

☆☆ *Hire a* ☆☆
SOLDIER

ISSUE 3

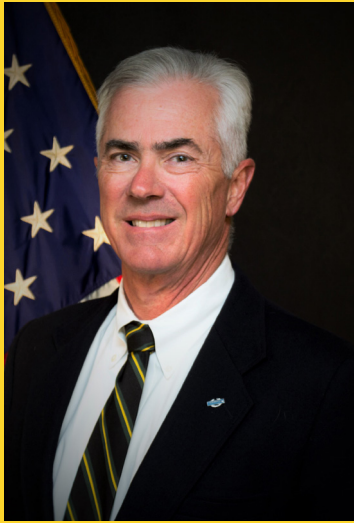
WINTER 2019/2020



**FINDING JOBS
FOR SOLDIERS:**

**THE METHODS
EMPLOYED BY
ARMY TAP TO HELP
SOLDIERS MOVE
FORWARD TO THEIR
NEXT CAREER**

**CHOOSING THE
SCHOOL THAT'S
RIGHT FOR YOU**



Letter from the Director

As we begin the new year, it's time to reflect on the year that has passed. It's been a very exciting twelve months for the Army Transition Assistance Program. We spent last year preparing for our symposium that was held this past August, as well as preparing for NDAA 19 implementation, which kicked off at the start of the fiscal year, October 1.

One of the common themes of the symposium was how we directly connect Soldiers to careers, our Tactical Employment Connection Strategy. This Strategy encompasses five methods: Enhanced Hiring Events, Career Skills Program, leveraging the American Job Centers, maximizing the Reserve Component Connection, and a soon to be announced fifth method that we are very excited to bring to Soldiers. The importance of this, and the direct impact on Soldiers and Employers, led us to decide on it as the theme of this issue of Hire a Soldier magazine.

As always, there is more to this magazine than just articles on the theme. We aim to provide information to help Soldiers, Commanders, and Business and Community Leaders. With this issue, we are getting back to basics with some of the topics - and we are doing the same with our program this year.

I hope you enjoy the content within this magazine, and find it informative and useful, whether you're a transitioning Soldier, a Commander working to support the Soldiers in your command, or a Business looking to hire the brave men and women who have served our country and are now ready to take the next step.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Walter Herd".

Walter Herd, Colonel (Retired)
Army TAP Director

★★ Hire a ★★ **SOLDIER**

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Get Connected!

Want to Hire a Soldier?

1. Use #HireaSoldier on social media to tag your job openings and transition advice.
2. You can connect with Soldiers in the SFL-TAP LinkedIn Connection Group (www.linkedin.com/groups/7063275).
3. Contact your local TAP Center for regional events, opportunities to get your openings posted on social media, and to meet transitioning Soldiers.
4. Create a pre-apprenticeship or internship program for Soldiers through the Career Skills Program.

Want to be Hired?

1. Use #HireaSoldier on social media when posting about your job search. Search the hashtag to find opportunities.
2. Join the SFL-TAP LinkedIn Connection Group (www.linkedin.com/groups/7063275) and get active!
3. Contact your local TAP Center for scheduled transition classes and hiring events or visit www.sfl-tap.army.mil.
4. Start transition early (18 months prior to transition or 24 months prior to retirement)
5. Network with employers and fellow Soldiers, especially those who have already transitioned. Be active in-person and online!

Editor's Note



It's hard for me to believe that it's already time for another edition of Hire a Soldier. This edition comes at a particularly exciting time for our program.

Since the last time this magazine was published, we had our biennial symposium, we implemented the changes outlined in NDAA 19, released new curriculum, worked on an updated Army Directive, and more, on top of our daily continuing efforts to provide the best possible support to our Soldiers. We are maintaining this energy as we go forward, and continuously seeking to provide the best program we can for our Soldiers.


The focus of this edition is our Tactical Employment Connection Strategy. The majority of transitioning Soldiers identify finding a career as their main transition goal. With that in mind, our team is focusing on what the most successful methods are for Soldiers to find employment. We're using tried and true, as well as new, methods to do what we always do - set up Soldiers for a successful transition. Check out our center spread for more information on this.

On another note, I would be remiss in failing to mention the start of the New Year. This is the perfect time to remind ourselves of our goals, evaluate our strategies, and redirect our efforts if needed - particularly for transitioning Soldiers and their Families. As we welcome 2020, I would encourage transitioning Soldiers to tailor their resolutions around their goals. I would encourage Commanders to resolve to be the best supporter of their Soldiers' transitions as they possibly can. Lastly, I would encourage any business leaders to resolve to support our Veterans and Hire a Soldier.

Best Wishes for the New Year!

Lauren Cooper
Editor

Making the Move: Relocation During Transition

 Lauren Cooper



Moving – you’ve done it so many times by now, you’re basically a professional. You get your orders, prep for the move, get to your next duty station, and unpack everything in your new home, knowing that in a few years, you’ll likely have to do it all over again. Your final move is different, though, and many transitioning Soldiers are moving to a new location. According to data compiled from DD214s, 77% of transitioning Soldiers intended to relocate (28% to their home of record and 49% to a different location). Only 23% intended to stay in the area of their final duty station.

One of the biggest differences for your final move is that the decisions regarding your move are in your control. There are some limitations, such as timelines for when you can move, but for the first time since you entered the service, you get to make the decision on where you want to go. You get to pick what kind of job you’re looking for, how long you’re going to stay in that location, the type of environment you want to be in, etc. While this is exciting, it can also be a little intimidating, especially if you have been in the Army for a long time. It can lead to a lot more uncertainty – you aren’t handed orders and told to report to a certain destination at a certain time. With this new control, you also have a lot more questions that need answers.

For some people, making these decisions are easy. Maybe they know they want to be near family, or they’ve already received a job offer. For those who still need to decide, there are three major factors to consider in order to determine where you want to move – or even if you’ll move. These three factors are location, career, and finances. You (and your family) should pick one to prioritize, as this will help you narrow down your selections for the others. For example, if you have a specific job type or title in mind, you may be able to move anywhere you wish, or you may be limited to locations that have more employment opportunities. If finances are

the most important thing, then you might need to follow the money. Consider moving to a state that has generous tax laws for retirees, an area where you will be able to get the type of income you desire, or areas that do not have high costs of living.

When it comes to location, there are a few states that are more popular than others for transitioning Soldiers – keep in mind, this data includes Soldiers who aren’t relocating. The states receiving the most transitioning Soldiers are:

- 1) Texas
- 2) California
- 3) North Carolina
- 4) Georgia
- 5) Florida

Many Soldiers prioritize location – whether they’re going to their home of record, or a state where they have family, or back to a previous duty station that they enjoyed. Maybe you’ve always wanted to live in the mountains or on the beach, and now’s your chance to live that dream. All three of the factors you need to consider tie into each other – make sure you’re doing the best you can to find the balance that works best for you (and your family).

Wherever you decide to go (or if you decide to go), you need to talk to your local transportation office. Even if you’re staying in the area, if you are moving off base or to a different home or nearby town, the personal property office can help you move, just like all the times before. They’ll be able to tell you what you’re eligible for based on your discharge type and time in service, inform you of what’s different this time, and help you get it all set up.

Every move is different, your final one more so than most. Plan well in advance, prioritize, and prepare. It’ll be worth it when you’re settled into your new home. ■

U.S. Army Partnership for Youth Success (PaYS) Program

 Damon Stinger Sr. & Gabby Bonilla, PaYS Program

Transitioning Soldiers, did you select the Partnership for Youth Success (PaYS) option when you initially joined the Army? The Army PaYS program provides you with guaranteed interviews with over 800 PaYS Partners to help you find your next career. Not sure if you opted-in for this program during your enlistment process or lost your Statement of Understanding (SOU)? Contact the Army PaYS helpdesk at usarmy.knox.hqda-asa-mra.mbx.payshelpdesk@mail.mil.

The PaYS program was established in 2000 as an enlistment incentive for full-time Army Soldiers. Throughout the years, the program expanded to include Army Reserve Soldiers, Army National Guard Soldiers, and Cadets in the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC). It is a strategic partnership between the Army and a cross section of private industry, academia, businesses and state and local public institutes. The PaYS program guarantees Soldiers/ Cadets a job interview and possible employment after their service in the Army with their chosen PaYS partners. This provides Soldiers with the unique opportunity to simultaneously serve their country and prepare for their next career.

The PaYS program provides Soldiers with an easier transition into the civilian world with job interviews from PaYS partners. The PaYS program also benefits businesses that want to hire Veterans, allowing them direct access to transitioning service



The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the U.S. Army sign a Memorandum of Understanding for the U.S. Army's Partnership for Youth Success (PaYS) Program.

members, and an official partnership with the U.S. Army at no cost. This direct access enables employers to connect with trained and qualified Veterans who have honorably served their country.

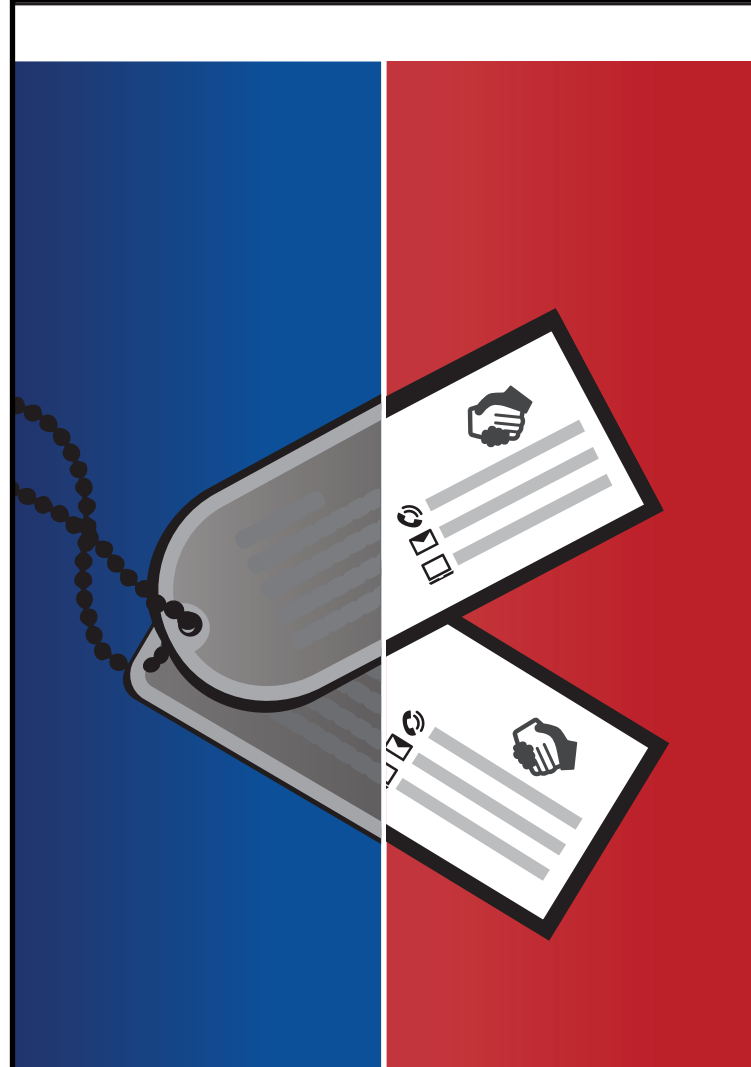
The Army is the only branch of service with a program that provides such impactful results at this magnitude. Although this program is free for Army Soldiers and companies, by no means does it lack quality. It takes dedication, hard work, teamwork, and effort from Soldiers and Cadets, PaYS partners, and the PaYS team to make sure Soldiers and Cadets are connecting with their PaYS partners to schedule



their guaranteed job interviews. The PaYS team over the last several years have visited Army Transition Assistance Program (TAP) Centers and met with counselors to brief them on the PaYS program. The Army TAP counselors and Army PaYS team are dedicated to providing Soldiers/Veterans with the resources and tools to fit their personal needs when they transition. Army TAP centers are, in our eyes, the last line of defense to remind Soldiers of their PaYS option.

The Army is known to provide its Soldiers with the tools and programs needed to have a successful transition after serving our nation. 868 companies have signed the Memorandum of Agreement to participate in the PaYS program since inception. PaYS partners include Fortune 500, Fortune 1000, Global 500, and Department of Defense contractors. These employers eagerly partner with us because they understand the value Veterans bring to the workforce.

To learn more about the PaYS program visit www.armypays.com or contact the PaYS helpdesk at usarmy.knox.hqda-asa-mra.mbx.payshelpdesk@mail.mil.



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From Soldier to Student

How to pick the right school for you

 Lauren Cooper

So, you've decided that you want to get a traditional education. Or maybe you're still exploring all of your options. Either way, there's a lot to consider. There are numerous options for types of schools, locations, degrees or certifications, and more. How do you find out what's right for you?

Your career goals are a good starting point. If you have an idea of the type of work you would like to do, it can help you narrow down your options. If you're going into a skilled trade, obviously you'll want to look into community colleges and trade and vocational schools that offer the license or certification you need. One of the main benefits of this course of action is that you will be making a good wage after finishing a lower cost education. Additionally, finding a trade school that works for

you is fairly straightforward. Here are some of the questions you need to ask. Is it located near you, is it accredited, what is its job placement rate? Do they have partnerships with local businesses for students to work as apprentices? This is something you want to look into early during your transition – Career Skills Programs and credentialing opportunities can help you get a leg up in your career.

If you're considering a university education, things get a little murkier. It's much more expensive, usually takes longer, and typically becomes a larger part of your life, so you want to make the right choice. With the advent of online programs, location isn't as much of an issue, but online school certainly isn't for everyone. It does have a lot more flexibility, but you don't have the ease of access to various



support systems that are available on college campuses. In addition to determining whether you want online or in-person schooling, there are some important things to consider:

1. What schools let me maximize my GI Bill benefits?

Not all schools will let you use all your benefits. It's important that when you're evaluating schools on various criteria, you also make sure you can use all of the benefits you have from your time in service. The Department of Veterans Affairs has an online comparison tool that you can use to see how the schools you're considering match up against each other.

2. What schools have the program I'm interested in?

If you have a certain degree or career field in mind, you need to make sure the university offers the major you will need. Depending on the field you're interested in, you might want to research the most respected schools in your career field. Some industries are more particular about this than others, so it's something to look into.

3. Does the school have a Veteran student organization?

As a Soldier, you have been surrounded by those who understand what you are going through;

either they are experiencing it alongside you or they have in the past. As a non-traditional student (what universities call students who didn't start school right out of high school), it may be hard to relate to many of your classmates. A school with a strong Veteran support system can help. It's a group of people who will understand your past and present experiences. Many Veterans struggle when starting college – it's an incredibly different environment and you're no longer surrounded by your brothers and sisters in arms. Your experiences and priorities are often different than your classmates. It is often described as a very isolating experience. Having a group of Veterans who have gone through, or are currently going through, the same thing can help, just as it did when you were starting your Army career.

There are lists of Veteran friendly universities online that you can review, and if you have a certain school in mind, they should have information on their website. The Veteran student organization may also have a social media presence you can take a peek at.

There are clearly a lot more factors to consider. Location, if you want to attend in person. Cost, dependent on how much your benefits will cover and other potential tuition assistance. Two year or four year, whether you'll be a full time or part time student, and qualifications for acceptance. There are a lot of resources that you can use. The Department of Education has the College Scorecard to help you find the right fit, and the Department of Defense has the Tuition Assistance DECIDE tool. These, along with many other resources available online, can help you narrow down your options and determine your best course of action. Army Education Counselors are another great resources you should talk to when researching and making your decision.

If one of your transition goals is to get a college degree, attend the two day Higher Education track as part of your transition. Talk to your TAP Career Counselor for more information and to get it scheduled. ■

U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs Warrior Training Advancement Course

WHAT is WARTAC?

Warrior Training Advancement Course (WARTAC) is a skill-bridge education and employment opportunity for Wounded Warriors and transitioning Servicemembers to complete a national-level Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), training program while still on active duty. Successful completion of this training program leads to an opportunity for Servicemembers to be interviewed and hired as a disability compensation claims processor at one of VBA's 56 [Regional Offices](#) around the country.

WHY is a VSR Position Right for YOU?

The Veterans Service Representative (VSR) explains benefit programs and entitlement criteria, conducts interviews, identifies issues, gathers relevant evidence; adjudicates claims, and inputs data necessary to generate the Veterans award and notification letter (which describes the decision and the reasoning behind that decision). The VSR works in a cubicle-style office environment in one of VBA's 56 Regional Offices and serves as the primary contact for the Veteran and his/her representative concerning VA disability compensation claims.

WHO is WARTAC Targeting?

WARTAC is open to Wounded Warriors and active duty Servicemembers in the transition process. This is a 10-12 week program depending upon the training location. This provides participants with an opportunity to learn the skillset of a VSR.

HOW Do YOU Become Eligible?

WARTAC is open to:

- Servicemembers who are transitioning and, upon successful completion of the WARTAC training program, would be available for potential employment no more than 60 days after the end of a WARTAC training session and;
- National Guard or Reserve Component members who have completed 180 days on active duty; who are expected to be discharged or released from active duty in the armed forces; and, upon successful completion of the WARTAC training program, would be available for potential employment no more than 60 days after the end of a WARTAC training session.

Availability to relocate based on VBA's employment needs is necessary for participation in WARTAC. Transitioning Servicemembers must secure command approval to participate in the WARTAC program and meet all DoD Career Skills Program requirements.

Applicants must submit a resume (and transcripts if applicable) demonstrating eligibility based on past education and/or professional work experience to qualify as a GS-7, Step 1. [GS Pay schedule](#)

Participation in the WARTAC program is not a guarantee of employment with VA.



INTERESTED? WE WANT YOU!

Please contact your local Career Skills Program Office for additional information. To learn more about the WARTAC program, scan the adjacent QR code.



Tactical Employment Connection Strategy:

How the Army Transition Assistance Program helps Soldiers find Jobs

The next few articles are about a major focus at the Army Transition Assistance Program - our Tactical Employment Connection Strategy. We have always supported Soldiers in their job search, as that is the most common goal of transitioning Soldiers, and now we have developed an initiative that specifically targets the most impactful methods.

By focusing our efforts on five methods: Enhanced Hiring Events, the Career Skills Program, American Job Centers, the Reserve Component connection, and a soon to be announced fifth method, we provide events and services that result in more interviews, more job offers, and more Soldiers with the peace of mind that they have a career after they transition.

While we cannot yet include an article on the fifth method, we're excited to give you a sneak peak: we will be partnering with an established job search website to have a single, focused space for Soldiers and Employers to connect. Keep an eye out for an official announcement!

Enhanced

Hiring

Events

When you hear the term “hiring event,” what comes to mind? Probably your typical job fair, with tables set up and recruiters milling around, waiting for you to approach them. If that’s the case, you might hear about a TAP hiring event and be less than enthused. It’s time to change your view on hiring events – Army TAP definitely has. That’s why our centers are changing up the process, in order to provide better opportunities for Soldiers to find a career before transitioning.

Preparation for an enhanced hiring event starts months before the actual event. The team at the TAP center hosting the event starts identifying employers with job vacancies to participate well in advance. The employers and open positions must be identified no later than 90 days prior to the event itself, so Soldiers can view the opportunities available and start preparing. Soldiers then have the next month to work with their TAP Career Counselor to develop a targeted resume for each opportunity they would like to apply for. By the 60 day mark, Soldiers should submit their resume(s) to the employer(s) they chose.

In the two months leading up to the event itself, employers have time to review resumes, identify candidates they would like to reach out to, and start scheduling interviews. A benefit of doing it this way is Soldiers from installations around the world can participate through phone or video interviews, either prior to or on the day of the event. Over 70% of Soldiers relocate, so this allows many Soldiers to start job searching in the area they plan on moving to. The TAP team at Fort Benning, led by Transition Services Manager Eddie Perez, has been successful with this method. At one of

■ Lauren Cooper

their events, 2,050 connections were made, and the top 10 locations connected included states near and far, such as Florida and Washington, and a location halfway across the world – Seoul, Korea. Another example is an event where Soldiers in Korea had a viewing party where they had the opportunity to see the Fort Benning team speak to employers and hand over their resumes on their behalf. At yet another, a Soldier in Kuwait was interviewed by a company at Fort Benning, and went on to receive the position.

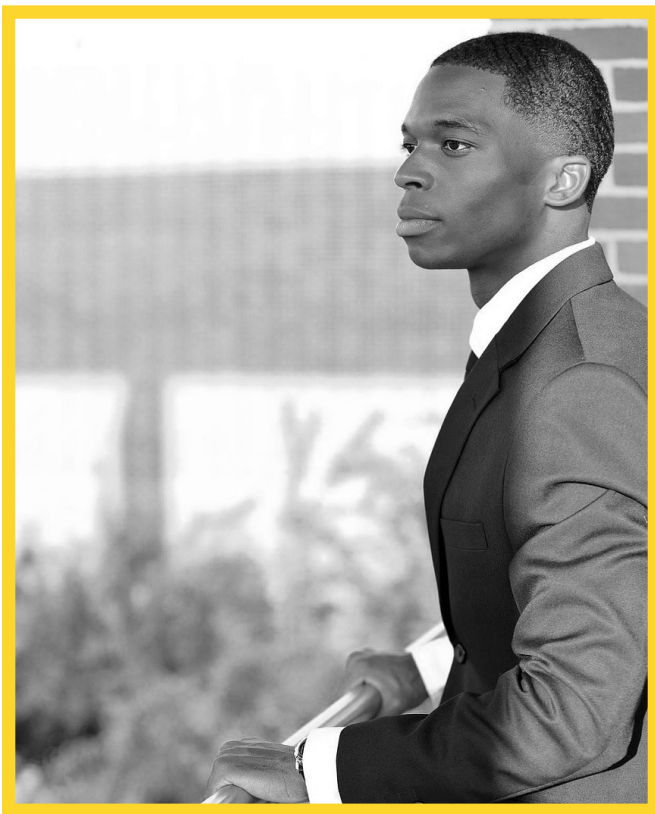


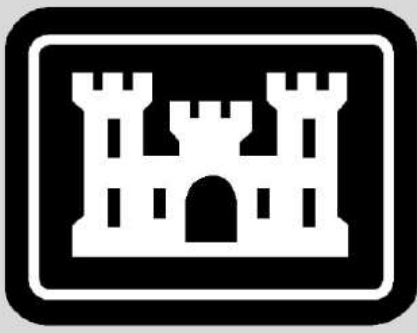
The day of the event is primarily reserved for face-to-face interviews and job offers. Employers will be set up with their own space to conduct interviews – such as a curtained off booth or a separate room, depending on the location – and the TAP team

at that location will have a waiting area set up for Soldiers to stay in while they wait their turn.

Some installations have been doing this for a while now. The Fort Bragg TAP center, for example, has seen incredible success with this process. Bill McMillian, the Transition Services Manager, stated that at typical job fairs, about 5% of Soldiers would find jobs. With the enhanced hiring events they've been doing, they see a success rate of 48-58%. At one event, 86% of Soldiers received a job offer or an invitation for a second interview.

Army TAP wants hiring events to be a beneficial, rewarding experience for Soldiers and employers alike. There's no denying this is a lot more work than the typical job fair, for all parties involved, but it is worth it for the pay off. Companies don't have to build a candidate pool and hope for the best – they have access to a group of loyal, skilled, and adaptable people who are ready and willing. Soldiers don't have to go to a room full of recruiters with no idea what opportunities are actually available, and they might walk away knowing that they have a job as soon as they officially transition. Army TAP is playing career matchmaker, and it works great. ■





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ARMY CAREER SKILLS PROGRAM

Ben Henderson, Army Career Skills Program Manager

The Army Career Skills Program (CSP) began in 2013 at Joint Base Lewis-McChord with our first program, United Association - Veterans in Piping. Since then, the Army has expanded the opportunities available for our transitioning Soldiers to over 200 programs hosted at 32 Army installations across the Army Enterprise. In addition to the CSP, over 2,600 Soldiers have taken advantage of individual training programs (internships).

Eligible Soldiers can participate in a CSP during their last 180 days in the Army and the programs provide training opportunities with both civilian and federal organizations in free to minimal-cost (pre) apprenticeships, on-the-job training, employment-skills training, and internships. The training opportunities can build upon their skill set or provide them an additional skillset for reentering the civilian sector. Since its inception, over 17,500 Soldiers have been placed with over 4,000 different employers into civilian careers with salaries ranging from \$45K to \$125K a year, after their military service. Job areas include; IT; Management; Transportation; Renewable Energy; HVAC/Plumbing/AC/Refrigeration/Welding; Construction; Mechanics; Safety/Security; sprinkler fitting; diesel technician; telecommunications; air frame and power plant; painting, drywall and glazing; and federal opportunities with the Veterans Administration; Army Civilian Human Resources Agency; and United States Forestry Service.

The Army CSP is a total Army team effort. The Installation Management Command manages the Army CSP; Human Resources Command, Transition Branch is the Policy proponent; and the Army Soldier for Life Fusion Cell serves as the outreach and connection piece between organizations and

IMCOM. The Navy, Air Force, and Marines Corps have similar training programs for their Service Members; known as SkillBridge. The Services work together to open their Service program opportunities to fellow Service Members based on slot availability. Ongoing efforts to make the program more efficient and effective are underway by increasing federal agency participation, expanding successful programs across the Army Enterprise, and serving transitioning populations in locations away from an Army installation.

The Army CSP has assisted Soldiers with careers in the civilian sector and also contributed to lowering the payment of Unemployment Benefits (UCX) for Soldiers overall. In 2011 the Army paid over \$514M dollars in UCX, which has been lowered to around \$72M in 2019. Furthermore, IMCOM established metrics for CSPs to meet: 85% graduation rate; 100% interview rate; and a 90% job placement rate. The Army's CSP has a notable 93% career placement rate for Soldiers after they successfully complete a program.

Additionally, the Army CSP has received numerous awards for its excellence in assisting Soldiers and organizations. Awards include: the American Business Awards Gold Stevies for Best Overall Organization of the Year (governmental) and Best Overall Customer Service Team of the Year (small, nonprofit); the Council of College and Military Educators Barry Cobb Government Organization Award; and the Federal Recognition Awards for Large Teams (second place). The program also was a finalist for the Harvard University Innovation in American Government Award in 2018.

Army CSP companies recognize the importance of Army values and ethos in our Soldiers and what they bring to their organizations. The Army CSP makes a positive difference each day for our Soldiers, families, civilian employers and the communities our Soldiers settle into.

Soldiers interested in the Army CSP should visit their local CSP Installation Administrator at their Education Center or TAP Office, or visit the link at: <https://home.army.mil/imcom/index.php/customers/career-skills-program> to see the opportunities available to them. ■

CSP SUCCESS STORY

Staff Sergeant (SSG) Kyle De Woody knew that when he transitioned, he wanted a change. Working in intelligence, sitting in front of a computer all day was not for him. This is fairly common for transitioning Soldiers – over 60% of Soldiers report that they found employment that was not similar to their military training. After sitting at a desk for his military career, SSG De Woody wanted to work with his hands. His mentor recommended that he attend a briefing on the Career Skills Program (CSP) to see if there were any opportunities that interested him. As it happened, the UBC Millwright CSP was exactly what he was looking for.

The UBC Millwright CSP is an eight week program that teaches Soldiers how to work with precision instruments, perform alignments and tuning, and generally educates participants how to be “the guy that goes in and fixes industrial equipment,” as SSG De Woody described. He had eight weeks to learn everything from the ground up, and the immersive, practical experience allowed him to learn something entirely different from his work in the Army. CSPs in general have a very high placement rate, and this one is no exception – SSG De Woody has already accepted a position and stated, “you’re pretty much offered a job before the program finishes.”

Part of that is due to this specific CSP’s field – skilled trades are in high demand. However, it also highlights the desire of many employers to hire Veterans. For those that aren’t already hiring Veterans, SSG De Woody wants to remind them that Soldiers have untapped potential, and “they want to make moves for their family or personal reasons, and these

Soldiers are highly dedicated.” For an employer, this translates into a candidate with an impressive work ethic who’s willing to go the extra mile.

Commanders can certainly speak to Soldiers’ work ethic, dedication, and potential. It can sometimes be hard for Commanders to let Soldiers go, but in the words of SSG De Woody, the purpose of the CSP is “not to take [Soldiers] away from the Army, it’s to give them an alternative career once they’ve transitioned.” Whether a Soldier is searching for an “alternative career” or employment similar to their military training, a CSP is a great opportunity for them to learn about the civilian workplace and company culture. It’s a risk free way for Soldiers to try a new job, field, or just to see if they like working with a company. It’s also risk free for the company, since they don’t have to pay for a salary or benefits.

Even with all of the very clear benefits of this program, it is underutilized by Soldiers. They may be unaware of the program, or they might feel as though none of the opportunities fit their needs. That’s where the individual internship comes in – the Soldier can partner with a company that suits their needs and wants, with a role custom made for them. While transition can be overwhelming, it’s important to take advantage of all of the opportunities available. One of the biggest pieces of advice SSG De Woody had for Soldiers is “don’t be afraid to ask.” Whether it’s asking your Commander if you can have the time to participate in a CSP, or just asking for help in general, it’s worth it to ask. There are numerous resources out there, and many people willing and able to help – you just need to be willing to ask.

Reserve Component Connection

A black and white photograph showing two hands holding white puzzle pieces. The hands are positioned as if they are about to connect the pieces. The background is a solid yellow color.

For our third article about the Tactical Employment Connection Strategy, we will go through the Reserve Component connection. As many transitioned Soldiers are probably aware, Active Component Soldiers must complete a Continuum of Military Service Counseling with a Reserve Component Career Counselor (RCCC), which provides Soldiers the opportunity to learn about the benefits of staying in uniform part-time. What many aren't aware of are the ways the Reserve Component helps connect Soldiers to employment. There are numerous opportunities through the Army Reserve and the Army National Guard that can help Soldiers immensely as they transition. Each has designated individuals whose purpose is to support Soldiers as they transition – even if they aren't joining the Reserve or National Guard.

For the Army National Guard, these individuals are Transition Assistance Advisors (TAA). They provide support to Soldiers from all components with all aspects of the transition from Active Duty to the Reserve Component or civilian life. After transitioning from Active Duty, TAAs continue to provide support for Veterans and Family Members and assist them in navigating a myriad of resources and benefits to which they are entitled. In addition to providing assistance for employment, education, relocation, VA benefits and more, TAAs help Soldiers, Veterans, and Family Members understand and access various state-specific benefits. State resources

and benefits can be difficult to navigate, making this one of the key advantages of positioning at least one National Guard TAA in every state and territory. Soldiers, Families and Veterans can locate their respective TAA by **clicking here: <http://www.taapmo.com/Docs/about/TAA%20Maze%20Roster.pdf>**.

For the Army Reserve, Army Readiness Specialists (ARS) and Transition Readiness Liaisons (TRL) provide support to transitioning Soldiers. Once their new contract is finalized, there will be 18 ARSs and 14 TRLs. The ARSs are spread out at Army Reserve locations throughout the US, who provide assistance and education on employment, resumes, and interviews, share career opportunities, and establish partnerships with local employers. That final point is such a great asset for Soldiers – it helps them directly connect to employers in the towns they want to move to. The TRLs have a very similar role, and they are located at Active Duty installations with high volumes of transitioning Soldiers. To see where they will be located, visit **<https://www.usar.army.mil/P3/LocalSupport/>**

As part of our Tactical Employment Connection strategy, the Army's transition program wants to maximize the Reserve Component connections to ensure that Soldiers can take advantage of the incredible resources available. We want Soldiers to be able to connect to employers who work in the town where they want to live. ■

American Job Centers

Our fourth and final article on the Tactical Employment Connection Strategy is all about American Job Centers (AJCs). The Army Transition Assistance Program (TAP) and AJCs have worked together for more than three years. When transitioning Soldiers are nearing their transition date, if they need continuing support for their job search, a “warm handover” is conducted with the AJC. Essentially, Soldiers are connected with a representative at their local AJC.

At nearly 2,400 AJCs, which are funded by the Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration, clients can receive free help for their job search while businesses can access resources and develop a talent pipeline. This could include career counseling, resume help, interview practice, hiring events, and more. AJCs are open to the general public, but Veterans receive priority of service. This means

that, if there are limited resources, Veterans and other groups with priority of service move to the front of the line.

AJCs are clearly a fantastic resource for any and all job seekers, which is why they are part of the TAP Tactical Employment Connection Strategy. While they have played an important role at the end of many Soldiers’ transitions, TAP wants to encourage their use throughout the transition process. Go Early, Go Often doesn’t just apply to TAP classes and workshops – utilizing other services, such as AJCs, can maximize Soldiers’ opportunities and help them successfully transition into a fulfilling career.

For more information, and to find an American Job Center near you, visit <https://www.careeronestop.org/LocalHelp/AmericanJobCenters>.

What Soldiers Wish Companies Knew

Clearing up common misconceptions to help Soldiers overcome barriers to employment

 Lauren Cooper

If you are a business owner, hiring manager, or recruiter reading this magazine, you're probably already interested in hiring Soldiers. You already know that Soldiers are fantastic team members, skilled leaders, loyal, and flexible, but you may still have some reservations. There are still myths and misconceptions out there that create barriers for Soldiers looking to get hired in civilian workplaces. Here are a few things that Soldiers wish companies knew:

1. First things first: Soldiers are not rigid, overbearing people who shout orders all the time. Sometimes when people think of Soldiers, they make the mistake of imagining the angry Drill Sergeant character that's so popular in movies about the Army. Few, if any, Soldiers are actually like that in real life. Soldiers are just as diverse in personality as the rest of the population.

2. Related to this is the idea that most Soldiers only know how to follow orders. Alongside the movie depiction of the angry Drill Sergeant, many Soldiers are portrayed as only knowing what to do if a command comes out of a superior officer's mouth. Soldiers are not mindless drones – they are leaders and creative problem solvers, regardless of rank. They show initiative and are dedicated to going above and beyond to provide the best quality they can. Often, Soldiers have to be creative, flexible, and dynamic due to the situations in which they must excel. Various trainings and team building exercises require Soldiers to build their ability to think creatively and strategically to solve problems and overcome obstacles. Additionally, they do this as part of a unit, which helps develop them into great team members.

3. A third misconception is the belief that Soldiers are uneducated, and admittedly, fewer Soldiers



have bachelor degrees than the general population. However, Soldiers are just as knowledgeable and trainable as everyone else – perhaps more so. They may not have a traditional college education, but the training and experience they receive is commensurate with university. Soldiers can even receive college credit based on their Joint Service Transcript. Additionally, many Soldiers take advantage of the tuition assistance benefits during their service as well as the GI Bill after they transition to further their education.

4. Myth number four is the idea that rank equates intelligence or potential. Officer or enlisted, senior or junior - in civilian workplaces, there isn't a direct relationship between rank and whether or not you should hire someone. Rank is a great signifier of experience and authority, but not necessarily an individual's long term potential. The Master Sergeant or Lieutenant Colonel that retired after 25 years of service may or may not be the better candidate than the Staff Sergeant who transitioned after 8 years. It depends much more on what you're looking for in your potential candidates.

5. Lastly, it's time to address the elephant in the room: Post-traumatic Stress Disorder. Many civilians seem to have the idea that all Soldiers get deployed into a warzone, and that all Soldiers who experience war have PTSD. Both of those statements are simply not true. According to the National Center for PTSD, 11-20% of Post 9/11 Veterans have PTSD in a given year. This means that not only just a fraction of Veterans have PTSD, but like any other injury, it is not a permanent diagnosis. Just as with the rest of the population, only a portion will experience events that could potentially cause PTSD, and even fewer will have it – and those that do are not defined by their condition.

When you get rid of the myths and misconceptions about Soldiers, they aren't as different from other candidates as you may have thought. What remains still sets them apart – as candidates who outshine the rest due to the lessons they learned from the Army. ■

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Assess and Adapt: Company Culture in the Civilian World

■ Lauren Cooper

One of the most daunting aspects of starting a new job is adapting to the company culture, and sometimes it's even harder for transitioning Soldiers. While all new employees have to go through this process, it can be a shock for some Veterans. They're used to the structured, hierarchical culture of the Army, which is consistent across units and installations. In the Army, the rules of conduct are highly defined. There isn't much confusion around the culture, the way the organization works, or each individual's place in it. From day one, Soldiers learn about how to be part of the Army and become part of the esprit de corps.

In the civilian world, things are often much more subtle and unspoken. Companies will talk about having a great organizational culture, but won't necessarily speak to the aspects that make it great for the people who are submersed in it every day. Also, what's great for one person may be terrible for the next. That's why it's important to research companies before interviewing or accepting a position – honestly, it's best to do some research prior to applying to help determine what companies to apply to (or ones to avoid).

Before the Interview

There's a lot of information that can be gleaned from a company's online presence. Companies are just as invested in finding new employees who fit in with their culture as individuals are with finding a company where they feel comfortable and fit in. Many include a significant amount of information about their culture on their hiring and human resources pages. More and more, they are adding a page dedicated entirely to their culture and what it's like working for their company. Their website should also include their mission, vision, and value statements. Potential employees can read those and determine whether the goals and values of the company mesh with their own.

Social media is also a great place to learn more about the company because it is a less formal medium. Most social media accounts aren't designed to share information on company culture, but the culture does influence their social media presence. Some companies are starting to use social media for an inside look at the day-to-day work

experience. There are also multiple websites where people post reviews about companies they've worked for. Just a reminder for all of these online resources: the company is trying to put its best foot forward, so as with all online reviews, take the information provided with a grain of salt. That being said, patterns and common threads can be identified to help learn about what the company is actually like.

Lastly, try to reach out to people who work there. They are the best source of information because they live it every day. This is where a good network comes in – leverage any and all connections possible, and try to get an informational interview. If they work in the same department or under the same manager as the open job, that's even better. They can give insight into the subtle, unspoken rules and expectations and give a clear picture of the company culture.

During the Interview

There are a lot of questions that can be asked in an interview to learn about the company's culture. Typical ones such as "What's a typical day like at this company;" "What are your favorite and least favorite things about working here;" or even just asking "Can you tell me about the company culture here?" are all good options. Asking about what type of team building they have, how employee goals are set, how success is measured, or its community or philanthropic initiatives also provide

insight into the company's values and culture. If the interview takes place at the company, rather than over the phone or using video chat, it's even better. A lot of insight can be gained from meeting the receptionist, seeing the office itself, and potentially having the opportunity to take a tour.

On the Job

Once the job is accepted and started, it's time to start adapting to the culture. One of the most important things is to observe and take notice of what other employees do. How do most people communicate? Is face-to-face the primary method, or email? What activities are going on and how involved are people? What do most people do for lunch - are they eating with other teammates or at their desk? How are meetings run? Is it more structured, or pretty flexible? Typically, organizations are much more flexible and relaxed than the military, but it depends on the industry and specific company. Don't be afraid to ask questions – HR or coworkers are great resources and willing to help new teammates adapt, as it makes it easier on everyone.

Adapting to a new company can be intimidating, and it's strange to many Soldiers to be so unsure of their role after knowing exactly what was expected of them and how they fit in during their time in the Army. That's why it's vital to do research, ask questions, and be open and willing to adapt. ■



EFFORT

leads to

OPPORTUNITY

What would you do if you could do anything you wanted for your transition? While that's not really feasible, with some research, hard work, and a little negotiation, you can set yourself up for success and get what you need.

That's what Lieutenant Colonel John Woodcock, Operations Research Analyst assigned to the Joint Staff, did. At the time this article was written, LTC Woodcock was two months into his internship with a company he's excited about, gaining new experiences, and learning a new type of role. But how did he get there?

While going through the Army Transition Assistance Program at Joint Base Myer Henderson Hall, LTC Woodcock attended an information session on the Career Skills Program (CSP). Several companies spoke of their CSP opportunities, and attendees had a chance to network and build relationships with the company representatives. While none of the companies present had opportunities that fit his goals or timeline, he was inspired to seek out his own individual internship through the Career Skills Program.

LTC Woodcock reached out to companies to pitch his skills and expertise to set up a CSP individual internship, but was not successful. His network, however, was. He was connected to Chris Thorne at HireMilitary, who linked him to Splunk. As a research analyst, there was a very wide variety of roles and industries that he could explore, but LTC Woodcock had something specific in mind. He was

looking for a modern technical company where he could have different experiences. That's exactly what he found at his internship. As part of the Public Sector Customer Success Management team, he has the opportunity to work on the technical side, and the team does customer facing work as well. It's an opportunity to expand his knowledge, and eventually get direct customer service experience.

That level of success doesn't mean it came easy,





though. It took some effort to get this opportunity; in addition to the time spent reaching out to companies, like many others LTC Woodcock had to find a way to balance his Army responsibilities with his transition plans. As with

many roles, LTC Woodcock's position would not be backfilled until his transition leave started, making it a little harder to do a CSP. However, it was made possible with the support of his division chief and a little negotiation.

That negotiation is sometimes necessary. There is a mission that needs to be completed by the unit, and each transitioning Soldier has their own personal mission to transition successfully. Balancing these can be challenging, but LTC Woodcock reminds Soldiers that with transition, you get "one shot, then it's all you." He also spoke of the challenge with reconciling others' perceptions, the Soldier's personal worries, and their personal mission. Sometimes during transition, Soldiers might feel guilty that they are leaving their unit with additional work, or they might feel as though others think that the Soldier is "abandoning their post," so to speak. It's important to recognize that transitioning is a highly important personal mission that requires a lot of time, effort, and consideration.

LTC Woodcock has some advice to help Soldiers find the right opportunity if they want to do a CSP. First, determine what your goals are while you're looking

at opportunities, but remember: don't expect that one position or one company will be all things to you. The hope is usually to get a job offer, but you can receive many other benefits, such as trying out a new type of career to see if it's truly what you want to pursue, training opportunities, and broadening your perspective, just to name a few. The process itself is a learning and growth opportunity that Soldiers should work to maximize every step of the way.

In order for Soldiers to do that, they need the support of their Commanders. As a former Commander himself, LTC Woodcock knows and understands the challenges surrounding that. During his time in Recruiting Command, he saw a Soldier miss out on a once in a lifetime opportunity because a Commander decided that they needed the Soldier to stay. LTC Woodcock wants Commanders to evaluate the value the Soldier provides the unit by staying, versus the value the Soldier gets from attending a CSP. As he put it, "Commanders have resources at their disposal to make sure the unit's mission is achieved, whereas Soldiers have to take advantage of opportunities as they arise."

It's clear that CSPs are incredible opportunities for Soldiers, especially with their very high placement rate. It's worth it to note that CSPs are also great for business. In addition to the typical benefits of having an intern, such as knowing how well a person will fit into the company and what they are able to do, companies get more with the CSP. In LTC Woodcock's words, "they get access to a candidate pool that is highly flexible, adaptable, and trainable." This pool has a higher level of mental toughness, they are more likely to have security clearances and connections to DOD, and they are both chameleons and leaders, able to fit into a variety of roles. ■

To find out more about the Career Skills Program, click this link:

<https://home.army.mil/imcom/index.php/customers/career-skills-program>

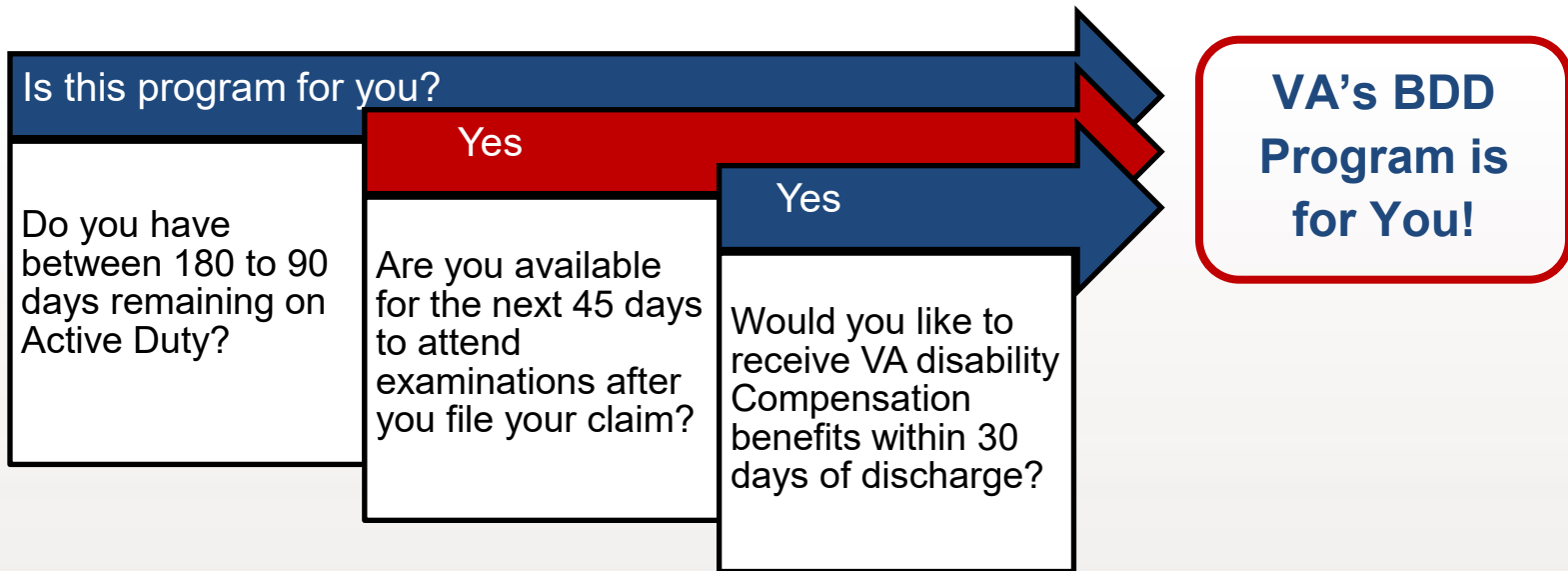
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