

Job Searching For Returning Veterans

Coming from a war zone and readjusting to civilian life without waking up to mortars in the middle of the night, or grabbing your weapon every time you have to use the bathroom or eat a meal is hard. Coming home and having to look for work is even harder. Do start if possible with your former employer. Good employers will do the right thing and welcome you back. Still, don't be surprised if you hear that you are now "over qualified" for that position. Employers find themselves in a difficult situation when they lose a vital employee and must replace that person with no ability to plan for an easy transition whenever that former employee does return. Sometimes there are no easy answers from a business point of view. Someone is going to be disappointed whatever they do.

If you can, take advantage of your Montgomery G.I. Bill benefits, which includes a lot of college money incentives. Do be sure and talk to the financial aide office as often there are additional incentives that can be worked out with a properly accredited school. The Veteran's Assistance (VA) Representative at the school should be able to help with advice and assistance. There are also Veteran's Representatives located at the Missouri Career Center to assist with job searching needs and to answer other questions about benefits. G.I. bill money can also be used towards on the job training and apprenticeship training. Vet Reps can lead you to those who are approved.

Don't forget to apply for your SF86, or security clearance. Many employers are very interested in this because it shows you can be trusted, there are no skeletons in the closet, and they may decide to save money by not also ordering a background investigation. This gives you an advantage over other applicants.

Be sure and have handy several copies of your DD214. Be ready to turn in a copy along with your resume and application. Civilian employers may not know how to read one, but they do know what it stands for. Be sure to look into the websites Military.com and usajobs.opm.gov for other job search opportunities along with the database of jobs at Missouri Career Center. Currently that database is found at www.greathires.org which will soon be moving to www.MissouriCareerSource.com.

When creating your resume get rid of the military jargon. Think back to basic training when your world changed from civilian to service member. It is time to reconvert back to civilian words. Instead of squad leader, use managed/supervised ten employees. Think of all the equipment you were responsible for without any losses and what that monetary total came to. If you can use specifics with numbers—how many, how much, your resume will be stronger for it.

Use phrases such as "capable of working in high stress environment, implemented safety plans (risk assessments), able to lead and motivate others, are all great examples to use on a resume. Just take your military job description and convert it to civilian language. If you need help doing that you can use the O*Net Crosswalk to translate from military to civilian language at <http://online.onetcenter.org/crosswalk>. Write down all schools,

training sessions, licenses, and have them translated also. Then weed the list for those that would be most respected by employers or most related to the job you are targeting. Don't forget your medals either. You won't have to translate them for the effect to be impressive.

Now take a look at your hair cut. Are you still wearing the same high and tight you had when you finished basic training? Take a deep breath and let it grow out a little because now you want to blend in. If you are job searching and you have 20 "been there done that" t-shirts, leave them at home. You want to wear dress slacks or khakis with a solid color button down long sleeve dress shirt. Look like you do in your dress uniform, but without the coat.

When you are ready to interview be patient with the civilians. If you have an appointment or meeting at 1500 hours and you are there at 1445, it might take your interviewer until 1510 to come and get you. Take a deep breath, smile and think about what the first sergeant would say to them and carry on. And squash your knee jerk reaction to answer every question with a "yes, sir". Too much formality makes interviewers uncomfortable. Just relax and be your self. Also check out the Job Seekers Workshop at the Missouri Career Center. The best thing you can do for yourself is to learn how to interview. The Missouri Career Center is here to help you and they have dedicated staff to help veterans so take advantage of their help if you feel you need it.

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