



Qualigence  
International

# **BUILDING A BUSINESS CASE FOR RECRUITING VETERANS**

Whitepaper

## IN THIS WHITEPAPER

More than half (60%) of today's employers are having a difficult time finding candidates that have the necessary qualifications for open positions.

Veterans often possess the necessary skills, attitude, competencies, and cultural knowledge for such open roles, yet are overlooked due to a lack of understanding in Recruiting, Talent Acquisition, and HR regarding transferrable military experience.



For veterans who served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces at any time since September 2001—a group referred to as Gulf War-era II veterans — the average unemployment rate is higher than that of the national average – 7.2% compared to 5.5% nationally, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Gaining a comprehensive understanding of relevant veteran skills and attributes can aid in fixing the disconnect between employers seeking talented workers and veterans with the necessary qualifications who are going unnoticed.

In this Whitepaper, we will explore the central issues with veteran hiring and what recruiters and employers can do to alleviate these issues and strengthen the allegiance between veterans and the civilian business world.

\*Source: Robert Half International

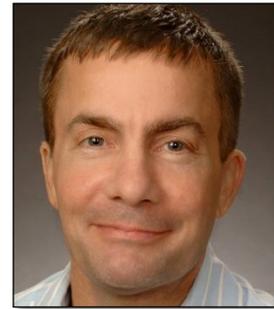
## THE TRANSLATION CHALLENGE

In order for organizations to begin to build a business case for recruiting and hiring veterans, what must first be understood is the reason for the disparity between veteran hiring and organizations having trouble filling roles that call for key skills.

The fundamental issue with helping veterans re-enter the workforce is the lack of understanding regarding hiring for competency versus hard skills, said global recruiting expert and educator Steve Lowisz.

“Military workers make a great fit, but companies don’t know it,” Lowisz said. “Companies don’t know how to screen for these types of skills.”

Phil Hendrickson, Chief Talent Strategist for Qwalify, has spent the last decade launching veteran initiatives for companies such as Starbucks and Apple.



Phil Hendrickson, Qwalify

The very core of the challenge in getting veterans back into the workforce, Hendrickson says, is understanding how to translate the skills and experiences veterans have into the kinds of skills and experience that companies are looking for, an issue he calls “The Translation Challenge.”

*“If veterans walked out of their military service with a resume that looked just like yours and mine, there would be no challenge here...it’s precisely because they walk out with 5, 10, 15 years of experience, incredible skills and leadership ability, yet their resumes look completely different.”*

- Phil Hendrickson, Chief Talent Strategist, Qwalify

The discrepancy occurs when hiring managers and recruiters look at acronyms, phrasing, and verbage that is different than what they're accustomed to seeing on a resume, Hendrickson said.

"When hiring managers or recruiters look at many military resumes, they are puzzled," he said.

Typically, hiring managers want to see people that come from similar backgrounds and recognizable companies who describe their backgrounds in a familiar way, Hendrickson said.

When hiring store managers during his time as Manager of Global Talent Sourcing Strategy for Starbucks, Hendrickson knew that the core skills, many of which are learned in the military, made for a high performing store manager – skills such as leadership courage, developing and inspiring teams, and being able to think on your feet.

Hendrickson said when companies invest in hiring veterans they will be rewarded with increased team performance and lower turnover.

## VETERAN EMPLOYMENT BY THE NUMBERS

- The unemployment rate for male veterans declined to 5.2 percent in 2014
- The rate for female veterans edged down to 6.0 percent
- Among the 573,000 unemployed veterans in 2014, 59 percent were age 45 and over
- Thirty seven percent were age 25 to 44, and 4 percent were age 18 to 24
- Veterans with a service-connected disability had an unemployment rate of 5.9 percent in August 2014
- Nearly 1 in 3 employed veterans with a service-connected disability worked in the public sector in August 2014
- In 2014, the unemployment rate of veterans varied by state, ranging from 1.4 percent in North Dakota to 8.5 percent in Maryland
- In 2014, 21.2 million men and women, or 9 percent of the civilian noninstitutionalized population age 18 and over, were veterans

- Bureau of Labor Statistics

“There is no better return on investment than that,” Hendrickson said.

## “A VERY EMPLOYABLE GROUP OF PEOPLE”

Lynn Phillips, Executive Director of the Fallen & Wounded Soldiers fund in Livonia, Michigan, said one of the most crucial components to helping veterans transition into the civilian workforce is remembering the numerous military positions that go beyond the front line.

“When you think of wars, you forget that behind the infantry, there are hundreds of thousands of service members with all kinds of specialties,” Phillips said.

These specialties can include:

- Administration
- Computer programming
- Special Operations
- Radio systems
- Communication
- HR
- Information Technology
- Health Care
- Engineering
- Logistics
- Supply Chain Management



**The  
Fallen and Wounded  
Soldiers Fund**

(Visit the Army’s listing of [Military Occupational Specialties](#) for the full list.)

Hendrickson echoed Phillips’ statements.

“There’s a misperception that everyone in the military carries and shoots a gun,” Hendrickson said. “Some of the misconceptions come from not understanding the width and breadth of talent within the branches of the military, including engineering, IT, logistics, HR, project management, communications, recruiting,

people leadership, and on and on. People’s perceptions are from TV –a drill sergeant screaming at you and climbing over walls.”

## WHAT COMPANIES CAN DO

Employers should be mindful of allowing veterans to transfer skills they’ve obtained in the military into the private sector, a process that’s not always easy due to stumbling blocks such as the requirement of licenses and certifications for transferable skills, Phillips said.

Once organizations realize the great potential veterans present, then are then able to build a business case for hiring veterans.

To do so, it takes more than posting open positions to a veteran job board.

“Companies need to lean in and say ‘What can we do to better reach out to this community?’” Hendrickson said.

Hendrickson recommends the following steps to develop the building blocks to building an internal veteran initiative:

- Make an active decision as a company to pursue the challenge
- Provide literature and resources to Recruiting and HR departments
- Have a designated member of the Recruiting department make an active effort to understand military branches, levels and ranks, military language, and be able to identify and translate these items on veteran profiles to make informed hiring decisions



- Designate a person or team who will reach out to the veteran community, help them with their resumes, with interview skills and tips, and explain what it's like to work at your company. If your company already employs veterans they can be your best brand advocates
- Design key messages for the veteran community that represents your company and brand and explains why you're a veteran-friendly place to work
- Create a volunteer veteran employee networking group where veteran employees and spouses can mentor new employees, be on interview panels, help veterans transition into your company and be successful



There are also local and statewide initiatives in place that companies can explore.

In Michigan – where there are more than 680,000 veterans– laws were recently passed that require the state to accept certain work experience gained in the military toward obtaining a license in several professions.

Resolutions have also been introduced to offer discounted college tuition for veterans.

Phillips recommends contacting the veteran liaison at local colleges to identify opportunities for veterans. Michigan Works! also actively posts openings geared toward veterans and offers resume assistance.

## THE POWER OF ENGAGEMENT

Internal veteran initiatives do not need to be costly or robust to be effective. Creating a veteran's employee networking group is free, notes Hendrickson, as is inspiring and encouraging employees to think about reaching out to veterans to become better brand ambassadors.

Hendrickson noted the following efforts are free or of the same cost as other recruiting initiatives:

- Attending Veteran-focused career fairs
- Hosting career fairs at company office
- Inspiring and incentivizing recruiters to make an extra effort to identify veterans in the sourcing or screening of candidates, talking to people who have prior military service
- Familiarizing yourself with local veteran transition assistance programs and other nonprofits that coach, council, and transition veterans

For companies that are recruiting veterans, the power of engagement with veteran prospects and veteran candidates goes beyond reading resumes.

"It's about stopping and getting to know the veteran in front of you at the career fair, understanding them as individuals and professionals, and by talking with them uncover their unique experience and skills and how those may translate into roles at your company," Hendrickson said.

Phillips recommends being aware of particular differences that may occur when interviewing and connecting with veterans. This can include effects of traumatic injuries and the need for patience as they readjust back into the civilian world. Phillips also recommends being prepared for flexibility regarding the need for veteran employees to attend Veteran's Affairs appointments.

"You have to have an open mind and understand they're trained for a great number of things," Phillips said.

*“It’s so critical for veterans to be employed... they’re accustomed to being depended on and having responsibility, and it’s critically important for them to be able to return to a productive lifestyle.”*

- Lynn Phillips, Executive Director, Fallen & Wounded Soldiers Fund

Additional Resources:

[Army’s Military Occupational Specialties](#)

[Michigan Works! Veteran Services](#)

[Fallen & Wounded Soldiers Fund](#)



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