

# Insights from Hiring Experts: Helping Veterans Stand Out

By Autumn Rice, ACP

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, nearly 200,000 men and women leave military service and return to civilian life every year. Those 200,000 individuals are faced with deciding which career path they would like to take post service. For many, this uncertainty is daunting. Since 2012, American Corporate Partners (ACP) has worked with over 36,000 transitioning Veterans. In 2024 alone, ACP worked directly with more than 4,000 Veterans who are facing the unknown head on. One of their most common questions is, “How can I make myself stand out from the rest when applying for roles?”

In order to get a behind-the-scenes look into the hiring process, I spoke with four different Mentors in the ACP program. With experience in hiring or in being hiring managers themselves, Christopher Jason, Dustin Manuel, Robert Sanchez, and Frans Scheepers are experts in some of the most sought-after fields of interest for Veterans. While they all work in varying fields with different qualifications and requirements, the overlap in their advice is clear. Throughout our conversations, I was able to see a clear path to success: highlight the value you bring as a Veteran, tailor your résumés, prepare for interviews and utilize your resources!

## Veterans' Unique Value in the Workforce

Veterans make up about 7% of the U.S. population. While they represent a small percentage of the population, the skills they learn throughout their service makes them stand out. Jason, Manuel, Sanchez and Scheepers all agreed that Veterans bring a special set of skills to their respective fields.

Jason explains that Veterans tend to hold a “level of initiative, get it done attitude, problem solving, and critical thinking.” Manuel agrees and says he enjoys “finding Veterans with the right experience [for a role]... By understanding what they did in the past,” Manuel gains clarity on what candidates can accomplish in the future. Sanchez adds, “Veterans have proven they are able to accomplish [any] task, and think outside of the box. Critical thinking is key.” Scheepers feels that Veterans “have very strong leadership qualities. [They are] disciplined and structured... they can create structure out of chaos.”

It is clear that Veterans bring unique value to many fields. Emphasizing these skills is key to the application process.

## Tailored for Success

When it comes to first impressions, a résumé is a hiring manager's first impression of the candidate they are considering. Robert Sanchez is a U.S. Air Force Veteran who currently works at Northrop Grumman, with years of experience in hiring in Project Management. He says, “The most common mistake that Veterans can make with their résumé is the idea that they cannot leave any white space. Instead, I am thinking: ‘Does it catch my attention? Is it clear?’”

Frans Scheepers, with 15 years of experience hiring in the Finance field, echoes this idea. He emphasizes the importance of transparency: "I look for clarity as to how they got to applying to the role, showing they can draw those lines between the role and their expertise". Scheepers also adds to make sure that when applying, "tweak [your résumé] depending on each role and highlight those skills that would align with that specific role"

How is clarity shown? Sanchez asks, "What impact did you make? Focus on your strengths, what are your strong points. Highlight five things that you are really good at." Regarding the ideal length, Sanchez says, "Having a résumé that is one to two pages max shows that you can get your point across clearly."

Translating years of military experience into the corporate sector is another common challenge for Veterans. U.S. Navy Veteran Christopher Jason, who has experience with the hiring process in the Defense field, points out, "The key is learning to express and communicate the 'so what' of the experience."

Much is accomplished throughout the course of a military career, but the significance to a civilian workforce can often be overlooked or poorly understood. Checking IDs while on gate duty, while an entry level role in the military, demonstrates attention to detail, perseverance and even customer service. Jason adds, "Presentation is everything... articulate the value that you can bring to the specific role you are applying for."

### **The Power of Preparation**

The next step in the hiring process is, of course, the interview. While it may seem obvious to come prepared to an interview, it's not always intuitive. U.S. Air Force Veteran Dustin Manuel, who helps with hiring at defense contractor Lockheed Martin, emphasizes the need to plan ahead. "You can't over prepare," says Manuel. "I can tell instantly when a candidate is prepped." His advice to candidates? "Do it in the mirror, download prepared interview questions, and practice the STAR [Situation, Task, Action, Result] format."

Both Manuel and Navy Veteran Jason speak about the importance of storytelling in interviews. Manuel states, "The most successful interviewees have a list of examples they can pull from. They can tell a story about the answers that are relevant to the questions being asked." Jason adds, "The interview is your chance to show them how you think and who you are. Practice your history and revisit your past to explain why it is important. Be able to tell a story."

### **There are resources - use them!**

Transitioning out of the military and jumping into the civilian sector is not an easy task for many Veterans. By speaking with hiring professionals in varying fields, I was able to gain insight on how Veterans are able to best showcase their skills. The last question I asked was: "Is there

anything else you would like to tell a Veteran as they are embarking on their transition into the civilian sector?"

In parting, Sanchez mentions, "You have that confidence. You went on deployments. Your resilience adds layers. Reach out to someone that you know... ACP is so important." Sheepers agrees: "Make use of services like ACP. Make use of Networks." Jason adds, "Always try to make your résumé a little bit better." Dustin notes, "Use LinkedIn. Use your free resources!"

To utilize ACP's free year-long mentorship and connect with individuals in your desired field, fill out the ACP [Veteran Application](#) today!