

# A Debt to be Paid: Employing our Veterans



By Preston Ingalls

**W**hat has 4 decades as an employer taught me about hiring and managing veterans? That it's the smartest move I can make in terms of a stronger workforce and ROI.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), 21 million men and women, or 9 percent of the civilian population age 18 and over, are veterans.

Finding decent employment, as a veteran, is not a given just because they served their country. In 2014, the unemployment rate of veterans varied by state, ranging from 1.4 percent in North Dakota to 8.5 percent in Maryland. The good news is that it has gotten better in 2014 and 2015. The unemployment rate 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—declined by 1.8 percentage points over the year to 7.2 percent in 2014.

However, among men age 25 to 34, Gulf War-era II veterans had a higher unemployment rate (7.5 percent) than did nonveterans (6.3 percent). BLS reported that among women, the unemployment rate for Gulf War-era II veterans (8.5 percent) was higher than the rate for nonveterans (5.9 percent) in 2014. 35-to 44-year-old female veterans had a rate of 9.0 percent, which is almost double the rate of 4.8 percent for their nonveteran counterparts.

According to the *Stars and Stripes* (an online independent news and information site dedicated to the U.S. military community, comprised of active-duty service members, DoD civilians, contractors, and their families), nearly two-thirds of new veterans say they faced a difficult transition to civilian life. While the bleak economic environment is partially to blame, a survey on post-military employment explains that they also seem to be speaking a different language than the business leaders who might hire them.

In the applicant screening process, I will give extra points to anyone that is a veteran. It's not necessarily because I'm a Vietnam Vet that can relate to them more than non-vets. The simple fact is hiring vets makes more sense because of the unique qualities they bring to the table. I refer to these as the "Two-Zero Hero" or 20 reasons to hire a vet.

## **TWO-ZERO HERO: 20 REASONS TO HIRE A VET**

**1. Mission First:** Vets have been conditioned to focus more on the mission at hand than personal goals and objectives. They have learned, through training and coaching, to see the immediate and long-term missions as paramount over their own needs.

**2. One Team-One Purpose:** Since teamwork is reinforced over and over in all aspects of military life, Vets understand the benefits of collaboration and cooperation in accomplishing objectives. They have also experienced the esprit de corps and camaraderie that develops in the form of devotion and loyalty to a group supporting a common goal or objective. It is one thing to support a common purpose eight to five, but in the military where your waking hours are spent with the same people on and off duty, you develop a close social bond. So the buddy with whom you work closely in performing your duties is the same one with which you share quarters and socialize. That contact forms a tight bond that creates a formidable team.

**3. Expedited Learning Curve:** Vets have the proven ability to quickly acquire new skills and knowledge. How else could you take an 18-year-old who once flipped hamburgers for a living and train him to service complex equipment worth millions and make decisions that could affect the lives and welfare of many others in a few short months? The fact that they possess transferable skills proven to achieve success is just one of the

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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reasons we have the largest and finest military in the world.

4. **Disciplined Approach:** Vets are conditioned from the beginning of their training to follow a disciplined, self-controlled regimen. Where many nonveterans may eventually learn this lesson, their veteran counterparts are repeatedly trained and reinforced in restraint and constant focus.
5. **Procedural Awareness:** Vets have gained a distinctive perception on the value of accountability and activity consistency in far higher proportions than their civilian counterparts. Because they have seen constant proceduralization and standardization of tasks during their military jobs, they understand how policies and procedures produce uniformity, safety, and higher productivity.
6. **Leadership Slant:** Vets understand practical ways to manage and achieve goals and targets in even the most difficult and complex situations. They are trained to lead by example as well as through influence, direction, delegation, motivation, and encouragement. This training is formalized, for the most part, and reinforced through constant coaching and practical on-the-job-training.
7. **Count on Me:** Vets know what it means to do an "honest day's work." They may have complained about the activities while performing them, but the majority recognize that integrity translates into qualities of seriousness, reliability, and trustworthiness. "I count on you; you count on me."
8. **Pressured Performance:** Vets have the ability to know how to accomplish tasks on time despite apprehension, stress, or adversity. They understand the importance of dedication of effort and persistence.
9. **Can Do-Will Do:** Because Vets are conditioned early in their training to triumph over adversity, they have learned to safely push themselves beyond perceived limits. That confidence comes from a hard-won record of resolve to overcome challenges and barriers through

sheer will. The confidence gained from pushing beyond physical, emotional, and mental constraints creates a "can do" spirit, difficult to replicate in time spent only in a civilian career.

10. **Safety First:** Vets have a heightened awareness of the significance of

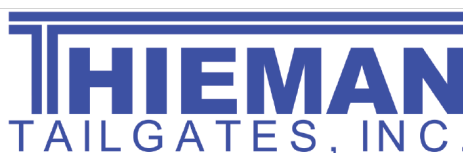
health and safety standards. This dedication translates into the safeguarding of self, others, and property. ■

*Check out the next issue of MCS for the next 10 reasons to hire a veteran and learn why veterans are struggling to find jobs in the civilian world.*

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