

# TASK & PURPOSE

## Barracks to business: Hiring veterans has never been easier

[Jason Sutton](#)

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**Editor's Note:** The following story highlights a veteran at Wells Fargo. Committed to including talented members of the military community in its workplace, Wells Fargo is a client of Hirepurpose, a Task & Purpose sister company. [Learn more here.](#)



Jason Sutton (Army Veteran, Market Executive, Ohio Region, Wells Fargo Commercial Banking)

As a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and a newly minted second lieutenant, I felt well prepared to tackle the challenges facing a junior field artillery officer in the U.S. Army. When the time came to leave the Army, however, I was much less prepared to make the transition into the yet-unknown civilian sector.

One of the primary issues facing veterans after we transition is that we lack the same sense of purpose and mission that we had with our military careers. Today, more than ever, our service members volunteer to put themselves in harm's way. They are defending our freedom across the globe and should be recognized as our country's true heroes. It's critical that employers educate veterans and provide viable options so we can make informed decisions about the rest of our lives.

Wanting to get closer to home and family, I settled for a position as a foreman/engineer working the night shift in an automotive plant. While the role was challenging in certain aspects, it was far from what I envisioned when I left the Army. I had the skills necessary for a successful post-military career; however, I didn't know what options were available or where to begin to look. It wasn't until I enrolled in business school that I found a career path in financial services. That gave me the opportunity to further my leadership development, which led to my current role as a region head for Wells Fargo Commercial Banking, which also allows me to give back to my community and other veterans. At that time (the late 1990s), resources available to service members leaving the military were limited.

## **Military transition programs, partners open doors**

Today, there are many strong programs available to assist veterans in their transitions to civilian life and careers outside of the military. Among the organizations that my company works with to support veterans is [American Corporate Partners](#) (ACP). I have had the privilege of meeting and mentoring several newly separated veterans through ACP, and I see the impact this program has on veterans' lives.

"Many veterans leave the military with little idea of what to do or where to go next; they just know they need to find a job," says Colleen Deere, executive director of American Corporate Partners. "With the help of mentors from Wells Fargo and our other corporate partners, ACP provides the guidance and tools to assist veterans, whether recently separated or out of the service for many years, find meaningful post-military careers."

Much like I experienced after leaving the Army, many veterans today have trouble finding — and sticking with — meaningful employment. A lack of job satisfaction has led to a first-year turnover rate for veterans in their first post-military job of about 44 percent, according to a recent study from the Chamber of Commerce Foundation. However, among veterans who completed the one-year program with an ACP mentor, 86 percent remained in their first post-military job longer.

Tight labor markets make it more important than ever for businesses to consider out-of-the-box recruitment strategies. Recruitment opportunities on military bases are becoming more common, with the U.S. military's [Transition Assistance Program](#) and [Onward to Opportunity](#) (O2O), a free career training, certification, and employment program designed to launch military veterans into their next civilian careers. These are also great organizations to consider connecting with for business hiring efforts.

Does your company recruit on military bases?

This fall, I had the opportunity to join Lisa Young, our Military Talent Strategic Sourcing leader who oversees base recruitment for Wells Fargo, at a job fair at Fort Campbell in Kentucky. This was an incredible opportunity to recruit talented, focused service members who could bring unique career backgrounds and skill sets to any business.

According to Young, "With more than 200,000 veterans leaving the military each year, Wells Fargo's presence on military bases is a good way to tap into a huge talent pool of candidates with demonstrated leadership skills, self-discipline, and the ability to adapt to changing environments."

On-base recruiting provides employers with access to both service members who are leaving their military careers in pursuit of civilian life and new opportunities for their families. Programs like O2O help make this pursuit easier by providing candidate assessment, industry-specific training, and collaboration with [Hire Heroes USA](#), another organization that our company supports, to facilitate and oversee interview matching between participants and employers.

"We recognize the importance of newly transitioning service members understanding the difference between a job in the military and one in a civilian business," said Cliff Yager, Installation Program manager of Onward to Opportunity in partnership with the Veterans Career Transition Program. "Programs like ours help facilitate the rebranding that veterans may need as they seek to promote themselves and their skills in corporate America."

In its 11th year and closing in on 30,000 lifetime hires, Hire Heroes USA is the leading veteran service organization, specifically targeting the issues of underemployment and unemployment among veterans. As a top sponsor of two Hire Heroes USA events, my employer receives access to several key recruiting tools that the nonprofit offers, including its job board, virtual career fairs, recruiter database, and recruiter training on best practices in veteran hiring.

"Employers can be successful in attracting top veteran talent through training and a better understanding of how to recruit and, more importantly, retain that talent," said Christopher Plamp, chief executive officer of Hire Heroes USA and a decorated Air Force combat pilot. "Hire Heroes USA has that expertise. Our goal is to bridge the gap between employers and the veterans who seek our services."

### Understanding the benefits of hiring military veterans

Transitioning from military life to civilian and corporate life is challenging. Newly separated service members may not be as skilled at self-promotion or articulating the intangibles instilled in them by military experience that translate into performance in business.

Programs like O2O and ACP are terrific resources for military veterans, and on-base recruiting is an excellent tool for businesses of all industries to find highly qualified and committed employees. Having an expert in the recruitment of military veterans may not be feasible for every company, but understanding the avenues to recruit and hire these individuals can be highly beneficial — for businesses and veterans.

"Our goal at Wells Fargo, of course, is to hire transitioning service members for our roles," Young says. "But the larger goal is to prepare military personnel to leave the service and successfully reestablish themselves in the civilian world — professionally, financially, and emotionally."

***This article was sponsored by Wells Fargo***