



**INSTITUTE FOR  
VETERANS AND  
MILITARY FAMILIES**  
SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY JPMorgan Chase & Co., Founding Partner



**EMPLOYMENT  
RESEARCH**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**WORKFORCE READINESS ALIGNMENT:**

The Relationship Between Job Preferences, Retention, and Earnings

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**WORKFORCE READINESS BRIEFS**

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**ABOUT THE INSTITUTE FOR VETERANS AND MILITARY FAMILIES (IVMF)**

The IVMF is the first interdisciplinary national institute in higher education focused on the social, economic, education, and policy issues impacting veterans and their families post-service. Through the focus on veterans programming, research and policy, employment and employer support, and community engagement, the Institute provides in-depth analysis of the challenges facing the veteran community, captures best practices, and serves as a forum to facilitate new partnerships and strong relationships between the individuals and organizations committed to making a difference for veterans and military families.



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**Overview**

This paper focuses on testing propositions related to workforce readiness by examining the relationship between job preferences, military conferred skills, and a variety of outcome measures including retention, income, and perceptions about transition. Using self-reported data collected from veterans who transitioned from the military and are working in civilian jobs, our analysis demonstrates that the application of the skills gained in the military and securing employment in a desired career field are two critical factors in the transition process for both veterans and their employers.

**WORKFORCE READINESS ALIGNMENT**



# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN Job Preferences, Retention, and Earnings



## INCOME, RETENTION, AND CHANGING EMPLOYERS OR CAREERS:

### MATCHING CAREER FIELDS INCREASES RETENTION AND EARNINGS

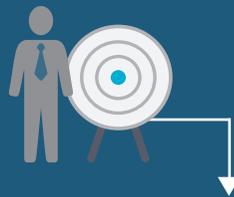
Obtaining a job that matches one's preferred career field **increases** the likelihood of remaining in the job or career field, leading to higher job retention and higher personal income.

### MATCHING MILITARY OCCUPATION INCREASES RETENTION AND EARNINGS

Obtaining a job that matches the occupation for which the veteran was trained while serving in the military also **increases** job retention and personal income.

### VETERAN STATUS INCREASES RETENTION AND EARNINGS

Military experience is often viewed positively by employers, increasing the likelihood of being hired. This, in turn, leads to **increases** in job retention and higher personal income.



## ALIGNMENT

### ✓ CAREER PREFERENCES, MILITARY BACKGROUND, AND EMPLOYER USE OF MILITARY SKILLS ALL MATTER TO RETENTION.

Being in one's preferred or desired career field is an important factor that determines the best employment match for a transitioning veteran. Military occupational specialty (MOS) may be another factor in determining the best employment match for a transitioning veteran, but it is not the only factor. Being with an employer that utilizes the skills and training from the military (e.g., teamwork, leadership and management skills, etc.) is another.

### ✓ FINDING FIT IS A LEARNING PROCESS THAT TAKES TIME; OPPORTUNITIES FOR SERVICE MEMBERS TO LEARN ABOUT CIVILIAN CAREERS MAY ACCELERATE THE PROCESS AND THEIR SUCCESS.

Veterans were more likely to be working in their preferred career field over time and with each subsequent change of jobs after their first civilian job, likely due to the accumulation of experience in civilian jobs. This implies that relevant work experience gained prior to military transition may provide accelerated pathways for separating service members to more quickly secure a job and ultimately find a fit in their preferred career field.

### ✓ MANY VETERANS SEEK DIFFERENT CIVILIAN OCCUPATIONS AND CAREERS, BUT STILL WANT TO APPLY THEIR MILITARY SKILLS.

When veterans enter the workforce, the majority sought employment that did not align with their military jobs. However, the majority of veterans reported that they prefer to utilize their military conferred skills.



## TRANSITION

### PRIOR PREPARATION FACILITATES JOB MATCH-MAKING AND TRANSITION.

Those who felt strongly that they were "well-prepared to successfully navigate the transition from military to civilian life" had a job that (1) matched their preferred career field, (2) matched the occupation for which they were trained while in the military, and (3) veteran or military status helped them obtain their job.



## Results

The discussion presented in this paper emphasizes the relationship between the career aspirations of the veteran, and his or her success securing employment consistent with those aspirations. The research indicates that employment consistent with the veteran's preferred career pathway **improves job retention, extends job duration, and increases personal income**, all of which ostensibly enhance the veteran's and veteran's family's overall quality of life.

The analysis performed for veterans was primarily based on three questions: (1) Is this job in your preferred career field?, (2) Did this job generally match the occupations you were trained for while you were in the military?, and (3) Did your veteran/military status help you to obtain your current post-military job?. The key results from the analysis were:

- **Current Alignment:** When considering the respondents' current jobs, 74 percent of the respondents indicated that their current job was in their preferred career field, 60 percent indicated that their current job matched the occupations for which they were trained while in the military, and 79 percent indicated that their veteran status helped them obtain their current job.
- **Changing Employers or Careers:** Responding "Yes" to any of the three aforementioned questions tends to indicate an increase in the likelihood that the respondent would extend their tenure or stay in their current job. Of the respondents who answered "No" to all three questions regarding job preference, military match, and whether or not veteran status helped obtain their current job, 72 percent indicated that they were considering changing employer or career field.
- **Changing Employers or Careers:** Veterans that indicated that they were not currently in their preferred career field corresponded with a stronger desire (more than 50 percent of this group) to change employer or career field. This highlights how important it is for the veteran to find a job that matches his/her preferred career field.
- **Tenure:** Job tenure of veteran respondents in their preferred career field exceeds, on average, job tenure of veteran respondents in jobs that do not match their preferred career field.
- **Job Duration:** Analysis of job duration reflects how important positive alignment is with the three questions. Positive responses improve the likelihood of a longer job duration for the first job and magnifies the importance of the veteran's first job search.
- **Income:** The percent difference in veterans' average current salaries for three "Yes" responses versus three "No" responses is over 101 percent. Thus, finding a job that results in a "Yes" response to at least two of the three questions results, on average, in increased compensation for the veteran.



- **Transition:** Those that responded "Yes" to all three questions regarding job preference, military match, and whether or not veteran status helped obtain their job, exhibited the highest average rating of being well prepared for transition. Those that responded "No" exhibited the lowest average rating of the transition.

The results demonstrate that when the respondent indicated "Yes" to all three questions then there is workforce readiness alignment. When the respondent indicated "No" to all three questions then there is workforce readiness misalignment. When employers and employees are aligned, there is a resulting increase in job tenure, retention, and personal income. Thus, finding and obtaining a job within one's preferred career field provides positive returns to the veteran, in terms of increased job retention and higher personal income. Job search is an integral part of the labor market, filled with uncertainties. Information concerning existing jobs and job opportunities reduces many of the adverse or restricting aspects of job searches, reduces time costs, and reduces transaction costs.

Job seekers do not search indefinitely for the 'ideal' job, and though the stopping rules are not uniform across job seekers, the one factor that can minimize the time cost of job searching is market information about the type of jobs in the market and the characteristics of those jobs.

Any program or assistance provided to the veteran in his or her job search to improve the likelihood of a "Yes" response to the preferred job question will facilitate an easier transition from military to civilian life, thus reducing the time cost associated with job search, increasing the likelihood of remaining in the job for a longer time period, and enhancing the overall quality of life for the veteran and his or family.

## Recommendations

Taken together, these findings highlight the importance of the match between veteran job seekers and employers. When this alignment exists, it improves retention, which benefits both employers and employees. Conversely, when there is misalignment, employees are more likely to seek opportunities elsewhere. It is therefore beneficial to both parties to find alignment at the onset of the hiring process or identify the path to go from “what is” that matches current experience and skill toward “what’s wanted” which may require a path, additional experience, and potentially training or learning. In light of these findings we make the following recommendations to employers and veteran job seekers.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EMPLOYERS

- ✓ Adopt an individualized approach to hiring transitioning military and veterans.
- ✓ Take time to understand each employee’s personal and professional goals within the organization.
- ✓ Enable a customized plan to help individual employees succeed in the workplace and take ownership in their career advancement.
- ✓ Hire based on skillsets rather than exclusively on specific specialty areas (e.g., MOS).
- ✓ Following a hire, capitalize on veteran employees existing strengths by placing them in roles, delegating responsibilities, or giving assignments that signal the value that they bring to the company.
- ✓ Utilize mentorship and peer mentoring programs that can help veteran employees learn about opportunities within a company that will best align with their skillsets and personal career goals.
  - Capitalize on existing veteran employees as mentors.
  - Create and encourage formal and informal peer networks and military affinity groups.
  - Offer opportunities for military affiliated employees to self-identify as veterans and visibly award high performing veteran employees.
- ✓ Publicize and visibly demonstrate your company’s commitment to veteran hiring, including:
  - In social media and on website.
  - In position descriptions.
- ✓ Ensure that hiring managers, human resource professionals, and other employees involved with the hiring process are trained on military cultural competence in order to best understand military candidates and new veteran hires.
  - This includes: how to understand prior military experience, military training and how it translates to civilian employment, and how to leverage military benefits for employees seeking additional education, certifications, or other credentials. It also includes ensuring that all employees—top-to-bottom—know the company’s commitment to military hiring.
- ✓ Understand that veterans may be transitioning from their military career either to continue with similar work in the civilian sector or they may be embarking on an entirely new career. Where possible, take advantage of federal resources like the Department of Labor’s O\*NET and other firms with veteran hiring initiatives to capture leading practices and developing tools that help veterans identify and translate their skills that apply to advertised positions.
- ✓ Consider how your position descriptions are written, and if they are appropriate for attracting veteran candidates. When possible, add “or relevant military experience” to job requirements to call out your commitment to opening up the conversation for transitioning skills.
- ✓ Identify the population of transitioning veterans and create programs to close their business acumen gaps.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR VETERAN JOB SEEKERS

- ✓ When possible, utilize educational benefits prior to transition, particularly if you intend to work in a position distinct from your work in the military.
- ✓ Leverage available mentorship, internship, and on-the-job training programs wherever possible in order to gain exposure to available positions, educational opportunities, and chances to gain job experience in civilian settings; participate in peer networking programs, before, during, and after transition to better understand how to take advantage of opportunities for advancement, certification, or training.
- ✓ Take advantage of career readiness opportunities offered by the service branches, the DoD, and the VA prior to retirement or separation as well as those offered by community, state, local nonprofits, and universities, as well as corporate programs.
- ✓ Prior to military transition, talk to veterans who have successfully transitioned to identify positions, industries, and companies of interest. LinkedIn veteran groups can be a tremendous avenue for information and networking.
- ✓ Prior to military transition, proactively seek information from veteran peers who have successfully transitioned to learn about veteran retention efforts of various employers, including use of military conferred skills after time of hire.
- ✓ During transition, focus on applying to companies who have openly and visibly demonstrated their intent and interest in hiring veterans.
- ✓ Prior to transition, prioritize translating military experience into civilian terminology specific to relevant positions. Read position descriptions carefully and tailor job applications with strong consideration given to demonstrating how prior experience is applicable. It is acceptable to utilize the wording in company requisitions to translate your military skills on your resume.
- ✓ Recognize that transition from the military may be a process rather than an event. Jobs obtained directly after transition may be temporary, serving as opportunities to gain relevant job experience, get exposure to new positions, companies, and industries, or more clearly define personal employment goals.
- ✓ Remember that the transition out of the military was not your first transition. You successfully transitioned into the military before you had the level of maturity and experience with which you are exiting the military.



# WORKFORCE READINESS RESOURCES

The Veterans Opportunity to Work (VOW) Act of 2011 requires that 100 percent of eligible separating service members receive updated transition assistance services. This service entitled Transition GPS includes information about job-seeking tools, military skills translation, educational opportunities, and use of benefits such as the Post 9/11 GI Bill. Additional elements include information about entrepreneurship, credentialing opportunities, and financial readiness. Related efforts to improve workforce readiness have included increased reciprocity of licensure for high demand occupational areas (e.g., aircraft mechanics, automotive mechanics, emergency medical technicians, and licensed practical nurses).<sup>25</sup> There is an existing network of workforce readiness assets directed toward the military already in place which range from services, to legal remedies, policies, as well as funding support in the form of tax incentives, and grant funding. Some of those efforts are listed below. Note: this list is not all inclusive nor does we endorse any one program. There are many other helpful resources for both veterans and employers that are not listed here.

## Department of Chamber of Commerce

- ★ **Hiring our Heroes**, a program of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, launched in March 2011 as a nationwide initiative to help veterans, transitioning service members, and military spouses find meaningful employment opportunities.

## Department of Defense (DoD):

- ★ **Transition GPS**, The DoD's updated five-day workshop focuses on transition from military service to civilian life and includes information about job-seeking tools, military skills translation, educational opportunities, use of benefits such as the Post-9/11 GI Bill, and information about entrepreneurship, credentialing opportunities, and financial readiness.
- ★ **SkillBridge**: Service members meeting certain qualifications can participate in civilian job and employment training, including apprenticeships and internships. Training can take place starting up to six months prior to a service member's separation, and must offer a high probability of employment and be provided to the service member at little or no cost.

## The Department of Labor (DOL):

- ★ **Hero 2 Hired (H2H)**, now merged with the **Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Employment Center (VEC)**, is a comprehensive employment program that offers everything a Reserve Component job seeker needs to find their next opportunity, including job listings, career exploration tools, education and training resources.
- ★ **O-Net**: Occupational codes in O-Net can be used to conduct a military-occupational code (MOC) crosswalk based on jobs filled while serving in the military. The crosswalk is intended to identify civilian jobs that correspond to various military roles as well as occupational outlook, necessary education, licensures, credentials, and salary information.
- ★ **My Next Move for Veterans** is an O-Net based search engine, intended to help users link prior military experience (branch of service and military occupation code or title) to pertinent information needed to explore civilian careers and related training, including information to write resumes that highlight relevant civilian skills.
- ★ **The Gold Card Initiative** is a joint effort of the **Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration (ETA)** and the **Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS)**. Provides unemployed post-9/11 era veterans with intensive needed to succeed in today's job market.

## Department of Veterans Affairs (VA):

- ★ **Montgomery and Post-9/11 GI Bill** Provide funds for educational costs (and some living expenses) for eligible veterans and for eligible spouses and family members.
- ★ **Veteran Employment Centers (VEC)** provide critical paths to employment through their workforce development programs and services connected at the state level through American Job Centers and online through vet.gov. VEC provides a one year job seeker account to LinkedIn and access to 800 free Coursera online courses as well as an online location for job seekers and employers to connect.

- ★ **Veteran Employment Services Office (VESO)** is a program management office within the VA that offers various programs and services for career exploration in Veterans Affairs and, more widely, across the federal government.

- ★ **VA's Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E)** services includes their Education and Career Counseling Program which allows service members and veterans to get personalized counseling and support to help guide their career paths and encourage the most effective use of their VA benefits and assistance with job training, employment accommodations, resume development, and job seeking skills coaching. Other services may be provided to assist Veterans in starting their own businesses or independent living services for those who are severely disabled and unable to work in traditional employment.

## Small Business Administration (SBA):

- ★ Offers a variety of resources to veteran's interested in small business ownership and entrepreneurship including information about financing for Veteran-Owned Businesses, loan and grant information including states and organizations who provide loans to veterans, access to training, counseling and assistance, business resources for people with disabilities including service-disabled veterans. SBA offers Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) with 18 regional affiliated Veteran Business Outreach Centers (VBOC) offering targeted services to veterans including business plan development and mentoring. (such as Boots to Business, EBV, Reboot, V-Wise). To learn more visit the **Office of Veterans Business Development (OVBD)**.

## Non-Governmental Resources:

- ★ **USAA** offers a general set of tools and advice for separating service members, including but not limited to employment and financial tools. USAA's resources also include a customizable Military Separation Checklist, active duty retirement information, and insurance calculators.
- ★ **JPMC** co-founded the Veteran Jobs Mission in 2011, now a coalition of over 200 companies committed to the professional development and employment of veterans. The coalition has honed their focus on retention and career development for veterans in the private sector, including on-boarding training programs, establishing sponsorship programs, and highlighting industry-specific best practices.
- ★ **GI Jobs** is an online tool for veterans interested in employment, education, and entrepreneurship. GI Jobs offers articles and information related to career exploration and post-secondary education options, and tools for resume building, application writing, and interviewing.
- ★ **LinkedIn for Vets** provides information on job openings and helping you appear in search results when potential employers are seeking out people with your skillset. LinkedIn provides a free 1-year Job Seeker Premium subscription and courses at Lynda.com to all U.S. Veterans and Service Members

- ★ **Deloitte's Career Opportunity Redefinition and Exploration (CORE) Leadership Program** is an initiative aimed at doubling veteran hiring numbers by helping veterans translate their skills to a business environment. It is a part of the White House's Joining Forces Initiative and provides an Open House for Veterans to learn skills and meet Deloitte professionals to help them transition.

- ★ **Veteran Recruiting** is a division of Astound Virtual, a company specializing in online recruitment solutions. VR operates a virtual recruitment center through which employers can recruit veteran applicants more efficiently and effectively. Veteran applicants can job-search, attend virtual career fairs, and host resumes on VR's website.

- ★ **Onward to Opportunity (O2O)** is offered on U.S. military installations across the country, providing in-demand, industry-validated training to transitioning service members, all Guard and Reserve, and active duty spouses who are navigating the transition to civilian employment.

## Ernst and Young

- ★ **Veterans Network** provides a professional resource network created by Veterans at EY to connect with each other and provide support to one another. Among other things, the Veterans Network is able to provide a peer mentorship program to help Veterans transition to new roles or gain professional development.

- ★ **HonorVet.org** provides career mentoring to Veterans looking to improve their interview and business skills as they transition to a corporate environment.

- ★ **Prudential VETalent** is program built with Workforce Development Services (WOS) to assist Veterans transition into the workplace. Graduates of the program receive marketable credentials and help in finding job placement.

- ★ **Walmart's Veterans Welcome Home Commitment** hopes to hire 250,000 veterans in Walmart and Sam's Club. It guarantees a job at Walmart for any Veteran Honorably discharged after Memorial Day 2013. Additionally, it provides military skills matching and transitioning timelines. In Walmart, provides a unique "find your fit" tool that helps service members find the Retail and Logistics job best suited for them.

- ★ **The Veterans Career Transition Program (VCTP)** at IVMF, offered with grant support from JP Morgan Chase & Co., offers free online education and training programs to post-9/11 veterans, their spouses, transitioning active duty service members, and spouses of active duty military. VCTP is focused on preparing transitioning service members and spouses for their careers in operations, HR or IT. Participants develop skills to effectively prepare for and execute job searches, including company research, resume and cover letter writing, and a foundation to advanced level courses in Microsoft Office, Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Outlook.



**I used my military developed leadership skills in my everyday civilian jobs, even those non-military related” -Army veteran**

# STAY IN TOUCH

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