

## DAILY NEWS

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Dr. Mike Haynie

Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz said that “hiring people is an art, not a science, and resumes can’t tell you whether someone will fit into a company’s culture.”

That’s a widely held notion — and it happens to be one of the most significant impediments to addressing the unemployment situation of post-9/11 veterans, a situation that should embarrass every American.

For the better part of the past year, veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have been jobless at a rate that is 4% to 7% higher than nonveterans. The situation for our youngest veterans — those ages 18 to 24 — is most disturbing. Data from the Department of Labor suggest that this vulnerable segment of the veterans’ community is experiencing unemployment at a rate that exceeds 30%.

To meet this emergency, politicians and veterans advocates have attempted to advance a business case for hiring veterans — relying on gauzy anecdotes and generalizations about their leadership ability.

That hasn’t gotten much traction, and I understand why. While leadership ability and a strong sense of mission are important, they alone aren’t enough to broadly motivate employers to move beyond “art” — and a lingering perception that military veterans might not cut it as employees — to science.

But there is more than enough evidence to make a strong business case for why employers should hire veterans.

For example, studies validate that the characteristics descriptive of successful entrepreneurs and innovators are also traits common to veterans.

According to the research, veterans are more likely than non-veterans to have global experience, and on average have more advanced technical training. In an increasingly global and technical workplace, these competencies are invaluable.

Multiple studies suggest veterans are generally more resilient and learn from failure. When almost 80% of new product and service development projects are terminated before they reach the marketplace, this ability to “bounce back” is vital.

Research also demonstrates that veterans — particularly those with combat experience — are adept at decision-making. A study published in the *Journal of Applied Psychology* in 2011 found that military experience imparts the ability “to effectively manage chaos.”

According to the research, individuals with military experience exhibit a higher propensity to trust both superiors and co-workers. That results in higher performing teams, high levels of organizational cohesion and morale and effective governance systems.

I could go on.

Recently, I met with the CEO of a Fortune 500 company who asked me how he would explain to his shareholders the logic behind a firm-wide investment focused on hiring veterans. That’s a question I’ve been asked many times before, and it’s a question that I hate to be asked — because it causes me great anxiety.

As a proud veteran myself, I don’t think I’ll ever be comfortable with the suggestion that the business case for hiring a veteran has to be justified as a dollars and cents return on investment. However, wearing the hat of a business school professor, I have to acknowledge that CEOs are responsible to shareholders.

In that meeting, it brought me great joy to say to that CEO, this is not art — it’s science and economics. Hiring veterans is good for business.

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*The IVMF recently issued a report, “The Business Case for Hiring a Veteran: Beyond the Clichés.”*