How to Hire a Veteran

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A 2019 report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics showed that the unemployment rate for veterans was 3.1%, which was the lowest rate in 19 years. After years of chronic unemployment, businesses seemed to have finally learned that there are great benefits to hiring veterans. Of course, the ongoing pandemic has changed this rate drastically for the entire working population. But for businesses that are rehiring in order to open up again, now might be the perfect time to hire experienced veteran workers.

What veterans bring to the table

The stigma of veterans having unmanageable PTSD has eroded in recent years. After all, it would be next to impossible to keep such a low unemployment rate among veterans if there was high turnover among these workers due to mental health issues. These fears have largely been unfounded. In fact, companies are reaping the benefits of hiring veterans. These benefits include:

Teamwork and Leadership. If nothing else, being in the armed forces teaches people a level of discipline, collaboration, and initiative that most other workplaces can't match.

Focus. The armed forces also trains individuals to be incredibly goal-oriented. *Here's the mission with the desired end results, go out and get it.* Veterans come out with a level of focus and drive that isn't common in the typical employment pool of workers.

Loyalty. If anyone can “tough it out” when times are lean or the business is doing poorly, it’s veterans. Having been forced to endure downright unappealing circumstances during their service, veterans can power through during thick and thin.

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The WOTC

Businesses should hire veterans for altruistic reasons. But it doesn’t hurt that the government provides a great tax incentive to do so as well. The **Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC)** is a Federal tax credit that aims to encourage employers to hire veterans and other traditionally disadvantaged groups of workers.

Certain qualifying hires can earn up to $9600 per employee, and veterans are in the tier for the highest tax credit. Once you hire two, three, or more veterans, you can see how quickly this tax credit can add up.

The program currently runs until January 1st, 2021, so now is the time to hire and take advantage of the WOTC.

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How to hire a veteran

Here are the steps to hire a veteran:

1. Research the skills you want from a veteran.

For any hiring decision, it’s important to figure out the type of skillset you need for a position. When hiring veterans, an additional exercise is to see what traditional skills from the armed forces will best translate to the role.

For example, if your company is hiring for a marketing position, the skills you may be looking for are related to crafting engaging content and understanding people's decision making process. In this case, a former Army Recruiter may provide the right qualifications for the job. Or perhaps a Psychological Operations Specialist, since they understand people. Another might be a Recruiting and Retention Officer.

These military titles weren't just pulled from thin air. There is a site that can help you match up the position to the relevant skillset: careeronestop.org. Plug in the position you are hiring for and see the types of military titles that result to give you a good sense of the type of veterans you might want to look for.

You can also refer to the Department of Labor's guide to hiring veterans as well.

2. Contact a local veterans employment coordinator.

Speaking of the DoL, their site can connect you with a local veterans employment coordinator to assist you in placing the right candidate. Connecting with an expert in this space can help reduce the time-to-hire, especially if you're trying to take advantage of the WOTC by the end of this year.

They might want to see the content of your job posting, so it's a good idea to have at least a rough draft of your requirements and qualifications written down before connecting with a representative. You can even reach out after you've posted the job to let them know of this new hiring opportunity so that it's top-of-mind to these coordinators.

3. Post to job sites for veterans.

It's never bad to post to the usual job sites like Indeed and Monster. When you do, it's helpful to add language to explicitly show that veterans are encouraged to apply. In fact, putting "Veterans Encouraged to Apply" in the job title

can increase the response rate from veterans immediately since it’s the most visible part of the listing.

Aside from the aforementioned sites, there are many other job boards that can target veterans specifically:

Furthermore, since many veterans decide to continue their education after their service, local colleges and trade schools can be great places to post, especially if the schools focus on the type of skills your business is looking for.

It’s always a great time to hire a veteran, but now is the time to do so to take advantage of the expiring WOTC.

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