

Network Like a Boss (with Mentoring)

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Want a big paycheck? Then expect to network like a boss, no matter what career level you are on. Big money means big risk for the hiring manager. Big networking mitigates some of that risk because someone is willing to stand up for you. Makes sense, right?

But then I get questions:

From young enlisted: *"How do I network when my network has no money and no power (yet)?"*

From midlevel pros: *"How am I supposed to network when I don't know anyone on the outside?"*

From senior leaders: *"How do I network to industry when my entire network is military, defense or government?"*

From spouses: *"How do I network when my entire network is at our last duty station?"*

One word, jobseekers: mentorship. You need a civilian mentor during your job hunt. Now don't freak out on me just yet. I'm not going to tell you to get a mentor without telling you exactly how to do it. I'm also not going to tell you to get a mentor without acknowledging how much you hate talking to strangers.

Luckily there are many types of mentorship out there designed to help you find a job. Our Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs) recognize that in order to break into the civilian world, our junior enlisted, junior officers, midlevel pros, senior leaders, veterans and spouses all need those essential connections. They need a bridge, and our VSOs are out there building them.

Each of the following mentorship programs was founded by service members who identified a need in the transition cycle and found a way to fix it for veterans and spouses. (I love when veterans understand that the service member and the spouse share the same financial situation.) No one understands a veteran like a veteran. Here are three versions of networking. Which one of these suits your transition needs best?

[American Corporate Partners:](#)

Where and when: The relationship is conducted by phone over the course of a year.

How it works: After you submit your application online, ACP schedules a call to talk about your education, your experience, your career ideas. Then they hand-select a mentor for you from one of the Fortune 500 companies they work with, such as Bristol Myers Squibb, Major League Baseball, and Disney, who provide mentors from their employees. You and your mentor will have 12 mentoring phone calls over the next 12 months to talk about anything from corporate culture, to résumé, to college majors. [Active duty spouses](#) may also apply.

Their results: 20,000 veterans have completed the program since it was founded in 2008. The average starting salary of their participants in 2020 was \$86,000.

Sweet spot: They have worked with everyone from E-3s to three-star generals, but their sweet spot is junior enlisted who have no degree.

[FourBlock:](#)

Where and when: In-person cohorts meet over a 10-week period in 15 [major metropolitan cities](#), including Seattle; Washington, D.C.; and Tampa. Virtual cohorts meet online so you can participate even if you are transitioning from overseas.

How it works: If you get accepted into the program, you join a cohort of 15-25 veterans. (FourBlock stood up its initial spouse program in fall 2020 and has hosted 50 spouses in two online cohorts so far). For 10 weeks, your cohort will meet in person at one of 80 companies. In addition to coursework, guided discussions, résumé reviews, mock interviews and general networking, presentations are given by executives from leading companies and industries in that program location.

Their results: More than 2,500 veterans have completed the course. They report that 84% alumni secure full-time positions or internships in the industry or company of their choice after graduating from our program. Their average starting salary is \$92,000.

Sweet spot: They work with active-duty service members, veterans and spouses, but their sweet spot is junior enlisted who used the GI Bill and are currently enrolled in college.

[Veterati:](#)

Where and when: Calls are conducted by phone and last from 10 minutes to an hour.

How it works: After you complete their 60-second sign-up, you can choose from their mentor profiles and schedule a call. Mentors indicate what subjects they would be happy to talk about from career coaching, to advice on your VA claim, to company culture. There is no time commitment or personal relationship required. Spouses, active duty and veterans use the platform the same way.

Their results: Users talk to an average of four mentors and as many as 25+.

Sweet spot: Mid-level professionals and introverts with questions.

No matter what mentorship program you choose, do choose one (or two or three) and use it to network like a boss. Your [Reverse Resume](#) may get you the interview, but your civilian network shoots you over the top.

Jacey Eckhart is Military.com's Transition Master Coach. She is a Certified Professional Career Coach and military sociologist who helps military members get their first civilian job by offering career-level [Master Classes](#) through our Veteran Talent Pool and on her website [SeniorMilitaryTransition.com](https://www.SeniorMilitaryTransition.com). Reach her at Jacey.Eckhart@Monster.com.