



Through American Corporate Partners, military veterans like Tre'elle Tolbert are paired with mentors from Fortune 500 companies, like Wells Fargo's Sara Mocabee.

Volunteering & Giving

On a mission to reduce veteran underemployment

American Corporate Partners is a nationwide nonprofit combating veteran underemployment by pairing post-9/11 veterans with volunteer mentors from Fortune 500 companies like Wells Fargo.

'Viewpoints' invites guest authors from outside of Wells Fargo to share an important perspective related to their work. Today, we welcome Colleen Deere, executive director of American Corporate Partners.

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Colleen Deere is the executive director of American Corporate Partners.

When my husband, Steve, was thinking of leaving the Army in 2010 to return to civilian life in New York City, we created resumes and signed up for job fairs designed to connect veterans and military spouses with companies looking to hire us. However, we left empty-handed and defeated.

We faced the prospect of moving 1,500 miles back home to be unemployed — despite having college degrees, great references, and a wide array of valuable skills.

Like many veterans and their spouses, we weren't just looking for "jobs" — we wanted careers. After moving half a dozen times in five years, we sought stability, growth potential, and the ability to make an impact. But there was a gap between what we knew we wanted and what we were ready for.

That's where [American Corporate Partners](#) comes in, with a volunteer army of mentors who have signed up to help maximize the likelihood that a veteran lands the right career. I've been part of the American Corporate Partners team for nine years now, working every day to support veterans in their transition to new civilian careers.

Through ACP, Steve met with a phenomenal mentor who took the time to prepare him for interviews and talk with him about how to translate his skills from leading combat missions in Iraq to working as an associate at a large financial firm.

Once Steve landed a job, his mentor made sure he felt comfortable and successful in his new role and encouraged him to seek out opportunities for advancement. More than seven years later, they are still in touch.

Helping returning veterans find their next careers

Founded in 2008, American Corporate Partners is a nationwide nonprofit on a mission to reduce veteran underemployment. Our unique, customized mentorship program pairs post-9/11 veterans with volunteer mentors from Fortune 500 companies, like Wells Fargo, in a yearlong mentoring relationship.

Veterans and mentors work together on everything from career exploration, resume and interview preparation, small business development, networking, and more.

At a time when veteran unemployment is at a record low, ACP continues to experience significant growth — ACP received 20% more applications from veterans seeking mentors in 2018 than in the prior year.

Across the board, veterans are reporting underemployment to be their primary issue. Veterans leave the military and are instantly unemployed, facing the need to rapidly decide their next career. With only minimal guidance, this stress, along with family and financial pressures, can be overwhelming.

Returning veterans are bombarded from every angle with job boards, job fairs, and job portals promising a quick-fix solution to address their immediate short-term problem: finding post-service employment.



AMERICAN CORPORATE PARTNERS

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ACP has found that more than seven of every 10 veteran applicants don't know what they want to do in civilian life, rendering a job fair almost useless. If you aren't sure where your skills fit in, how do you know what job titles to look for? How do you know what companies have roles that fit you? And what do you do if your military occupation specialty simply doesn't translate to a civilian career?

Job fairs just aren't designed to help connect the dots between the job seeker and the job opportunity.

Connecting veterans with business leaders who want to help is what ACP's mission is all about. ACP's mentors work one-on-one with veterans to tease out strengths, goals, personality factors, and interests to ensure the veteran selects a career opportunity that's going to be a good fit.

ACP has engaged an all-volunteer army of some of the brightest, most talented and passionate employees in corporate America to help veterans find their way after the military. Since 2012, more than 260 Wells Fargo team members across the country have mentored 360 veterans with ACP, helping address veteran underemployment one individual at a time.

With more than 1 million veterans expected to transition from the armed forces to civilian life over the next five years, the value of having an experienced mentor is rarely discussed, but it is becoming essential to helping veterans and their spouses find their next careers.

Topics: [job training](#), [military](#), [veterans](#)