

# Support from Behind the Lines:

## 10 Steps to Becoming a Military-Ready Employer

**Sherrill A. Curtis, SPHR**

## **AUTHOR**

This toolkit was prepared by Sherrill A. Curtis, SPHR, principal & creative director for Curtis Consulting Group, LLC, a human resource consulting practice in New Jersey. Curtis spearheaded the 2009 Pinnacle Award-winning program “Mission Career Success” providing career transition services for over 800 returning service members and their families. She co-developed the grant funded “Project Connect” offering in transition assistance for veterans with disabilities. Curtis developed and co-delivered pilot workshops for special military-focused sessions at the 2010 and 2011 SHRM Annual Conferences. She regularly presents on this topic at SHRM chapter and state council meetings and other conferences.

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## **PUBLICATION NOTE**

This treatment was first published in print in April 2012. A SHRM Online version of it was published shortly thereafter under the title of “Becoming a Military-Ready Employer.” That version will be updated periodically as developments warrant.

This toolkit guides HR professionals and business leaders in how to effectively source, assimilate and support all military-connected talent (veterans, guard, reservists and their supporting family members) in the workplace. It also describes how to assess an organization's culture and resources related to military-connected employees, and how to develop initiatives that will best fulfill the organization's needs.

It may make sense for your organization to take the 10 steps that follow in the order presented. Or, you may take the steps in a different order if that makes more sense in your environment. You might even skip some steps if you already have certain things in place. Consider the steps as touch points for you to think about and act on and perhaps circle back to at various developmental stages in your program.

SHRM affiliate state council and chapter volunteer leaders will gain inspiration from examples of SHRM Pinnacle Award-winning and SHAPE initiatives. In particular, those active in Core Leadership Areas of Workforce Readiness and Diversity will find ways to support hiring military-connected talent within their local communities. For more information on these SHRM-specific strategies, see Appendix 1: Guide to Inspiration for SHRM Affiliates.

## STEP ONE: UNDERSTAND THE ISSUES

**“What we have before us are some breathtaking opportunities disguised as insoluble problems.”**

**John W. Gardner (1921-2002)**

Not since World War II has the nation demonstrated such great respect for the women and men who have served in the armed forces with a concerted effort to reach out to them with job opportunities and support. By complying with relevant laws, expanding benefits and pay programs that go beyond the required minimum, and instituting other innovative workplace policies, employers are in a position to have a significant impact in the lives of those who served both in front of and behind the lines. Understanding the issues that military-connected applicants and employees face is the first step in that direction.

According to the SHRM Poll: Military Employment (2012), organizations continue to value highly the skills individuals with a military background bring to the workplace. Over 90 percent of respondents that hired military talent in the 36 months preceding the poll agreed that those employees demonstrated:

- A strong sense of responsibility.
- Working as part of a team under pressure and with a high degree of professionalism.
- The ability to see a task through to completion.
- Strong leadership and problem solving skills.
- The ability to adapt.<sup>i</sup>

These same skills appeared among the top ten skills cited in Critical Skills Needs and Resources for the Changing Workforce (2008) copublished by SHRM and Wall Street Journal/Career Journal. These findings confirm the reasons candidates with a military background are considered highly desirable contributors to an organization's performance.<sup>ii</sup>

According to the Employment Situation of Veterans Summary released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics in March 2012, the average monthly unemployment rate for all veterans during 2011 was 8.3 percent—about the same as the overall civilian unemployment rate. However, the unemployment rate for Gulf War-era II veterans (those who served in the armed forces sometime since September

2001) was 12.1 percent overall. For the youngest veterans of that era—those 18 to 24—the unemployment rate was 30.2 percent (compared to 16.1 percent in that age group of non-veterans). The rate for veterans 25 to 34 years old was 13 percent (compared with 9.3 percent among non-veterans in that age group.)<sup>iii</sup>

In light of the White House plan to pull 33,000 troops from Afghanistan by September 2012, however, the unemployment rate for veterans can be expected to climb. In addition, the unemployment rate for military spouses was an alarming 26 percent, a figure 8.3 percent higher than the unemployment rate for the general labor force during the same period.<sup>iv</sup>

### Considerations for Military Talent

The transition from a military to a civilian career can be daunting. Upon returning home, service members think primarily of reconnecting with their families and getting some much-needed rest as they try to acclimate to a “normal” home-life routine.

While service members transitioning out of the military may receive information during debriefings about potential job assistance and resources, there is no formal, mandatory career transition training program for all services. Consequently, these honorable women and men turn in their gear, sign papers and return home without training on how to take that next all-important step in their careers. Accustomed to a regimen of functioning as a unit with clear goals and assignments, they often find themselves in unfamiliar territory as they compile their resume and begin to apply and interview for positions.

HR professionals need to be aware of the difficulties members of this talent pool may encounter as they maneuver through their job search. For example, when creating a resume, veterans may not know how to express their military experiences in a way that applies to a civilian workplace. Consider military talent applicants—who have been trained not to boast about “just doing their job”—suddenly finding themselves face-to-face with an interviewer who expects them to speak up and elaborate on their skills and successes.

Engaging with this talent pool is comparable to approaches that HR professionals might take with an international applicant new to the U.S., or an applicant who had long service in another organization suddenly facing a job search without career transition assistance. Blending the skills of clarity in communication, patience, active listening, and awareness of diverse needs, the HR professional begins to connect in meaningful dialogue with the military-connected job seeker.

### Considerations for Spouses and Family Members

At one time, service members were primarily young, single male draftees. Our all-volunteer armed forces now include older, as well as married service members of both genders who are more likely to have children. Profile of the Military Community figures in 2010 indicated that nearly all of married service members also have children and 42.5 percent of reservists are single parents.<sup>v</sup>

Most military families, like most families in the general population, rely on the combined income of two working spouses. In addition to dealing with the challenges of managing a household, helping children adapt to life without the deployed parent, and adapting to frequent relocation, 35 percent of military spouses work in professions that require state licenses, an obstacle to employment after relocation that some states are addressing through legislation.<sup>vi</sup>

## Ongoing Challenges for HR

Employers continue to report that successful engagement of military talent is a high priority in meeting their talent acquisition and performance management goals. Although roughly two-thirds of respondents in the 2012 SHRM poll hired veterans within the past 36 months, only 13 percent reported being very aware of effective resources for recruiting veterans. These statistics indicate that despite unemployment figures, it remains challenging for HR professionals to source candidates with a military background. HR professionals also reported that information on effective outreach programs, translating military occupational skills (MOS), and helping veterans transition to the civilian workplace would be helpful to their hiring efforts.<sup>vii</sup>

## STEP TWO: DEVELOP A BUSINESS CASE

HR professionals understand the ethical and patriotic drivers for hiring military talent—that moral imperative to give back to those who served our country. Yet organizations that engage this talent pool benefit in key measurable ways that directly tie to some of the most common business goals. They include:

- A workforce with coveted core competencies that consistently fall within the top ten employer desired attributes, including leadership, teamwork, critical thinking, problem solving and working under pressure.
- Enhanced brand recognition for the organization that translates into increased market share.
- Increased talent attraction and retention.
- Increased customer attraction and retention.
- Opportunities for tax credits (see sidebar).

HR's task is to effectively communicate those benefits to senior leadership and throughout their organizations.

### Tax Incentives and Credits

As of February 2012, the government offers employers tax incentives and credits for hiring military talent. They include:

The VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 was signed into law by President Obama in November 2011. Altering the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC), the act provides two tax incentives for employers to hire veterans between November 22, 2011, and December 31, 2012:

- The Returning Heroes tax credit provides a credit to for-profit employers of up to \$2,400 for hiring veterans who have been unemployed for more than four weeks, or up to \$5,600 for hiring veterans who have been out of work for over six months. The maximum credit available to certain tax-exempt organizations is \$1,560 for hiring a veteran who has been unemployed for more than four weeks, or \$3,640 for hiring a veteran who has been out of work for over six months.
- The Wounded Warrior tax credit continues the previous WOTC credit to employers for hiring veterans with service-connected disabilities; however, it now provides a new credit of as much as \$9,600 to for-profit businesses and up to \$6,240 to certain tax-exempt organizations that hire a veteran with a service-connected disability who has been unemployed for more than six months. To qualify for the credit, employers must certify individuals via Form 8850, Pre-Screening Notice and Certification Request, within the first 28 days of hiring a veteran. The credit can be claimed as a general business credit on Form 3800.

Information on the VOW to Hire Heroes Act—Frequently Asked Questions and Answers page of the U.S. Internal Revenue Service website. [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov)<sup>viii</sup>

## STEP THREE: DEVELOP A VISION AND PROGRAM CONCEPT

As a catalyst for organizational change, the HR professional has the opportunity to design and implement initiatives to create a work environment that is not simply military friendly, but truly military ready. That marks the distinction between the role of advocate (statements to promote and support) and architect (taking action to employ well-thought-out strategies directly tied to measurable business goals). No other business role has the same vantage point from which to review and assess all potential organization touch points for military-connected talent.

Creating the overall concept for a potential program, initiative, policy or benefit to present to the CEO and/or leadership team requires careful thought combined with a clear, outlined vision. Regardless of whether the vision is conveyed during brief, casual conversations or a formal presentation complete with slides, it is imperative that the message clearly demonstrates critical thinking and addresses the following key elements:

- Specific needs.
- Possible solutions.
- Connection with organizational goals.
- Potential return on investment (ROI) to be derived from a cost/benefit analysis.

Using “what-if” scenarios demonstrates that you have thought through solutions and have explored the potential impact of intended and unintended effects. After reading this toolkit and reviewing the examples in Appendix 2: Guide to Inspiration for Action at Work, you will be able to create your own concept outline.

If you do not feel prepared to outline your program, you may need to wait until after you have done a culture and needs assessment as described in Step Five.

## STEP FOUR: ENGAGE SENIOR LEADERSHIP

Once you have a well-defined vision and concept, determine who among senior leadership can provide the visible support needed for the initiative, program or policy. A thumbs-up from proactive and prominent leaders helps to secure buy-in throughout the organization. Programs that have the ongoing support of so-called executive “champions” are more likely to gain traction. Support means more than lip service; it means dedicating key resources—time, talent, budget, equipment or space—to the program. Without such visible and tangible support, initiatives either fail to launch or fall flat and dissolve over time. Use the following checklist to guide you in identifying appropriate individuals to champion the vision and emergent action plan:

- Identify the best internal champions—trusted leaders who instill confidence in others.
- Determine if there is an external supporter (for example, a key vendor) that should be brought into the champion circle.
- Define the needs and concerns of those in the champion circle (what they perceive as valuable and why).
- Consider how achieving the goal(s) integrates with meeting their needs (as an individual, a department, division, etc.) as well as the goals of the business.
- Present your vision for the initiative in a manner that best fits the way each member of that audience intakes information.

When seeking executive or senior leadership champions, be aware of their perceptions of military-connected talent in your organization. Pursue those who demonstrate an understanding of the value of this talent pool and appreciate the opportunity to practice patriotism in hiring practices. For the most part, perceptions of military-connected talent are positive due to their highly coveted key attributes, but unfavorable reactions are not unheard of. During SHRM's 2011 Annual Conference, Lisa Rosser, Army veteran and founder of The Value of a Veteran, a recruiting and placement service for military talent, shared the following examples of resistance she's experienced among supervisors, managers and executives:

- "I can't figure out what they know how to do from their resumes."
- "I need someone with technical experience."
- "My positions require certain certifications and credentials."
- "Why bother? They're going to get called up (or relocate) anyway."
- "I need someone who can lead, not just follow orders."
- "I don't have the budget for niche job sites or placement firms."
- "I'm concerned about bringing PTSD into my workplace."

Information in this toolkit can help you address these perceptions. When presenting information to potential champions, be clear and concise; always tie actions to business goals. Again, know your audience. The fast-moving, heavily scheduled executive appreciates a brief conversation or one-paragraph overview with bullet points: purpose, anticipated outcomes and impact on resources. Leaders with a more methodical, reflective approach may prefer a formal conversation or meeting with slides walking them through each aspect of the thought process and potential outcomes and allowing them time to digest the proposal. Listen for signals as to which approach is best from language they use such as: "Sounds great, what do I need to know?" (informal) versus "Sounds interesting, let's set up a meeting so you can walk me through what you're thinking" (formal).

Remember to confirm the executive's agreement to move forward with the action plan. If the executive requires more time to think things through, then gain agreement on a follow-up date to secure support.

## STEP FIVE: CONDUCT A CULTURE AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Before devoting the precious resources of time, budget and talent to any project, first conduct a needs assessment. Often referred to as a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats), this process involves in-depth examination of the internal and external factors that may have an impact on outcomes.

If you already have created the overall vision and concept of the intended results as described in Step Three, your needs assessment will be more narrowly focused. It will help you formulate specific recommendations and their correlative ROI. If you still need to examine the big picture to determine your program, your inquiry will look more broadly at your organization's employment life cycle to identify opportunities. Either way, this step is an opportunity to:

- Cite candidly what is working within the organization, what is not and why.
- Identify available resources (that is, talent, time, budget and equipment).
- Identify additional resources needed to achieve desired goals.
- Review existing and anticipated favorable and unfavorable conditions.

In particular, this analysis should identify potential concerns, especially among line managers and supervisors. For example, according to SHRM's 2010 report on Employing Military Personnel and Recruiting Veterans, employers' greatest concern is how long deployed employees will be away from their jobs.<sup>ix</sup>

Appendix 3: Guide to Conducting a Culture and Needs Assessment (SWOT Analysis) contains both broad and narrowly focused questions to help you frame your process.

## STEP SIX: ESTABLISH PROGRAM ELEMENTS ACROSS THE EMPLOYMENT LIFE CYCLE

There are opportunities to develop a military-ready organization at all phases of the employment life cycle. It is rarely feasible to address all issues simultaneously. The needs assessment and SWOT analysis will help you set priorities. The following are examples of the kinds of activities that you can focus on as circumstances permit.

### Correlating Military Jobs to Civilian Jobs

The military has over 7,000 jobs across more than 100 functional areas. The vast majority of these jobs have a direct civilian job equivalent. Understanding the job design and the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) required for each function within your own organization is the starting point for the process of identifying the closest military equivalent.

The online tool O\*Net (<http://online.onetcenter.org/crosswalk/>) provides an easy and quick resource for demystifying the resumes of military talent. It allows searching by military occupational code (MOC) or job title and cross referencing military job functions and skills (MOS) to civilian equivalents, or vice versa.

This exercise translates military skills to roles within your business. Many organizations make it a regular practice to formally correlate the KSAs for each job to MOS and to brief anyone who could be a part of the interview team before they meet with a military applicant. This process also facilitates job redesign if job sharing, transfers, relocations or flexibility needs arise.

### Sourcing Military-connected Candidates

When planning to reach out to military-connected candidates, consider which resources make sense for your organization. Think in terms of accessibility, budget, response rate, time-to-hire, candidate skills, etc. Though many job boards offer access to military applicants, according to the 2012 SHRM poll, only 13 percent of HR professionals that responded indicated they were very familiar with where to source veteran candidates.<sup>x</sup>

Ways to tap into this talent pool include:

- Reaching out to local representatives of Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) ([www.esgr.org](http://www.esgr.org))
- Watching for advertising of job fairs for veterans, military and their families.
- Networking with base community centers, which often help to connect military job seekers and employers.
- Introducing yourself to representatives designated to work with veteran job seekers in the local Department of Labor Employment Office.



- Contacting college and university career centers—many of which offer “Yellow Ribbon” programs for returning service members—and arranging to meet potential candidates on campus.
- Participating in virtual job fairs such as Milicruit.com that provide access to military job seekers, allowing the employer to meet and chat with applicants without leaving the office.
- Phoning in a request for specific skills to Tip of the Arrow Foundation, which offers free personal matching between employers and military talent across the country.
- Advertising in Military Times, USAA Magazine or other military-focused publications.
- Harnessing the power of social media platforms, including Plaxo, Facebook, Twitter and Armezilla.com. Specialized LinkedIn groups offer an array of on-line connections with military talent.

A more extensive list of current sources is in Appendix 4: Guide to Sourcing Military-Connected Job Candidates.

### Applying Flexibility Strategies

The When Work Works Toolkit (SHRM/Families and Work Institute, February 22, 2012) defines workplace flexibility as “a dynamic relationship defining how, when and where work gets done as well as how careers are organized—that works for both the employer and employee.”<sup>xi</sup> Flexible work arrangements can help bring out the best of employees in all walks of life. Remember to take these into account in your efforts to support military-connected employees and employees who are military spouses.

#### Think Flexible

Increasingly, workplaces are recognizing that employees are an organization’s greatest resource and make a critical difference in an organization’s ability to not merely survive, but to thrive. To be truly flexible and effective, a workplace—its design, practices and policies—must benefit the organization and its employees. Workplace flexibility includes:

- **Choices in managing time.** Control over one’s schedule and agreeing that the schedule or shift meets his or her needs.
- **Flex time and flex place.** Traditional flexibility, daily flexibility (short-notice schedule changes), compressed workweeks and working at home.
- **Reduced time.** Full-timers who could arrange to work part time in their current position and part-timers who could arrange to work full time in their current position as well as part-year work.
- **Time off.** A lack of difficulty in taking time for personal or family matters, paid days off for personal illness, paid days off to care for sick children, time off for elder care without fear of losing one’s job, paid vacation time, paid holidays, time off for volunteering without the loss of pay, and caregiving leaves for birth, adoption and seriously ill family members.
- **Flex careers.** Employees are allowed to dial up or dial down their careers by taking extended time off for caregiving or sabbaticals. They also enable employees to phase into retirement.
- **Dealing with overwork.** Efforts to create reasonable work demands, to reduce unnecessary work and to create boundaries between life on and off the job.
- **Culture of flexibility.** Not having to choose between advancement and devoting attention to family life, not having advancement jeopardized by asking for flexibility, and overall supervisor support when work-life issues arise.<sup>xii</sup>

## Designing Benefits and Compensation

To attract and retain talent, military or otherwise, an organization must be aware of the benefits federal and state statutes require and benchmark ways in which it might go above and beyond the minimum. The ROI in loyalty and productivity from service members and their families is clearly demonstrated by winners of the Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award. (<http://www.freedomaward.mil/>).

These honorees exemplify what organizations from small to large can do for the active duty Guard and Reservist, their spouse and family. Easy to replicate examples from the awards and other sources include:

- Moving assistance upon arrival in new state.
- Relocation assistance for transitioning spouse.
- Full pay and bonuses during deployment.
- Child care credits.
- Robust employee assistance programs (EAP).
- Access to EAP and other benefits programs for the families of deployed employees.

## Interviewing Effectively

The most effective interview styles with military background candidates are behavioral and situational. They provide the best opportunities for the interviewer to engage the applicant in a conversation that invites them to shift out of the polite and respectful, which may involve them giving very short responses.

Military members are trained to be a part of a team. They generally do not elaborate on or boast about their accomplishments, scope of authority or responsibility. From their perspective, they were simply “doing their job” says Carl Blum, cofounder of Tip of the Arrow Foundation. Since 2008, Blum and cofounder Bob Deissig (a Vietnam Era veteran) have interviewed and coached more than 1,000 returning service members. They, along with other military talent recruiting experts such as Lisa Rosser (a veteran and founder of Value of a Veteran), consistently advise employers to prepare well for the interview, to be clear about the responsibilities and to use techniques that will draw out the candidate.

When, for example, a soldier at a Vermont ESGR career workshop was asked “What was your job while in service?” his response was “I drove a truck.” Upon further questioning, he revealed that he was responsible for supervising over 90 soldiers assigned to transport several million dollars worth of inventory from one location to another, each time loading and unloading and reconciling the inventory count. In addition, if the transport came under fire and experienced any injuries, he was responsible for ensuring those wounded received medical attention. There were several other duties he performed—all in a most grueling environment. These responses indicate the true scope and depth of that soldier’s role and responsibilities—far greater than simply driving a truck.

To ensure the most effective interviews with individuals who have served in the military or their spouse, hiring managers should be trained on effective interviewing techniques that include the following key points:

- Be familiar with the military occupational skills (MOS) that correlate with the job. (Again, refer to O\*Net at <http://online.onetcenter.org/crosswalk/>.)

- At the start of the interview, thank military talent applicants for their service or the spouse for their support at home.
- Clearly describe the job role and its responsibilities, defining expectations up front and avoiding generalizations.
- Draw out applicants to discover their “thread of excellence” by asking them to share their stories.
- Avoid close-ended questions (those that elicit a “yes” or “no” response) by posing probing questions about an individual’s service experience.
- Focus on active listening for skill sets and correlate them with job functions within your organization.
- Keep the candidate engaged in the process by following up and delivering on what you promise (for example, with post-interview phone calls about the status of their application, next steps, etc.). This is very important to them and should not be overlooked.

When interviewing military spouses, ask questions using a similar behavioral and situational approach. Members of this talent pool are often found to be great problem solvers with an ability to adeptly manage change. As you review a resume or conduct an interview, remember to suspend judgment around job changes for spouses and family members supporting those who served. Some may have been required to relocate and others may not. Their circumstance of moving is no different than a non military spouse moving because his or her spouse’s employer transfers their assignment on a regular basis. Probe for accomplishments, correlative skills and detail revealing their adaptability and ability to manage more stressful, pressure roles with efficiency and diligence.

### **Onboarding and Assimilation**

The military new hire comes from a very strong culture of discipline, clear direction and daily structure, as well as strong connections among family, community and employer. Ease the transition from the military to the civilian work environment for everyone by following some simple, thoughtful steps that really are no different from what you might do for an expatriate or even someone relocating from a state in another region of the country. This list may contain many procedures already in effect at your organization. Any of these actions would make a new hire feel welcome and a part of the organization. By engaging in all of them, you’ll ensure a smooth and successful career transition:

- If you don’t have a military-focused affinity or resource group in place, determine who in the department will be assigned as the new hire’s buddy. This person is responsible for responding to general questions about the organization, department and the new hire’s role.
- Be clear in communications and about all expectations for the job in those first critical weeks when everyone is getting to know one another.
- Provide information they may refer back to as needed about who manages which role in the organization and introduce them to key contacts on the first day.
- Establish a routine of communication and agree-upon deliverables.
- On the first day, get the whole department together (if possible) for lunch or have at least two other team members take the new employee to lunch.
- In addition to regularly scheduled meetings with the manager, have someone from HR meet with the new hire within the first week and periodically thereafter during the first three months. This provides an opportunity for the new

civilian worker to ask questions and express any concerns that he or she may not feel comfortable doing with their new manager.

- Schedule activities that provide opportunities for new hires to engage with team members outside of their department. Consider social events that include family members as well to fully engage with the organization.
- Include the military employee's spouse and children (if applicable) in organization events.

### Engagement and Retention

For veterans, deployed employees or military spouses, building and sustaining community with the organization is key to engagement and retention. Emily King, founder of Military Transitions, which is now part of The Buller Group, includes community building as one of her top eight tips for successful engagement of military talent. There are many simple and easy programs and activities to enhance engagement and increase retention including:

- Consider creating a mentoring program linking the new military employee with existing veteran employees as well as military spouses and family members.
- Use videoconferencing to keep deployed employees connected, not only with their families, but with their department or even the whole organization if feasible.
- Take pictures of what's happening at work and send them to the deployed service member.
- For more engagement ideas, see Appendix 5: Guide to Low- and No-Cost, Easy-to-Implement, Programs and Initiatives.

### Performance Management

Continuity and communication between the military hire and the manager are key to ensuring that performance concerns are promptly addressed. Just as those relocating from another country may have different expectations about performance management discussions, so may the military hire. Managers need to be aware that the military employer provides service members with clear direction for career advancement and compensation growth. For the military member, failure to meet objectives sometimes had life-and-death consequences; meeting objectives and going above and beyond the call of duty were consistently and publicly rewarded.

So what's the process in your organization? Do you have a clearly defined process for managing performance discussions? Are they informal or formal? Do they typically happen timely or often get delayed due to heavy schedules? Consider your answers and note that if your organization is more fluid than structured around this topic, it may be necessary for your managers to adjust the military hire's expectations in this regard. To avert any potential issues, as you begin the employment relationship, include a conversation around how the organization manages performance and the review process. Provide clear information about what is measured and what gets rewarded as well as how. Continue to reinforce the open communication established during the onboarding process throughout the employment cycle.

### Succession Planning

Not all organizations have a formal succession plan. Many tend to use a replacement approach instead, especially in smaller businesses where roles are very

specific to one person, and there is no current employee prepared to fill the open position. This is not a strategic approach to staffing.

Succession planning affects the military member from a couple of perspectives. On the one hand, given the potential for a military member to be called to active duty, the organization should be prepared to smoothly manage any transition by lining up one or more appropriate people to assume the service member's responsibilities. Job sharing, shadowing and mentoring are all potential methods to plan and prepare for a smooth succession when an employee is deployed. Discuss with the military member any possible plans to return to the organization.

On the other hand, deployed or potentially deployed military members still should be taken into account in succession plans for roles they may grow into. It is not appropriate to exclude military members from consideration in succession plans on the basis of their possible deployment.

In both cases, the employer should provide information and guidance and respond promptly to all questions and concerns.

## STEP SEVEN: DEVELOP INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL MESSAGING AND AWARENESS

Communicating about the organization's military support initiatives is essential to their success. In many instances, communications are the essence of the program. Communications and messaging take many forms and use a variety of media. Some areas to focus on include:

- Branding as a military-ready employer.
- Communicating about the programs among all stakeholders and at all levels within the organization.
- Delivering compliance and awareness training.
- Serving as a visible advocate in the community.

### Branding as Military Ready

An organization's branding is as important to attracting military talent as it is to attracting customers. A consistent messaging strategy should underlie all communications. An organization's logo, mission statement, website and use of social media platforms and collateral materials, not to mention that all-important one-on-one communication, all offer opportunities to say, "We welcome you."

Consider the organization's policies, programs, and initiatives, as well as its reputation for positive employee engagement. Which of these are you able to highlight in marketing job openings or for discussion during an interview to indicate that the organization is not simply military friendly, but truly military ready? Review the branding elements outlined below to determine what to include for your organization.

Website messaging. An organization's website is often the first point of contact with a potential applicant. What it says and doesn't say speaks volumes about whether or not someone with a military background would anticipate a positive experience. Take a tour of your organization's site using the following questions as prompts, and use your responses to strengthen the organization's web-based outreach to military talent:

- What content and visuals connote to a visitor that military talent is welcomed and valued in your workplace?

- Is there information about how to view and apply for job openings?
- Does it describe what it is like to work there?
- Are there descriptions of benefits and special programs?
- Does it showcase community involvement or support for non-profit organizations or causes?
- If you were in the shoes of a military person, or their spouse, would you get a sense you were welcomed at the organization?

Some of the best company websites that appeal to military talent (for example, Cintas.com, Lockheedmartinjobs.com, Mantech.com, Sodexo.com, Verizon.com) include the following elements that make their military-branding efforts work:

- Contains images and icons denoting military inclusiveness.
- Links to a separate page devoted to content addressing the military talent job seeker.
- Lists benefits programs, employee resource groups and activities that signal ongoing engagement after hire.
- Job descriptions along with skills are laid out in an easy-to-follow grid that correlates MOS to organization skills, making it quick and easy for job seekers to identify which opportunities are the best overall fit for them.
- Offer, at a minimum, an automatic reply to job seekers that complete online applications.

It is very important for the military applicant to understand where they are in the process and what the next steps are. When possible, assign someone from the talent acquisition team to reach out to candidates with personal follow-up in the form of an e-mail or phone call.

Social media. In today's networked digital world, use of social media is a necessity as well as an opportunity for organizations to brand themselves and gain exposure to customers as well as applicants—including military talent. Even a small organization can increase global presence using social media.

Create a Facebook page and special groups on other social media sites to draw in all military-connected talent in your organization and those at home seeking to stay in touch with their spouse's employment community. Develop your online presence by posting regularly on your page. Include information, photos and awards that allow visitors to envision themselves in your workforce. Of course, include job fair links, links to your military careers web page, and "likes" for other sites you want to call attention to. You might wish to form LinkedIn groups for your affinity programs.

### Internal Communications

Internal awareness of the organization's initiatives to reach out to, hire and engage military talent is crucial to support the branding effort. Begin by defining the various communication methods you will use to engage employees and accurately deliver the message. Keep in mind the old adage that it generally takes seven times for a message to be clearly heard, understood and remembered, and structure your communication plan accordingly. Always consider your audience. It is imperative to think of how they will best receive the information so they will remember it and respond as needed.

A consistent look and feel to messaging is important for quick recognition. You may want to create special branding for an initiative such as a new affinity group.

Enlist your marketing team to develop consistent visual elements—colors, logo, group name and tag line—and use them in all materials. To generate interest, excitement and participation in a new program or group, invite a cross section of employees to help name it.

Consider which of the following media are right for your organization given the number of employees, locations or access to computers or electronic devices:

- E-mail announcement appearing when the end user logs on to their computer on a designated day.
- Post on the organization's intranet site or internal calendar of events.
- Post information to specific groups on your internal communications systems (similar to LinkedIn or SHRM Connect groups).
- Group text messaging on organization sponsored cell phones for team members on the go.
- Set up meeting reminders on Twitter.
- Generate key deadline messages so employees don't forget to complete an enrollment or attend a meeting.
- Place branded meeting posters around the production facility or office spaces in addition to the lunch or copy rooms.
- Highlight the information in your organization's newsletter—either hard copy or online.
- Include a note on payroll stubs—payroll service providers offer this option typically at no charge.
- For special events, follow the real estate rule of using balloons for open houses. Local party supply stores and online resources can customize balloons with the program title.
- For the launch of an affinity group, print invitations in-house on card stock from your office supply vendor or special order from VistaPrint or another online resource. This adds a special touch when the envelope is personalized and placed on the recipient's desk.

### Compliance Training

Appropriate training in the employer's legal obligations with respect to military-connected talent is another dimension of organizational communication. At a minimum, those with managerial or supervisory responsibility should be trained in compliance with the following federal laws (see sidebar for brief description). Similar or more expansive state laws also may apply.

- Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA)
- Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)
- Uniformed Services Employment and Re-employment Rights Act (USERRA)

## Legal Rights of Military Talent

ADAAA. The ADAAA is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination and guarantees that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as everyone else to participate in the mainstream of American life—to enjoy employment opportunities, to purchase goods and services, and to participate in state and local government programs and services. Modeled after the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, the ADAAA is an equal opportunity law, not a benefit program entitling the veteran to specific services or financial assistance because of a disability. Managing on-the-job accommodation requests under the ADAAA for returning service members with disabilities does not require separate procedures from that of other applicants or employees.

FMLA. Broadly stated, the federal FMLA provides unpaid leave with job protection for up to 12 weeks in a 12-month period to qualified employees for the birth, adoption or foster care placement of a child, or to care for self or a family member with a serious health condition. In January 2008 and 2010 the FMLA was amended to permit:

- **Qualifying Exigency Leave.** Eligible employees who are the spouse, son, daughter or parent of a military member may take up to 12 weeks of FMLA leave during any 12-month period to address the most common issues that arise when a military member is deployed to a foreign country, such as attending military-sponsored functions, making appropriate financial and legal arrangements, and arranging for alternative child care. This provision applies to the families of members of both the active duty and reserve components of the Armed Forces.
- **Military Caregiver Leave.** Eligible employees who are the spouse, son, daughter, parent or next of kin of a covered service member may take up to 26 weeks of FMLA leave during a single 12-month period to care for the service member who is undergoing medical treatment, recuperation or therapy; is otherwise in outpatient status; or is otherwise on the temporary disability retired list, for a serious injury or illness incurred or aggravated in the line of duty on active duty. This provision applies to the families of members of both the active duty and reserve components of the Armed Forces.

USERRA. USERRA is intended to ensure that individuals who serve or have served in the Armed Forces, Reserves, National Guard or other “uniformed services” (1) are not disadvantaged in their civilian careers because of their service; (2) are promptly reemployed in their civilian jobs upon their return from duty; and (3) are not discriminated against in employment based on past, present, or future military service. “Uniformed services” includes the Armed Forces; the Army National Guard and the Air National Guard when engaged in active duty for training, inactive duty training, or full-time National Guard duty; the commissioned corps of the Public Health Service; and any other category of people designated by the President in time of war or national emergency.

Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) manages an ombudsman program to provide information, counseling and mediation on issues related to USERRA. ESGR’s Customer Service Center (<http://www.esgr.org/site/USERRA.aspx> and 1-800-336-4590 (option 1)) contains information and resources for employers and is available to offer free assistance to anyone with a USERRA question. ESGR also has been working with SHRM affiliates and individual members to sign Statements of Support declaring each employer’s support of National Guard and Reserve employees and compliance with USERRA. SHRM affiliates that have signed Statements of Support are listed in the SHRM Volunteer Leaders’ Resource Center (<http://www.shrm.org/Communities/VolunteerResources/Pages/default.aspx>).

## Understanding PTSD and TBI

Today’s veterans have higher rates of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury (TBI) due to the nature of weaponry as well as more frequent and longer deployments. According to SHRM survey data, HR professionals are interested in better understanding PTSD and TBI and strategies for accommodating these conditions in the workplace. You can find basic information on these conditions and accommodation advice by searching under PTSD and TBI on the Job Accommodation Network (JAN) website at [www.askjan.org](http://www.askjan.org). In addition, the U.S. Department of Labor’s America’s Heroes at Work offers training modules for employers, supervisors, and hiring managers on their website under the “For Employers” tab. (<http://www.americasheroesatwork.gov/>).



## Advocacy in the Community

Engaging in community outreach is a beneficial method of branding and creating awareness that your organization supports military talent and their families. Each community offers its unique options. A quick Internet search for your geographic area should yield several to investigate and pursue. Look for organizations that offer opportunities for your organization's employees to engage in individual as well as group activities—at your site or within the community.

## STEP EIGHT: DEFINE GOALS AND MEASURE SUCCESS

Establishing goals for each of the plan's components is an integral part of the development process. Measuring outcomes against pre-defined goals quantifies the effects (desired or undesired) for each program, initiative, policy or benefit. Without goals and metrics, you have a program for the sake of a program and nothing to point to that demonstrates a successful use of the organization's resources.

Be very clear about what you want to measure so as to focus effort on activities that will achieve the desired results. For example, in a recruiting role, if the incumbent is evaluated based on time-to-fill ratios, then their performance is measured based on the quantity of time spent engaged in the search and selection process. This does not allow for consideration of the quality of the candidate selected (best overall fit being a desired result). Nor does it address turnover and retraining costs due to a poor-fit hire that may result from poor job design, ineffective interviewing, ineffective assimilation, etc.).

When defining measurements of results for various programs such as hiring military-connected talent, offering affinity groups or enhanced benefits and resource referrals for family members of military, take into consideration the apparent and not so apparent returns to the organization. Examples of these include loyalty that leads to retention and reduced turnover ratios as well as relief from external stress factors resulting in stronger focus on assignments that, in turn, improves productivity.

Ensure that you establish measurements for each method that is used to achieve the desired goal. This will render specific information as to why the desired outcome was or was not achieved rather than simply the end result. This information is most useful for process improvement when certain delivery methods prove ineffective. Metrics demonstrating effective results may be used to gain buy-in support from senior management should you seek to continue, expand or create a new program.

An example of method measurement is outlined in the sidebar below.

### Methods and Measurements: An Example

Goal: Increase hires of military spouses by 10 percent in the current fiscal year

Methods: Include photos and content references to spouses and related benefits/culture on website military landing page; post open positions at the Base Community Service and Family Support centers; indicate military spouses in job board and other postings; advertise in Military Times magazine, MilitaryOne Source and Military.com; attend job fairs open to military spouses; and post with veterans representatives at local DOL employment offices.

Measurements: Number of website click-throughs from military spouse page and online applications received by military spouses and number of responses from each posting, job fair and resource (all sources: base centers, magazines, online boards, etc.).

Analysis: Review most effective methods and focus efforts on same; reduce or eliminate

## STEP NINE: IMPLEMENT AND MANAGE THE PLAN

This is the phase where your initial vision comes to life. Successful implementation directly correlates with the scope, depth and thoroughness of planning. In particular, the what/if considerations during planning sessions should have revealed potential issues requiring additional planning for contingencies. When you are assured these aforementioned elements are complete, then you are ready to proceed with the next steps that include:

- Assign accountability for follow-up on each deliverable and set target dates for initial and subsequent review periods.
- Review target launch dates for each component, ensuring all affected are aware of the timing. Remember to include your champion(s)!
- Review announcements (if applicable) for clarity, accuracy of details, grammar and typos. It is recommended that at least two team members review for a fresh perspective. This is especially critical for issuing new policies, practices or anything with information referencing an individual.
- Use the following checklist of project management action items designed to keep that vision on track and moving forward:
  - Conduct regularly scheduled meetings (in person, conference call or virtual) to report progress and address anomalies.
  - Promptly address concerns that arise outside of the regularly scheduled review meetings including follow-up to ensure the resolution met the need(s).
  - Provide formal progress reports to senior leadership team and champion(s).
  - Schedule an annual review of the program (or more frequently if needed depending on the nature of the goals) to assess and analyze results. Decisions to move forward or change direction are typically addressed at this juncture. It is also best to schedule this at least one quarter prior to the organization's annual budget preparation period. This will allow time for reporting results to senior leadership and securing approval to continue or expand should additional resources be required.

Remember to keep your planning flexible to adapt as needed to changing factors—foreseen or unforeseen. Being able to recognize what works and what doesn't is important for any business situation. The key is not to get stuck in patterns that once worked when they no longer produce the desired outcomes. When evaluating results, if needed, take the opportunity to shift gears and try a new direction. This may be necessary based on feedback in its many forms (recruiting statistics, performance management tools, training surveys, verbal or external triggers).

When seeking a new direction, go back to your SWOT methodology and do your due diligence to create the next potential solution. Gain additional feedback about, and buy-in for, recommendations before proceeding. People, organizations, compliance laws and the world are changing all the time. Remaining fluid as these changes occur allows for great opportunities to create something even better that works for everyone.

## STEP TEN: REPORT AND SHARE SUCCESS STORIES

Once the programs begin to produce results, share the successes throughout the organization's internal and external communities. Highlight measurements of job sharing programs, reduced turnover and productivity in reports to department

heads, leadership teams and executive board members. Just as you might post announcements of new hires and promotions, include accolades and welcome home messages for returning service members on your website, in company newsletters and press releases. Include human interest stories in press releases about internal and external community-based efforts to support military overseas and their families at home.

Continue discussions with your marketing and public relations teams about potential awareness efforts to support becoming recognized as an employer of choice for military talent so that you may continue to attract and retain this special talent pool.

Keep the focus on generating an internal as well as external heightened awareness about what the organization is doing and how those efforts are succeeding to truly be recognized as a military-ready place to work for service members, their spouses and family members.

## CONCLUSION

There are many possibilities that can make your workplace military ready. This toolkit serves to guide you through the process of taking an in-depth look to determine where the needs exist and how you might fulfill them. Remember that taking action, even if it may appear on the surface to be nominal, has great impact for those who directly as well as indirectly benefit. Though the intended purpose of sharing this information is to reach out to and engage military talent—those who served abroad and at home, the resulting strategies, flexibility and community that evolve from your actions serve to create a work environment that benefits all talent. That's a winning strategy for people and for business.

## APPENDIX 1: GUIDE TO INSPIRATION FOR SHRM AFFILIATES

Many SHRM chapters and state councils have developed and delivered successful military-friendly initiatives. Highlighted here are just a few, including some past SHRM Pinnacle Award winners. These also may serve as initiatives for your chapter or state council's SHAPE goals in the areas of workforce readiness and diversity.

### Evansville-Area Human Resource Association, Evansville, Indiana

#### 2009 Pinnacle Award Winner "Seamless Transition"

The Evansville-Area Human Resource Association (EHRA) partnered with the Indiana Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) to provide the "Seamless Transition" program to assist military personnel with a seamless transition into the civilian workforce. In 2009, EHRA provided career counseling services, offering assistance to 500 immobilized military personnel with identifying transferable skills, developing resume and interview preparation. EHRA's career counseling initiatives have proven invaluable to military personnel, many of whom have never prepared a resume or interviewed for civilian employment. EHRA connected these highly skilled and dedicated prospective employees to local employers through the Army's Employer Partnership Initiative and Indiana Guard's job posting websites.

Through these partnerships, EHRA member employers have been asked to identify the certifications employers demand, resulting in the military offering certification opportunities to military personnel to facilitate their future transition to civilian employment. ESGR and Army's Employer Partnership Initiative describe the partnership with EHRA as the model to be adopted in other states because they could not provide a full range of employment services without support from local HR professionals.

### Garden State Council-SHRM, New Jersey

#### 2009 Pinnacle Award Winner "Mission Career Success"

To provide support for the brave women and men who served our country so well, Garden State Council (GSC-SHRM) partnered with Fort Dix, Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), GI Go Fund and Tip of the Arrow Foundation to produce a career transition program designed to assist all service members with the successful transition from active service into civilian employment. Nearly 600 service members received personalized, one-on-one career coaching from

over 140 volunteer human resource professionals and professional coaches. The event produced a video of an expert panel discussion on job search, interviewing techniques and entrepreneurship. Workshops focused on networking, job search technology and ADA accommodation assistance. Resume lab services provided on-the-spot changes in preparation for the job fair (free to the more than 80 participating employers with current openings) serving up job opportunities for over 800 veterans. This program fills the gap resulting from an absence of career transition preparation services for service members. Due to the success of this pilot program, the Garden State Council partnered with military leaders, mental health services, employers, colleges and other groups to take the program national so service members returning to demobilization units across the country may gain from our support of their goal to become employed.

### South Puget Sound Chapter, Tacoma, Washington

#### 2011 Pinnacle Award Winner

The South Puget Sound Chapter's program "U.S. Military HR Inclusion Plan" is led by Sabrina Steinback, the chapter's web administrator. She is working at Joint Base Lewis McChord on a two-year federal grant program called "Heroes at Home 2 Program." The grant's purpose is to assist military spouses impacted by base closures in upgrading their skills and/or preparing for new careers. Services include free tuition, career coaching, job training, supportive services and employment linkage. The grant also assists in identifying skill gaps in new and emerging industries critical to the economic growth of Pierce and Thurston counties. One of the initial-year goals of the program is to enroll all participants into the job assistance program.

### Human Resources Association of New York, New York

#### 2011 Fundraiser for Post-traumatic Stress Disorder Research

When Mary Kocy announced that she was going to raise funds to support the Rusk Institute of New York

City to engage in a study of veterans in the workplace with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) by waterskiing around the Hudson River, eyes flew wide open and jaws dropped. Yet months later, there she was on an early October night on the Channel 11 news and within a few short weeks, the NYC HRA Chapter was celebrating the \$27,000 raised with Rusk representatives. Daring? Bold? Crazy? You bet! However, it was Kocy's passion to raise awareness of this issue that prompted her to seek out a newsworthy approach using one of her talents—water skiing.

Do you have a special talent that may be used in a fund raising event? What organizations in your community might you partner with to deliver an awareness program?

## Washington State SHRM Council, Washington

### 2011 Partnering with WorkSource Veterans Employment, Kennewick, Washington

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Representative Kelly Snell, at the WorkSource Columbia Basin local Veterans Employment office in Kennewick, Washington, is passionate about supporting transitioning veterans. Collaborating with SHRM's Washington State Council Diversity Director, Christine Devere, SPHR, Snell gained participation of over 60 members to deliver a return-to-work preparation program for returning service members. The program drew participation from across state lines in Oregon and Idaho offering multiple workshops on key topics for successful interview preparation. Fifty-six percent of all workshop participants secured work within a 90-day period. The rates of re-employment in 90 days broken down by participation in specific workshops also yielded impressive results:

- Mock interviews—79 percent
- Hidden jobs—77 percent
- Resume development—50 percent

The retention rate, which was tracked over six months, reached 82 percent. The average annual wage was \$42,916 (considered a very solid wage for this more agriculturally focused area).

## Texas State Council, Texas

### 2011 Hosted First Annual State-Wide Summit with Key Business and Government Stakeholders to Support Hiring Veterans

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In an effort to improve this disturbing employment statistic and improve veteran workforce readiness,

the SHRM Texas State Council has joined as strategic partner on veterans' employment issues with many organizations, and has received endorsements and/or formed collaborative alliance partnerships with many organizations in Texas and the United States. The mission of the "Patriotic Promise" is to execute a best practices employment and recruitment platform in Texas that will set the stage for building veteran human capital for Texas and U.S. employers. The SHRM Texas State Council is hosting a series of symposia across the state. These events bring together key military, government, industry and business leaders from Texas and the nation to surface the challenges and critical issues surrounding veteran employment. The basic premise behind the "Patriotic Promise" initiative is to close the transition, translation and communication gaps that hinder veterans from obtaining civilian employment in Texas and the nation, and, ultimately, to eliminate concerns and misperceptions employers have regarding the military workforce.

The "Patriotic Promise" researched companies that had paved the way and figured out how to engage and hire highly-skilled and workforce-ready veterans. These companies are now reaping the benefits of loyal and excellent hires.

## Morris County SHRM, New Jersey

### 2011 and 2012—"Tomorrow's Promise"

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This two-year initiative connects Morris County area businesses with their community's heroes, heroines and their families to generate economic growth while creating career transition success and reducing the unemployment rate for this special talent pool. The concept evolved as the chapter sought to fulfill two community needs: supporting struggling local businesses and reducing the unemployment rate for New Jersey veterans, guard members and reservists and their supporting family members. The Workforce Readiness team aligned with marketing and delivery partners at the Northwest New Jersey Small Business Development Center and the Parsippany Area Chamber of Commerce. Their outreach support partners include: United Way of Northern New Jersey, ESGR New Jersey, New Jersey Department of Labor Veterans Employment and Training in association with the local One-Stop Centers. In addition to delivering special military-focused talent workshops for employers, the Diversity team created a workshop on understanding how diversity affects all areas of a business.

The comprehensive services offer a variety of free skills and information filled workshops, job fair, certificate programs along with networking, tools and resources. Delivered by volunteer human resource and

business professionals, each component supports local employers and military-connected job seekers in achieving success.

## **Garden State Council, New Jersey** **2011 and 2012—“Wave Across America”**

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This simple and easily implemented program offers the Garden State Council support to its 11 local chapters inviting others across the country to join in “the Wave.” The mission is to source or create a minimum of one job for every 100 chapter members to be filled by military-connected talent by Veterans Day 2012. This makes the goal achievable for even the chapters with under 100 members.

Employer awareness and engagement is promoted through free programming provided in outreach to local Chambers of Commerce, clients of employment law firms, the New Jersey Small Business Develop-

ment Center of Northwest Jersey, Department of Labor Workforce Investment Board offices.

Logging and tracking the hires is done with ease through the use of a shared Google document. State councils and chapters may log in at their convenience to enter their contact information as well as that of the newly hired individual and his or her employer. A special recognition ceremony is planned for the state’s annual conference to acknowledge all program participants.

## APPENDIX 2: GUIDE TO INSPIRATION FOR ACTION AT WORK

*The proactive, successful business solutions described below demonstrate a wide variety of support to meet the varied health, family, legal and personal needs of veterans, guard and reservists as well as their families. Each organization interviewed was very excited to share their experiences so other employers may better understand the effects on the family members and how to best support them. For additional examples, see, Employer Support for the Military Community (Families and Work Institute/SHRM 2011) ([http://whenworkworks.org/research/downloads/www\\_military\\_support.pdf](http://whenworkworks.org/research/downloads/www_military_support.pdf))*

### **Intuit (ESGR Freedom Award winner)**

At the California-based organization (well known for its Turbo Tax products), its Military Network of 250 is constantly listening for opportunities to respond and support the company's guard and reserve members. In 2010, Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve honored them with the prestigious Freedom Award. Military employees receive full pay and organization bonuses during deployments; are eligible to participate in the employee assistance program, which provides confidential counseling; and are assigned an Intuit Military Network Leader to assist throughout deployment. Cheryl Graczewski, wife of Lieutenant Tim Graczewski, a U.S. Navy Reserve officer then deployed to Afghanistan, said, "While being the wife of a deployed allows me the opportunity to take pride in my husband's work, it also brings challenges and worries. Intuit has provided a significant counterweight to any financial worry we could have assumed and they offer personal support for Tim, for me and our 6-year old son. I can't imagine an organization more deserving of recognition for dedication to their military employees and their families."

### **State of Hawaii (ESGR Freedom Award winner)**

Employees of the State of Hawaii, another Freedom Award winner, stay in close contact with families of their deployed employees and make it a point to include them in special events. Major K. Mark Takai, the nominator and a Hawaii Army National Guardsman, said, "It's reassuring to know that when I'm away my co-workers stay in touch with my family and they are always there to help out any way they can."

### **Michigan State Police (ESGR Freedom Award winner)**

Nominator Lieutenant Stephen Nowicki, U.S. Navy Reserve, said, "It was comforting to know that the Michigan State Police would take care of my family, especially as I headed off to an uncertain future. Because [they] have such an extensive program in place to assist guard and reserve employees and their families, this was one less worry on my shoulders. Without the financial and emotional support [they] provided for my family and me, I would not have been able to re-enlist to serve my country."

### **Legacy Sports International (ESGR Freedom Award winner)**

An example of going above and beyond lies in this compelling demonstration of support for wounded heroes. Legacy hired its nominator, U.S. Army Reserve Sergeant Boone Cutler—injured while serving in Iraq—while he was recovering at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and provided him with full pay throughout his rehabilitation process. The Reno, Nevada-based organization also covered the expense to relocate the sergeant's wife and their three children to Reno. Said Cutler, "Legacy Sports all but rescued me, and without their help my life would have been much different."

### **Merck (ESGR Freedom Award winner)**

With more than 10,000 guard and reserve employees, Merck provides differential pay and continuing health benefits for family members. The company established an employee resource group, the Veterans Leadership Network, that assists with recruiting candidates with military experience to help newly hired or returning veterans acclimate to corporate life. Nominator Craig Henzel, Senior Finance Director and U.S. Coast Guard Reserve Commander, who served in the Gulf, shared

“I never had to worry about my family being affected by pay or health benefits while I was deployed. I missed my wife and children tremendously, but I knew they were in good hands while I was cleaning up the oil in the Gulf.”

### **City of Irvine Police Department (ESGR Freedom Award winner)**

A recipient of multiple awards, including several Patriot Awards, the Seven Seals Awards and the Pro Patria Award, this organization has engaged in a multitude of public recognition and community programs honoring not only its employees that served yet also those throughout the community. The company are known for its support of continued full pay and benefits for those deployed and their families. By “staying in regular contact with my wife and son to be sure their needs were met while I was deployed,” the company provided peace of mind for Police Lieutenant Thomas Allen while he served as a Marine Corps Reserve Lieutenant Colonel.

### **Actavis Helps Vets Return to Work**

During an HR leadership retreat at Actavis, collaborating with Caring Capital of Morristown, New Jersey, executives built portable work stations to help local veterans transition to the workforce. As they made display boards to hold business cards, brochures and other materials, one participant in a T-shirt proclaiming, “Proud Sister of a Veteran” observed, “Having a

brother in the Marine Corps, I’ve seen how critical it is for communities to show their support for vets. I’m so proud to work for Actavis.”

### **Solix Sends Sweet Dreams to Kandahar**

As they entered the firm’s conference room on Valentine’s Day, Solix Inc. employees chuckled to find pillowcases and pastels instead of note pads and pens. This was no ordinary meeting! Volunteers would turn blank pillowcases into transporting works of art, designed to ease weary U.S. troops to sleep in Afghanistan. Making clear the impact of their artwork, visiting Staff Sergeant David S. Sperry explained that in a world of prescribed uniforms and behaviors, service members embrace bedtime as the only chance to wear what they like and be themselves. Imagine their delight at resting on soothing sunsets and placid seas! As volunteers employed fabric pastels and markers to create their dreamscapes, Sergeant Sperry shared slides of the actual platoon members who would receive the gifts. “I had a sense of honor to be able to help our soldiers,” observed one employee. “This raised our spirits and decreased stress,” said another. The Solix event, another collaboration with Caring Capital of Morristown, New Jersey, linked an organization passionate about doing good with platoon members putting their lives on the line. As one volunteer noted, “I had the benefit of doing a good deed and having fun at the same time. All I had to do was show up and everything I needed was provided. This program highlights that Solix is a community-minded, service-oriented organization.”



## APPENDIX 3: GUIDE TO CONDUCTING A CULTURE AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT (SWOT ANALYSIS)

### BIG-PICTURE QUESTIONS

1. Do your website and recruiting materials have a separate focus for military talent?
2. Are benefits offered beyond compliance requirements?
3. What information and resources do you make available for military-connected talent and how?
4. Do you actively support and engage in community service events for military talent?
5. Do you offer affinity or resource groups or Service Member Connection Programs?
6. What programs internally and externally provide military family engagement and support?
7. If you responded “no” to any of the above, which of these offerings would work at your organization?
8. What else could be implemented that would fit your organization’s culture?

### TARGETED QUESTIONS

#### Full Employment Cycle:

1. What goals are in place for hiring, training, development and succession planning that specifically address military-connected talent?
2. Are they short- or long-term goals?
3. What is the time frame to achieve them?
4. What resources are needed to accomplish the goals?

#### Interviewing and Compliance Training:

1. What training elements should be included for hiring manager teams?
2. What risk management issues might occur if training does not? (Think: USERRA, ADA, FMLA, etc.)
3. What acclimation programs are offered during the onboarding process? For cross training as part of succession planning? For job sharing?

#### Benefits Programs:

1. Do EAP partners have qualified professionals that can manage the issues being faced by returning service members and their families?
2. Are leave policies fully integrated and flexible?
3. Is a legal assistance program offered for service and family members?
4. Are child care referrals, services or credits available?
5. Is transition assistance available for a relocating military spouse?

#### Compensation Programs:

1. Is continuance of full pay provided while on leave?
2. Does the returning service member retain his or her bonus or profit sharing status?

#### Anticipated Internal changes:

1. What organizational shifts might occur in the next fiscal year that would affect the goals you stated earlier?
2. Are there longer term changes being formulated?
3. Who will be affected? How?
4. What needs to happen to be prepared to effectively manage the change(s)?

#### Potential External Changes:

1. What external shifts might occur in the next one to two years that may affect the organization?
2. Are there longer term changes to consider?
3. Who will be affected?
4. Are any within the organization’s scope of control?
5. What needs to happen to be prepared to effectively manage the change(s)?

## APPENDIX 4: GUIDE TO SOURCING MILITARY-CONNECTED JOB CANDIDATES

### Standard Sourcing Approaches

Many of the usual approaches to sourcing candidates will have specialized programs, sections or staff devoted to military candidates.

- Placement firms
- Job boards (for example, Monster offers a special military section)
- Career fairs
- Publications
- Professional associations
- Non-profit organizations (for example, Tip of the Arrow Foundation)
- College and university campuses (for example, Yellow Ribbon Program and ROTC graduates, Student Veterans of America, grant-funded training programs exclusively for veterans)
- Employee referral program (for example, reach out in particular to your military connected talent)

### Social Media Approaches

Reach out to military-connected talent using social networking sites, some of which have military-related groups that employers can join or post to.

- Armedzilla
- Milicruit
- Plaxo
- Facebook
- LinkedIn (search the group directory for military-related groups, join, post your notices, etc.)
- Foursquare
- MySpace
- MyLife
- Twitter

### Approaches Using Government Resources

Reach out to federal and state departments of labor, as well as various offices of the military to learn how best to source military talent using their capabilities.

- Local employment office One-Stop Centers (veterans representatives)
- Military recruiting centers (some organizations—J.B. Hunt, for example—seek out military candidates as they enter service and then remain in touch throughout their military career. This is similar to what you might do with college graduates—engaging them throughout their master’s program while planning for their transition to your organization upon graduation.)
- Military career transition centers
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs VetSuccess.gov
- Veterans Administration Hospital Centers (for those exiting the healing process who are ready to return to work). Also Wounded Warrior sections of the hospital
- National Guard and Reserve units
- National Guard and Reserve: HERO2Hired (h2h.jobs)
- National Resource Directory. A collaborative website created by the U.S. Departments of Defense, Labor, and Veterans Affairs
- Military Spouse Employment Partnership. A tool for employers to find job seeking military spouses
- Employer Partnership of the Armed Forces
- Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP). These specialists develop job and training opportunities for veterans, with special emphasis on veterans with service-connected disabilities

## APPENDIX 5: GUIDE TO LOW- OR NO-COST, EASY-TO-IMPLEMENT PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES

*Staff Sergeant David Sperry with the Morristown, N.J., Army recruiting office, offered up some of the items in this list of easy-to-implement benefits that truly serve to create strong community support in your organization. (Many of these recommendations could also benefit employees who are not military-connected.)*

### Form Affinity Groups (employee resource groups for special populations)

Employee resource groups are growing in popularity and contributing in positive ways to business success. Organizations including Novartis and Verizon have experienced great results from their community-focused affinity program for military members and their families. It's about creating a safe haven for conversation, a place to connect. Your organization could set up weekly or monthly meetings for family members with a loved one in service or service members that returned to join in and share information, meet new people in the community and ease the after effects of relocation, mobilization and demobilization processes.

### Enable Phone and Video Conference Calls with Family Members

Remember phone booths from the days before cell phones? You closed the door, and you could talk privately. Give that privacy and option to your employees who want to connect with their service member in another time zone. The simple short calls throughout the day that we make with those we love and share a home are taken for granted. Imagine not hearing the voice of the one you love for weeks on end. You can also add the deployed service member to your teleconference service.

### Enable Video Conference Calls and Video Messages with Work Groups

Many military members report a boost to morale from being in direct contact with their co-workers. Create opportunities to send a special message to the service member abroad or welcoming them home.

### Support Care Package Activities

Allow the loved one to send a prepaid package using the volume discount you may have through your package delivery service.

Create “welcome home” packages for those returning from service, send them to their destination base and send one to their final destination—home.

### Allow Leave Pre-Deployment and After De-Mobilization

This is a life change, even if a temporary one. It takes time to adjust. No one should be expected to go cold turkey. How do you integrate this equitably into your leave policies and avoid the “How come he/she gets to take time off for that and I don't?” Well, it's no different than managing questions around the use of family medical leave. If you don't have a serious health condition, you don't use it. If you don't have children being born or adopted, you don't use it. The point is, the benefit is there if you need it. Offering three to five days paid leave is another option.

### Support Big Brother/Big Sister-style Programs

Consider the family role that the service member left open and explore the potential to help fill the temporary gap. Sperry jokingly quips “Ever try to manage through the mood of a 12-year-old girl?” How about helping Dad by taking her to a nail appointment? Or make the weekend easier for Mom by accompanying her 8-year-old son to his soccer game.

### Establish a Letter Writing Schedule

As Sperry relays, “You don't want to be the one at mail call that doesn't get anything.” Help keep them connected. Suggest to the employee that he or she set up a schedule with family and with the service member's co-workers at his or her office to share events and

news from each week. One person a day ensures a letter a day at mail call.

## **Donate Books and DVDs**

Adopt the troop of your employee's loved one and send a "downtime" package once a month with items for the members to read, view and swap.

## **Create Community Boards**

Establish a community help board in your breakrooms or on your intranet with postings of needs. These can include anything from help moving a refrigerator to lawn care, snow shoveling and minor household repairs. Getting the summer furniture out of the basement or lifting anything that requires a bit of muscle or more than two hands. This is also a great way to post for child care or tutoring services. The biggest bonus is that everyone in the organization gets to benefit from the opportunities. Each year, nominators for the ESGR Secretary of Defense Freedom Award cite knowing that their employer and co-workers pitched in to help their family from time to time while they were in service was a major relief for them and helped them focus on their mission.

## **Host a Community Event**

Engaging military families with the organization is important to military members. There are many opportunities to do this outside of a company-specific event. Check with your local United Way office and other non-profit organizations that focus on serving to connect the community with a specific group in need.

For an event just for your organization's employees, consider some examples from the successful programs of Caring Capital (<http://www.caringcap.com/>). Working with pharmaceutical organizations such as Novartis, they provide all the tools and inspiration needed to create a meaningful interactive event with your employees to support military families and service members.

## **Investigate Free Tax Preparation Services**

United Way and other groups (H&R Block, Jackson Hewitt, etc.) will typically offer free tax preparation services for service members, and in some instances, their family members. Contact your local offices to learn if any offer this service and promote the details through your usual employee communication channels.

## ENDNOTES

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- ix. Society for Human Resource Management. (2010). Employing Military Personnel and Recruiting Veterans. Retrieved on April 1, 2012 from [http://www.shrm.org/Research/SurveyFindings/Documents/10-0531%20Military%20Program%20Report\\_FNL.pdf](http://www.shrm.org/Research/SurveyFindings/Documents/10-0531%20Military%20Program%20Report_FNL.pdf)
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- xi. Society for Human Resource Management and Families and Work Institute. (2011). When Work Works Toolkit: Building Support for Workplace Flexibility. Retrieved on April 1, 2012 from [http://www.shrm.org/Communities/VolunteerResources/ResourcesforChapters/Documents/When\\_Work\\_Works\\_Toolkit.pdf](http://www.shrm.org/Communities/VolunteerResources/ResourcesforChapters/Documents/When_Work_Works_Toolkit.pdf)
- xii. Ibid.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following list includes resources from SHRM and other organizations. SHRM membership may be required to view particular items.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

#### **America's Heroes at Work**

<http://www.americasheroesatwork.gov/>

#### **Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve**

<http://www.esgr.org/site/>

#### **Engaging in Strategic Planning**

<http://www.shrm.org/TemplatesTools/Toolkits/Pages/EngaginginStrategicPlanning.aspx>

#### **G.I. Jobs Top 100 Military Employers (2011)**

<http://www.gijobs.com/2011Top100.aspx>

#### **Magazine Honors Companies Employing Military Members**

<http://www.shrm.org/hrdisciplines/staffingmanagement/Articles/Pages/MagazineHonorsCompaniesEmployingMilitaryMembers.aspx>

#### **Military Employment Resource Page**

<http://www.shrm.org/hrdisciplines/staffingmanagement/Articles/Pages/Military.aspx>

Military Spouse Employment Partnership

<https://msepjobs.militaryonesource.mil/>

#### **SHRM Pinnacle Awards**

[http://www.shrm.org/Communities/VolunteerResources/ResourcesforChapters/Pages/award\\_info.aspx](http://www.shrm.org/Communities/VolunteerResources/ResourcesforChapters/Pages/award_info.aspx)

#### **SHRM/FWI Employer Support for the Military Community**

[http://whenworkworks.org/research/downloads/www\\_military\\_support.pdf](http://whenworkworks.org/research/downloads/www_military_support.pdf)

#### **What is a SWOT Analysis and How Does it Apply to an HR department?**

[http://www.shrm.org/TemplatesTools/hrqa/Pages/CMS\\_022634.aspx](http://www.shrm.org/TemplatesTools/hrqa/Pages/CMS_022634.aspx)

#### **When Work Works: Building Support for Workplace Flexibility**

[http://whenworkworks.org/research/downloads/www\\_toolkit\\_120222.pdf](http://whenworkworks.org/research/downloads/www_toolkit_120222.pdf)

### SURVEY FINDINGS

#### **SHRM Military Employment Poll (2012)**

<http://www.shrm.org/Research/SurveyFindings/Articles/Pages/MilitaryEmploymentSHRMPoll.aspx>

#### **Employing Military Personnel and Recruiting Veterans—Attitudes and Practices (2011)**

<http://www.shrm.org/Research/SurveyFindings/Articles/Pages/EmployingMilitaryPersonnelRecruitingVeterans.aspx>

#### **Recruiting Veterans with Disabilities: Perceptions in the Workplace (2011)**

<http://www.shrm.org/Research/SurveyFindings/Articles/Pages/Recruitingdisabledvets.aspx>

#### **Critical Skills Needs and Resources for the Changing Workforce Survey Report (SHRM/WSJ/Careers, June 2008)**

<http://www.shrm.org/Research/SurveyFindings/Articles/Documents/Critical%20Skills%20Needs%20and%20Resources%20for%20the%20Changing%20Workforce%20Survey%20Report.pdf>

### COMPLIANCE INFORMATION

#### **Overview of the ADA**

[http://www.ada.gov/servicemembers\\_adainfo.html](http://www.ada.gov/servicemembers_adainfo.html)

#### **How to Handle An Employee's ADA Request for Reasonable Accommodation**

<http://www.shrm.org/TemplatesTools/HowtoGuides/Pages/RequestReasonableAccommodation.aspx>

#### **Managing Military Leave and Military Family Leave**

<http://www.shrm.org/TemplatesTools/Toolkits/Pages/ManagingMilitaryLeaveandMilitaryFamilyLeave.aspx>

#### **Fact Sheet on Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)**

<http://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs28.htm>

## **Fact Sheet on Family and Medical Leave Act Military Leave Entitlements**

<http://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs28a.pdf>

## **USERRA-FMLA Questions and Answers**

<http://www.dol.gov/vets/media/fmlaq-a.pdf>

## **The USERRA Regulations Deconstructed**

[http://www.shrm.org/Publications/LegalReport/Pages/CMS\\_016503.aspx](http://www.shrm.org/Publications/LegalReport/Pages/CMS_016503.aspx)

## **Partnerships Are Essential to Recruit More Veterans**

<http://www.shrm.org/LegalIssues/FederalResources/Pages/RecruitVeterans.aspx>

## **BENEFITS**

### **How to Develop and Administer Military Benefits**

<http://www.shrm.org/TemplatesTools/HowtoGuides/Pages/AdministerMilitaryBenefits.aspx>

### **Managing Military Leave and Military Family Leave**

<http://www.shrm.org/TemplatesTools/Toolkits/Pages/ManagingMilitaryLeaveandMilitaryFamilyLeave.aspx>

### **When Duty Calls: Responding to a Military-Related Absence**

<http://www.shrm.org/hrdisciplines/benefits/Articles/Pages/MilitaryLeave.aspx>

## **EMPLOYEE RELATIONS**

### **Employee Engagement and Commitment**

<http://www.shrm.org/about/foundation/research/Documents/1006EmployeeEngagementOnlineReport.pdf>

### **Job Accommodation Network**

<http://www.askjan.org/>

### **America's Heroes at Work**

<http://www.americasheroesatwork.gov/>

## **DIVERSITY**

### **Building a Diversity Initiative from the Ground Up**

<http://www.shrm.org/TemplatesTools/Toolkits/Pages/BuildingaDiversityInitiativeFromtheGroundUp.aspx>

## **Companies Finding Success Hiring Disabled Veterans**

<http://www.shrm.org/hrdisciplines/Diversity/Articles/Pages/HiringDisabledVeterans.aspx>

## **Diversity Must be Woven Into not Tacked Onto Company Culture**

<http://www.shrm.org/hrdisciplines/Diversity/Articles/Pages/DiversityMustBeWovenInto.aspx>

## **Employee Resource Groups for Veterans Deliver Results**

<http://www.shrm.org/hrdisciplines/Diversity/Articles/Pages/EmployeeResourceGroupsforVeterans.aspx>

## **Employee Resource Groups Drive Business Results**

<http://www.shrm.org/hrdisciplines/Diversity/Articles/Pages/EmployeeGroupsDriveBusinessResults.aspx>

## **Resurgent Employee Resource Groups Help Build Leaders**

<http://www.shrm.org/hrdisciplines/Diversity/Articles/Pages/ERGStrategy.aspx>

## **ORGANIZATIONAL AND**

### **Employers, Colleges Help Veterans Get Job Training**

<http://www.shrm.org/hrdisciplines/orgempdev/articles/Pages/VeteransJobTraining.aspx>

## **STAFFING MANAGEMENT**

### **O\*Net**

<http://online.onetcenter.org/crosswalk/>

### **Guidelines on Interview and Employment Application Questions**

<http://www.shrm.org/TemplatesTools/Toolkits/Pages/InterviewandEmploymentApplicationQuestions.aspx>

### **Managing Flexible Work Arrangements**

<http://www.shrm.org/TemplatesTools/Toolkits/Pages/ManagingFlexibleWorkArrangements.aspx>

### **Managing the Employee On-boarding and Assimilation Process**

<http://www.shrm.org/TemplatesTools/Toolkits/Pages/OnboardingandAssimilationProcess.aspx>



1800 Duke Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314-3499  
USA