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FINDING A JOB THAT FITS

How to align your military skills with satisfying civilian work

If you've ever left a civilian job soon after taking it, you're not alone. Roughly two-thirds of Veterans leave their first post-military job within two years, according to a recent survey by VetAdvisor and Syracuse University's Institute for Veterans and Military Families. Topping their reasons: low job satisfaction and limited advancement opportunities.

But happy employment is possible. The key to finding it is assessing whether your military skills align with the job you're considering. Here's how to do it, with tips from career coaches Scott Shearin, president and CEO of Veteran Talent Advisors LLC; Michelle Morettini of IMPACT Group; and Dana Mancigli, author of *Cut the Crap, Get a Job!*

IDENTIFY WHAT YOU LIKE DOING, NOT JUST WHAT YOU'RE GOOD AT DOING.

Look intuitively at what you enjoy most about current tasks, Shearin says. "Find one daily task you don't like and one that you like—that brings you satisfaction and fulfillment—and then see what that will be on the civilian side. Look for industries that drive your passions and pursue something in that realm."

Match job descriptions to your passions, Mancigli says. On a sheet of paper, make three columns. Column A dissects the job description. Column B lists your military skills. Column C lists what you enjoy most. Comparing them gives you a better sense for a fit.

Still not sure? Take a personality assessment, like the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Morettini says. Or, check out the Department of Labor's program My Next Move, which helps Veterans identify dream jobs and roles that are similar to their military service roles [MyNextMove.org].

VET AN EMPLOYER'S CULTURE USING SITES LIKE GLASSDOOR.COM AND LINKEDIN, AS WELL AS THROUGH VETERANS WHO CURRENTLY WORK THERE.

"LinkedIn has millions of groups, across all professional and interest lines, including Veteran-specific groups," Morettini says. "Glassdoor has a lot of anecdotal information, with specific experiences of current employees." Meetup.com, she says, is another great site to facilitate offline networking.

Morettini also recommends contacting your local employment office or career center, which may have an individual on staff who can help you tap into the Veteran community through offline or in-person groups.

PRESS HIRING MANAGERS FOR DETAILS ABOUT THE SKILLS NEEDED FOR THE JOB.

Hone in on the daily routine, Shearin says. Ask the interviewer to describe "a day in the life" for your position. What equipment will you use? What tasks will you be expected to accomplish daily?

Ask for a description of the "best employee," Morettini says. "What makes someone exceptional in this role?" Asking that will build a profile picture and [provide] a chance to talk about their related performance so that you can know what is expected of you."

WINDOW SHOP AT JOB BOARDS BY SEARCHING FOR KEYWORDS BASED ON YOUR MILITARY JOB DUTIES.

Find 10 appealing job descriptions, Mancigli says. What do they have in common with your military service? This helps determine your attractiveness to recruiters.

"This method works, because you will find real jobs versus what I call a 'unicorn,'" Mancigli says. "So many people say, 'I want to find a job that allows me to do this and this and this,' but that job doesn't exist."

ENSURE THE COMPANY FOSTERS CAREER ADVANCEMENT.

Ask about the "entry point" of the current leadership, Shearin says. "Did they come in as a manager or director? Or did they grow in the organization?" That, he says, helps gauge whether the company encourages growth from within.

You also can pick up clues via the "Book of Lists" published annually by your city's business journal. "These lists cover the fastest-growing private and public companies [in your area]," Mancigli says. The lists also include valuable information about mentor programs.

