Veteran's Guide to Vet-Friendly Employers
When the time for military service comes to an end, the transition into civilian work, even when welcome, isn't always easy or simple. Finding a veteran-friendly employer can make that period of change less of a challenge and the work more rewarding.

If you as a veteran can find employment where your previous experience is appreciated and desired, it can ease the difficulties of adapting to life outside the military. You may have looked at the military as an opportunity to further their education after high school or you may have looked at it as a way to jump right into a career rather than attend college, trade school, or enter into the civilian job force. The process of getting into the military is often a step-by-step one with guidance along the way and clear actions. You meet with a recruiter, gather information on the branch, make some decisions and then the military tells you what to do from there. Once the decision of what branch to join and when to join was made, many aspects of their job search and career decisions were made for you.

Perhaps you went right from a high school graduation gown to a military uniform and the thought of navigating the civilian work world seems a bit foreign. Now that you have reached the end of your military service and desire or need to transition into a civilian career, the decisions, path, and steps to take may not be quite so clear. It can be difficult to know how military skills will transfer to a civilian job, but companies with a goal of being friendly to veterans are looking to hire those with those skills. Finding a veteran-friendly employer can help ease that transition, help guide the direction of a job search, and better position a veteran for success in his or her next career venture. Even better is finding a veteran-friendly company that not only has the desire to hire veterans but that will give a veteran priority over a non-veteran. Veteran-friendly companies may even want to reach certain percentages of veterans within their workforce.

You can take certain steps, ask certain questions, and watch out for certain factors in the search for veteran-friendly employers and better set yourself up to be a good match for open positions.

**Where to Look**

A veteran may not have any idea where to begin figuring out where to look for a potential employer that will be accommodating to hiring veterans. Often businesses and organizations that desire to build their work-force with veterans will take steps to recruit veterans specifically. Some organizations might even have a set staff member dedicated to the recruitment of former military. That person may even be a veteran who is familiar with military culture. If so, this is a definite plus.
Some places to find veteran-friendly employers are on typical job-search sites such as www.monster.com, www.job.com, and www.indeed.com as well as through social media such as LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter. Companies serious about recruiting veterans and with veteran-friendly practices and policies may have a website specific for military recruitment. Doing an internet search can result in finding many examples. Many big-name companies such as Boeing, Disney, Amazon, JP Morgan Chase, Microsoft, and T-Mobile show up on lists of veteran-friendly companies.

However, don’t be afraid to think outside the box to smaller, lesser-known companies, perhaps not located in large cities. For example, Acutec Precision Aerospace, Inc., supplies sophisticated aerospace parts to a worldwide customer base from northwest Pennsylvania and is making hiring veterans a priority.

Various military service groups also have websites with job information for veterans. Vet Central has resources, job search tools and lists of companies. Victory Media provides lists of companies with the trademarked label of Military Friendly at www.militaryfriendly.com and information for veterans transitioning in its GI Jobs Magazine. Veteran Recruiting also is a website with tools and resources as well as online job fairs.

Businesses looking to hire veterans also may use career fairs and partnerships with business and trade associations. Veterans groups and organizations are also places veterans can use to find potential matches. The American Legion is one example of where to find career fairs specific to veterans through its website www.legion.org/careers/jobfairs. Disabled American Veterans is another resource with a listing of job fairs. Veteran-friendly companies also may work with American Job centers, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Hire Our Heroes program and the Military Officers Association of America to find former military job candidates and become more veteran-friendly.

If a company supports veterans’ causes either with donations or services, it is a good chance it is a veteran-friendly company. Keep watch for companies involved in the community and in veterans’ issues.

Lastly, don’t be afraid to network with fellow veterans and take advantage of the tight-knit military community by letting it be known that you are in the market for a new job. Veteran-friendly companies know how to use other veterans to recruit other veterans, and word of mouth is often the best way to find a job lead.

Identifying a Veteran-Friendly Company

Now that you know where to get started, what does a veteran look for in a veteran-friendly company? There are often common characteristics that veteran-friendly companies and organizations possess.

First, they are welcoming to veterans and show this by clearly communicating roles and expectations, policies and timelines. They accommodate special needs, especially those more prevalent with the veteran community.
such as PTSD and disabilities. They have a support system for veterans and make use of veterans already in their employ to support new hires.

A company may offer some flexible workplace programs such as flexible time that might be needed for a veteran undergoing medical treatment. Often, they facilitate ongoing education needed for the job. They use a mix of recruitment channels to find new candidates and hires. Veteran-friendly companies identify the skills needed and track effectiveness in their recruiting and job performance.

Within a job posting itself, a job candidate can find clues as to whether a company is veteran-friendly. An obvious sign that an organization is veteran-friendly is if it uses military classification codes in their application materials and job posts to help them identify whether someone’s job, rank, qualifications, and special training are a good fit for their opening.

A good veteran-friendly job description will avoid requirements stipulating a specific number of years’ experience to qualify. Instead, a veteran-friendly company will craft a job posting to list competencies it desires in a candidate. Rather than stating a job requires two years or more experience in sales, for example, it will list attributes they are looking for in an employee. Examples might be accountability, flexibility, leadership experience, know how to work within a team environment, problem-solving, resiliency, reliability, and loyalty. Companies with a high commitment to hiring veterans likely will have ways to identify positions that best match veterans’ skills. They also will have a high level of personal response and interaction. One example of this is a company that responds to veterans’ applications quickly, say within a five-day period. How a company inquires about military service also can be an indicator of awareness of veterans’ issues. A company in-the-know about veteran’s issues might ask candidates if they have served in the military rather than if they are a veteran because they realize that veterans are often under-reported because they may not self-report as a veteran if they served during peacetime.

Once You Have the Interview

You’ve found an intriguing job post, applied and now you’ve secured an interview. There are questions an employer may ask and topics they may cover that can give you more insight into whether they are a veteran-friendly employer and a good fit for you. You, as a candidate, can also ask certain questions to gather information. A candidate also can try to do some background research — reading about the company and looking over its website and any publications it offers or the company’s social media pages — to gain as much knowledge about whether a company is a match for veterans.

A company with a positive history of hiring and retaining veterans likely will have veterans in training and coaching positions or will use veterans already employed as mentors. If a potential employer highlights experience and accomplishments of veterans, or if there is a high visibility of veterans, those are other positive signs.
One indication of a veteran-friendly employer is that **the interviewer will encourage a candidate to speak freely** and sell themselves, something that may be uncomfortable at first for a veteran who is used to the team-work over individual accomplishment atmosphere of the military. An interviewer experienced in hiring veterans will understand that a veteran may be more familiar with a formal military communication style and that they may not be used to selling one's own abilities for a job. A candidate must promote his own individual experience and skills, but a veteran-friendly employer will also focus on evidence and examples of successful teamwork.

While many roles in the military have direct civilian equivalents, the military classification may not represent a person's true, full skill-set and abilities. Someone familiar with hiring veterans will understand that it is necessary to confirm the responsibilities of the opening with the candidate to help make sure it is a suitable fit. A veteran-friendly company will possibly even **put together a profile of skills from the military service** that apply to the position. If some of these signs are not readily apparent, **candidates can ask good questions** about whether a company has other veterans on staff, how many they have, if veterans are in leadership positions, how long they have been there, and what kinds of roles veterans serve in to find out more. Some companies don't brag about their veteran hiring practices and don't appear on veteran-friendly company lists.

**Reasons veterans leave companies** often include it being a poor fit or the responsibilities and duties don’t match the job description that was posted. Ask questions at the interview level about what will be expected of you and the skills and abilities required for the work. An interview candidate can inquire about what a typical day in the job would look like. What is the culture of the organizations, how is the organization structured, how do my military skills and experience fit into the job, are other good questions.

**Beyond the Hiring Process**

At some point during the interview process, even if not on the first interview, it is a good sign if a candidate is **provided with materials describing benefits, opportunities for veterans, and any support** that is offered. Whether a company has veteran-friendly policies also will be reflected in any benefits packages offered. Some **examples of veteran-friendly benefits include** financial assistance such as gap salaries, payment of insurance premiums, relocation assistance, extra vacation time, sick leave, or flexible time, which can be important for veterans needing appointments for issues regarding their transition or health concerns. Added bonuses may be such facilities as daycare and fitness center.

A veteran-friendly company **will also emphasize ongoing development**. It might provide assistance and advice on getting civilian licenses or certifications, encourage the use of the VA and GI Bill, or the VA work-study program. As an added incentive, some companies become “**Approved GI Bill™**” in order to attract registered
apprentices. Employers also can get licensing or certification tests officially approved, which allows veterans to receive reimbursement for test taking costs.

Beyond merely hiring veterans, keeping them as employees is a good sign of a truly veteran-friendly organization or of a solid company in general. An effective veteran-friendly company will have a veteran affinity group providing mentors and sense of community to its veteran employees.

**Watch Out For Red Flags**

Just as one can spot things companies are doing become more veteran-friendly, one can spot warning signs that a company may not be as well.

From robocall to computer scams, there is no shortage of people wanting to take advantage of others, and unfortunately, veterans are no exception to this. **Be wary of sites that ask for payment for information.** Do not give information to websites or if someone calls claiming you have a job offer if you have not sought out that position.

A red flag is if during an interview you are asked about membership in the Guard or Reserves. **It is illegal to discriminate** based on that service. An interviewer who is sensitive to veterans’ unique experiences also will not ask questions directly related to mental health or concerning combat.

**Indicators within an interview** that someone may not be a person you want to work for are not making eye contact, multitasking or not paying attention during the interview, making negative remarks about others in the company, or giving terse answers to questions.

**Conclusion**

Finding a new job is rarely a simple, quick or easy task for anybody, and veterans have unique challenges on this front. However, companies that already have the desire and experience in hiring veterans already can make result in a much smoother job search process. They also can help ensure that once you do find a new job it will be one that you want to stay and grow in.
Acutec Precision Aerospace, Inc., was founded in the rich manufacturing of Northwest Pennsylvania and offers an opportunity to learn and develop your potential in our clean, modern, state-of-the-art facility. Acutec’s expertise is in supplying sophisticated aerospace parts.