

A Corporate Transition: Coca-Cola Associates Mentor Military Vets

By: [Hannah Nemer](#) | May 24, 2018



During World War II, Coca-Cola President Robert Woodruff pledged to make Coca-Cola available within arm's reach of every soldier stationed around the world to help remind them of home. Now, Coca-Cola is working to make sure that veterans' transitions home are smooth.

Since 2014, Coca-Cola has joined forces with American Corporate Partners (ACP) to provide more than 280 career mentorships to veterans transitioning into the private sector. Paired based on mutual occupational interests, Coca-Cola mentors offer veterans outside of the company professional development advice as well as networking and resume building tools.

Army Veteran Lillian Norton, who has worked at Coca-Cola since 2013, now serves as one of the company's ACP mentors. The senior commercialization manager is thrilled to support her fellow veterans, recalling her own challenging transition finding a civilian career path after graduate school.



"Emotionally, you go from having a big support network to literally being on your own," she says. "I think about the wounds you can't see... that feeling of loneliness can spiral. So, it's critical for veterans to feel like they have someone who can help them in that transition process. A few hours of mentorship a month can keep someone on track to finding employment."

Norton likens her post-service transition to learning a new language, mentally re-framing military skill-sets into civilian terms and dropping some of the formalities of military lingo. Even putting together a civilian resume and a LinkedIn profile require a shift in mindset.

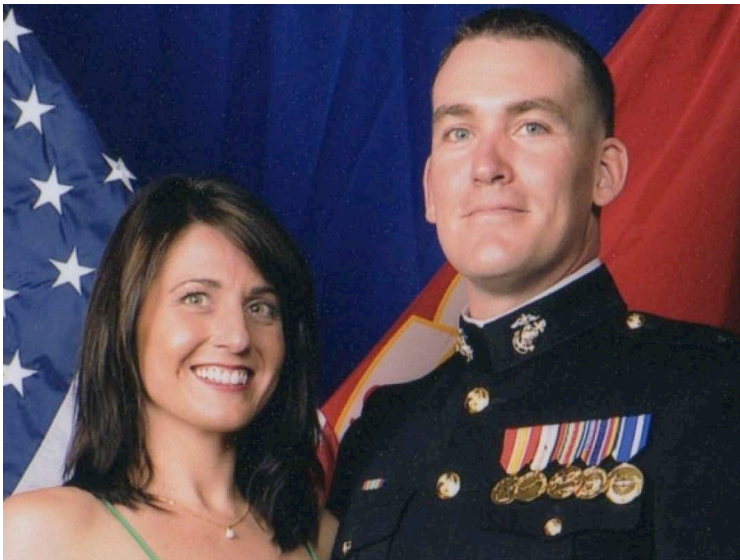


“These are things that come second nature to people in a corporate environment,” Norton says. “You don’t have to have military experience to pass that knowledge on to veterans.”

The opportunity to become an ACP mentor is open to all Coca-Cola employees – veterans and civilians alike. Because Coca-Cola employees work within so many different fields, Coca-Cola mentors can offer unique networking opportunities to veteran mentees who hope to pursue varied career paths.



Though he has never served in the military, William Smith, director of leadership communications for Coca-Cola North America, became an ACP mentor to honor friends and family who have served as well as to learn from the life experience of veterans.



"I enjoy connecting people," he explains. "I've been so impressed with the veterans I've met through this program – people who have done such big things at an early age. It's rewarding to help them find a successful career in the business world."

Mark Rahiya, Coca-Cola's chief retail sales officer and senior vice president of operations, believes that this, in turn, helps the business world.

Having served in the United States Navy

for six years prior to his 20-plus-year career at Coca-Cola, Rahiya believes the ACP mentorship provides a two-way dialogue that benefits Coca-Cola employees as much as the veteran mentees.

"We at Coca-Cola tremendously value the veterans who work in this organization. They bring vast leadership skills and experience operating in complex environments," he explains. Their can-do attitudes help us achieve our business goals. By helping veterans, we're helping the entire marketplace."

For Norton, working at a company that celebrates its commitment to veterans is heartwarming. She is thrilled that the ACP partnership enables her to help others transition into business environments.

"Mentors have a direct and tangible impact on these veterans' lives," she concludes. "Veterans have served their country; this is the least that we can do to give back to that community."

For more information on the ACP mentorship program, visit their website at <https://www.acp-usa.org>.

