out in the community to network and share best practices with outside organizations and colleagues in and across industries. Our Military Friendly® Employers recommend that companies choose a few key organizations with local, regional and/or national reach to focus their efforts.

Did you know that private employers with 100 or more employees, and federal government contractors or first-tier subcontractors with 50 or more employees and a contract or subcontract of \$50,000 or more, must file an annual EEO-1 report and now the Vets 4212 to meet OFCCP requirements?

3. Think Beyond Veterans.

More than 1.1 million women and men juggle family, work and school every day while meeting the unique demands of deployments, frequent moves and military life while their loved ones are on the front lines. Military spouses tend to be excellent multi-taskers with a strong work ethic. Military Friendly® Employers and Military Spouse Friendly Employers® recognize this value in these individuals, the “force behind the force.”

USAA, for example, recognizes that spouses are a key part of the community and the company sets formal goals to hire military spouses alongside veterans. Booz Allen Hamilton holds special webinars and educational programs for military families, and follows a peer training and support model for military spouses as they do for veterans, pairing new hires with military spouses who have successfully been employed at the company. If your organization is committed to the military community, consider the *entire* community and set goals not only for hiring veterans, but for military spouses as well.

“INTEGRATE, EQUIP, REPEAT”

While top-down commitment and a cultural shift to recruiting from the military is paramount to launching and running a successful military recruiting program, it should come as no surprise that work does not stop once a new hire sets foot inside your doors. In fact, this is when much of the work begins to make employees feel like welcomed team members who fit in your organization. Our top Military Friendly® Employers implemented comprehensive programs and policies to onboard military hires and to provide ongoing training to them.

4. Make Onboarding More Than Filing Out Forms.

Onboarding for any new hire should be comprehensive, covering information about the company’s industry, business model, customers and competitors, expectations about the employee’s role and goals, and logistics that will make it easy for him or her to “jump right in.” Veterans and military spouses are no different in this sense, but they may need supplemental training and additional background, especially if this is their first, or one of their first, employment opportunities in the civilian sector. Do you need to dive deeper into explaining who your customers are, their pain points and buying behavior? What certain industry terminology means? Protocol for contributing to meetings? Whether your organization tends to be more formal or less, taking the time to spend time with new employees—over weeks or months, in the office and in the field—sets the stage for a successful, long-term work relationship.

5. Match New Employees with Mentors.

Integration of new military hires into your work environment and culture can be even more effective—and faster—when they are matched with other veterans, Reserves or National Guard, or military spouse employees. Mentors with similar backgrounds speak the same language, can assist with translating and championing a military employee’s skills in his or her civilian position, and are, to put it best, success stories in their own right. Combined Insurance, for example, pairs new hires with veterans who have become managers at the company for in-field training and one-on-one coaching.

All three of our top 2016 Military Friendly® Employers also form peer or peer/mentor groups to provide a company-supported way for individuals to get together on a regular basis. These groups share information and gather feedback on areas in which the company could improve their resources and support for military employees and their families.

6. Build Useful Resources and Programs.

As mentioned above, the opportunity and company-sponsored ability to connect with other veterans over coffee or lunch on a monthly or quarterly basis is a valuable way to demonstrate what it takes to build a career at your organization, and provides a support system at all levels to navigate the work culture and job. Employers that are vested in their military employees have found other ways to show support, too. Booz Allen Hamilton, for example, built a library of links to internal and external resources for veterans and military families. USAA developed a specific Veterans for IT program to encourage more veterans to seek out a technology career at the company, or to get the training needed to begin an IT career. The program fills an important business need for qualified IT employees while demonstrating a commitment to the professional development of military staff.

BEING MILITARY FRIENDLY® TAKES COMMITMENT... AND RECOGNITION

Building brand awareness with your desired pool of candidates can serve as the long-term anchor for any talent acquisition program. It is the foundation of the best recruiting programs designed to attract the best and brightest from the military community, and will help to differentiate your company from thousands of others vying for the same talent. Our leading Military Friendly® Employers offer these tips for improving name recognition and credibility for your military recruiting initiatives.

7. Network...with Focus.

Networking and building relationships within the military community and your own community should be a given when it comes to increasing awareness of your organization. That said, focusing on a few key partners and award opportunities, like participating in the Military Friendly® survey and ratings program, will help align your goals and resources effectively and efficiently. Working in your community and with key partners will help you understand current and emerging issues for veterans and military spouses, so your company can better support employees, and increase word-of-mouth referrals about your commitment to recruiting from the military.

8. Leverage School Relationships.

Over one million veterans or their eligible family members are beneficiaries of the VA's education funding ([Department of Veteran Affairs, 2014](#)), with over 700,000 recipients using the Post 9/11 GI Bill to earn a degree or certificate (fiscal year 2013 data, [Department of Veteran Affairs](#)).

Beneficiaries who began receiving education benefits by training type and program during fiscal year 2013³

Education program	College, non-degree	Graduate	Under-graduate	Vocational/technical	Program totals
POST 9/11 ⁴	90,989	23,020	102,335	4,045	220,389

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Benefits Administration

³ Source: Hines Information Technology Center

⁴ Post 9/11 GI Bill statistics source: Office of Performance Analysis and Integrity Enterprise Data Warehouse.

Many service members leaving the military choose to go back to school; therefore, one way to connect with veterans ready to enter the workforce is to partner with veterans offices and career counselors at local colleges, universities, trade schools and community colleges—especially those designated as Military Friendly® Schools. These institutions have made a commitment just as your company has to attract individuals who have served (or have “served” as a family member). Together, organizations and institutions can build the bridge between classroom learning and positive career outcomes for veterans, leading to economic opportunity on the individual level and in the community at large.

9. Be Present.

There are many different ways to build awareness within the military community—hiring fairs, networking, and advertising in publications and on media outlets important to the audience. In addition to evaluating the cost-benefit of each of these tactics, one of the most important criteria is “being present” where military transitioners are *during* the military transition cycle.



Technically, service members begin talking about transition when they are assigned to their first duty station, which can be years before their actual separation from service. Then, in a soldier's final year, and especially 6-8 months prior to separation, the focus on transition sharpens greatly.

During that time, service members more seriously assess their career goals against their current skill-set. They choose fields of study or work (or determine how to use their GI Bill to get trained for work), identify geographical regions they wish to settle in, and begin reviewing Military Friendly® Employers in those locations. Employers that understand the length of this cycle and the importance of building a sustainable presence at *all* stages, not just in the last 30 days—or worse, *after* the individual is already out of the service—will be top of mind with valuable military candidates. Those that learn *how to build presence effectively* will gain a competitive advantage.

SUMMARY

Leading companies work continually to keep their training and resources fresh, review programs and policies annually and to align their business strategies and hiring needs with the pipeline of military talent. They invest in developing their military recruitment programs, building a presence within the military community, and driving response to their job openings—just as they invest in building and bringing to market their own products and services.

“We live in an era when the value of military service in the professional world is unquestioned and unmatched,” says Chris Hale, a Navy veteran and Chairman and Co-Founder of Victory Media. “Veterans are graduates of the premier training institution in the world.”

Today's Military Friendly® Employers set the bar higher and higher each year because they invest in recruiting military renewable talent—not merely because it's the “right thing to do,” but because it's smart business.

Learn more about Victory Media's Military Friendly® ratings and “health check” assessment process, plus programs to help companies build pipelines of military talent, develop military recruitment programs, build presence with military transitioners and drive response to career opportunities, by visiting us at www.victorymedia.com.

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About Military Friendly®:

Military Friendly® is part of the ratings division of Victory Media, a service-disabled, veteran-owned business. Military Friendly® rates companies and colleges on their programs to recruit and retain veterans and military spouses. Military Friendly® is a federally trademarked term, created in 2003 by Victory Media.

The Military Friendly® assessment process includes extensive research and required completion of a proprietary, data-driven survey. All Military Friendly® surveys, methodology, criteria and weightings were developed with the assistance of an independent Advisory Board comprised of higher education and recruitment professionals from across the country. The survey is administered for free. Criteria for consideration and more information can be found at <https://militaryfriendly.com>.

About Victory Media:

Based in Pittsburgh, Victory Media, a service-disabled veteran-owned business, connects classrooms to careers for the nation's next generation of professionals. Our data-driven ratings are published in *G.I. Jobs*®, *Military Spouse*, *Vetpreneur*® and *STEM Jobs*SM media, and featured in national media including USA Today, Wall Street Journal, FORTUNE, Bloomberg, NBC, ABC, CBS, CNN, CNBC, Fox News and others. Learn more about our solutions to Develop Programs, Build Presence and Drive Response at victorymedia.com, and follow us on LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.