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ON THE HIRING LINE

In the war for talent, smart companies are finding that military veterans bring them a wealth of knowledge and unparalleled leadership skills.

CEO





In 2006, one week before the end of his second tour of duty in Iraq, Army Sgt. First Class Derek Duplisea was the victim of a suicide bombing while on patrol in Muqdadiah. The resulting wounds—which included a traumatic brain injury caused by shrapnel—landed him in Bethesda Naval Hospital. Two years of therapy helped Duplisea learn to walk, talk, and slowly regain his memory, but his 13-year military career was over.

Today, Duplisea is busy fighting a different kind of war. As the “wounded warrior” liaison at Raytheon, Duplisea is a key member of the company’s military recruiting team. Four years after being injured, he is helping Raytheon recruit the best and the brightest in areas ranging from engineering to supply chain management, while providing guidance and support for others seriously wounded during their military service. “We are in a war for talent, and we are out to win,” he says.

Duplisea’s enthusiasm for his recruiting mission is clear. The pilot program—dubbed Operation Phoenix—was just a year old when Duplisea signed on. Now, he and senior military recruiter Joe Jackson Jr. are in the process of taking the effort launched in Raytheon’s Missile Systems business to all areas of the company. “We are trying to build

veteran champions wherever we go,” he says, noting that more than 700 vets are already registered in the Operation Phoenix database.

Raytheon, a global technology company that specializes in defense and homeland security, has long prided itself on being veteran-friendly. Yet it isn’t alone in turning up the volume on military recruiting. With baby-boomers retiring and the labor pool continuing to shrink, the 156,000 active-duty servicemembers who leave the military each year are increasingly being recognized as a valuable pool of talent. Retiring servicemembers come with not only security clearances but also a wide range of technical, management, and leadership skills that translate directly into the corporate work environment. “We serve as mentors assisting veterans to identify and leverage their military skills, education, and experiences to be successful,” says Raytheon’s Jackson.

Adapting to the Private Sector

“Almost every skill set that you have in industry has a corollary in the military,” says Ray Jefferson, Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Department of Labor’s Veterans’ Employment and Training Service. Vets also bring important attributes such as an accelerated learning curve, proven performance

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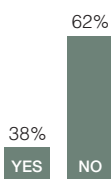
under pressure, respect for process, an understanding of chain of command, and the ability to innovate rapidly in crisis situations.

Smaller companies are paying more attention, as well. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, for example, has launched a program, Hiring Our Heroes, for wounded, ill, or injured vets. After first looking to large employers to provide jobs and job counseling, it is now reaching out to state and local Chamber chapters as a way to involve more small and medium-sized companies.

Likewise, in June the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) presented a special day-long program devoted to recruiting, hiring, and retaining military personnel. "It's the first time we have done this," says Eric Peterson, SHRM's manager of diversity and inclusion, noting that most of the organization's members come from small and medium-sized organizations that may lack the resources to develop a military recruiting effort on their own. The one-day SHRM program was designed to not only bring together transitioning vets and HR professionals, but also to present best practices in this area.

Recruiting Trend

In the past 36 months, has your organization hired any veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan?



Source: SHRM 2008

The message to the HR community: "If you don't know that you need to know about this, we are telling you that you do," says Peterson.

Government Incentives

A variety of federal and state programs are reinforcing that message by offering significant tax breaks to companies that hire qualifying vets. The federal Work Opportunity Tax Credit program, for one, provides a maximum tax credit of \$2,400 for hiring an unemployed vet or \$4,800 for hiring a disabled vet.

Military recruiting efforts often fall under a company's diversity program, both because the military itself is a diverse workforce and because the military experience fosters a different approach to problem solving, Peterson says. In order to benefit from this diversity, however, it is important that companies embrace the unique qualities that veterans bring rather than trying to make them fit the corporate mold, he adds.

Atlanta-based utility Southern Company has seen an increase in the hiring of military veterans over the past few years. In 2009, 24% of the external new hires were military veterans. "We are reaping the benefits of recent initiatives," says Marsha Johnson, senior vice president of human resources and chief diversity officer, noting that the 26,000-employee company has initiated a new military recruiting and branding campaign, added a dedicated military recruiter, created a web site dedicated to military recruiting, and continues to offer benefits for reservists and their families when employees are called to active duty.

Southern Company finds that its corporate culture is a particularly good fit for those exiting the military. Brian Reed, a 42-year-old who spent 21 and a half years in the Navy, found echoes of its core values of "Honor, Courage, Commitment" in Southern Company's principles—"Unquestionable Trust, Superior Performance, and Total Commitment."

"The words aren't the same, but what they are based on is similar," says Reed, now the lead instructor in initial training at the company's Joseph M. Farley nuclear plant near Dothan, Ala. His experience as an officer on nuclear submarines made him well qualified for a job in the utility's nuclear operations, where he found the technology was quite similar. Both the Navy and Southern Company use nuclear energy to

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THE TOP 10 REASONS WHY CORPORATE AMERICA HIRES VETERANS

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>1 Strong sense of responsibility</p> <p>2 Ability to work as part of a team</p> <p>3 Ability to see a task through to completion</p> <p>4 Ability to work under pressure</p> <p>5 Positively enhances the image of the company</p> | <p>6 High degree of professionalism</p> <p>7 Promotes patriotism of our country</p> <p>8 Information technology skills and training</p> <p>9 Strategic planning/foresight</p> <p>10 Knowledge/expertise of defense issues</p> |
|--|--|

Source: SHRM 2008

produce electricity. Whereas the Navy focuses on smaller-scale production, Southern's nuclear fleet produces about 16% of the company's total generation for its 4.4 million customers in the Southeast.

A Global Skill Set

The cross-cultural experience that comes from serving in Iraq and Afghanistan can also be a plus. In the current conflicts, an officer may one day be fighting a battle and the next be acting in the role of town mayor, says David Ferguson, General Electric Co.'s manager of military staffing and recruiting. "What that is really creating in these young military leaders is a great deal of flexibility and the ability to analyze a dynamic situation." Both, he says, are skills that are particularly valuable in today's fast-changing global economy.

While GE's best-known veterans recruiting program focuses on junior officers, the company actually recruits more enlisted personnel than officers. "We target enlisted folks for a couple of different reasons, including the technical training that they received," Ferguson says, noting that the military experience of enlisted person-

nel makes these veterans attractive candidates for a variety of assignments, including field service engineering or biomedical technician jobs.

Overcoming Daily Challenges

Yet moving from the military to the corporate work world can be a difficult adjustment. Seemingly simple tasks such as writing a résumé, interviewing for a job, or negotiating a salary can be daunting to individuals who have spent their entire adult lives in the military. Former Marine Kevin Schmiegel, who has been guiding the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's "Hiring Our Heroes" initiative, says programs designed to help vets find employment must first address these issues.

Even after they get a job, veterans often need support with the transition to corporate life. Military retirees are used to wearing a uniform every day and can be stymied by the idea of dressing for work. Even issues such as when to stand and when to sit can be confusing. "During my first year of work, I would stand up whenever my supervisor would walk into the room," says Jackson. "People would look at me, but that was what I was conditioned to do. We were trained to greet on our feet."

Mastering the nuances of career development can also take time. The corporate performance review, for example, looks nothing like the reviews conducted by the military. "In the military, the narratives tend to make everyone sound like a rock star," explains GE's Ferguson. Not surprisingly, a veteran who finds his or her review exploring areas for improvement might perceive that as a sign of impending failure.

GE has learned to tackle such issues head-on, providing a healthy dose of support to its military recruits both during the initial transition and after each employee has settled in. "If you just have a recruiting focus and don't address some of the other issues, you may in fact develop retention problems," Ferguson explains. One element of this support: a recently launched veteran's network designed to help the 11,000 military veterans now employed at GE make connections across all GE businesses, with a focus on leadership and advancement.

The transition to civilian employment can be easier at companies where the end user of the company's products is the military. "They know our company, they know our products," says



The pool of talent from the military has the potential to transform corporate America.





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John Malanowski, Raytheon's vice president of human resources operations, noting that many of those hired actually used Raytheon's radar and missile systems when in the military. That gives vets who join Raytheon a continuing sense of "commitment to mission," he says.

In other cases, it's the people, not the products, that create continuity for transitioning veterans. Health Net Federal Services, for example, supplements and integrates military health care services for the U.S. Department of Defense and supports health care services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Its stated mission: providing quality health care to those who serve.

"When hiring, we definitely take a close look at those who have served," says Molly Tuttle, director of communications at Health Net Federal Services,

noting that about 10% of employees are veterans. "These applicants identify with the day-to-day experiences of our beneficiaries, they understand and respect how the military works, and through their service, they have gained the dedication and pride our organization thrives on." They also come with the additional advantage of having obtained a security clearance, which is required of all Health Net associates working for the Defense Department.

More important, says Tuttle, is the fact that these individuals can relate to the needs of the beneficiaries, whether that person is a military wife expecting a child, a soldier suffering from catastrophic war injuries, or a child with an earache.

While employers are quick to point out the impact that veterans have on the bottom line, they acknowledge that there is real reward in knowing that their company is doing the right thing. Indeed, this kind of commitment means that the support for vets often extends well beyond the employment office. Health Net, for one, formed a meaningful relationship with Paralyzed Veterans of America to create a vocational rehabilitation center. "We contributed to them early because we really believe in the concept," says Tuttle. "Getting back to work is the next level of reintegration back into civilian life."

Although it is too soon to know what kind of impact today's veterans will have on corporate America, Assistant Secretary Ray Jefferson sees the pool of talent now exiting the military as potentially transformative. One only has to look at the impact that World War II veterans had on American business to understand the potential, he says. "After World War II, many blue-chip companies were built on the talents of veterans," he says, noting that the unique skills being developed by today's troops will certainly shape many of the companies of tomorrow.

Those on the front lines of military recruiting are getting an even more immediate payoff. "We go home every day and know that we made a difference," says Raytheon's Duplisea, adding that his program benefits the vets he's recruiting, the company, and the country. "Our program is a program where everyone wins." Clearly, he puts himself in that category, too. —Lynn Asinof

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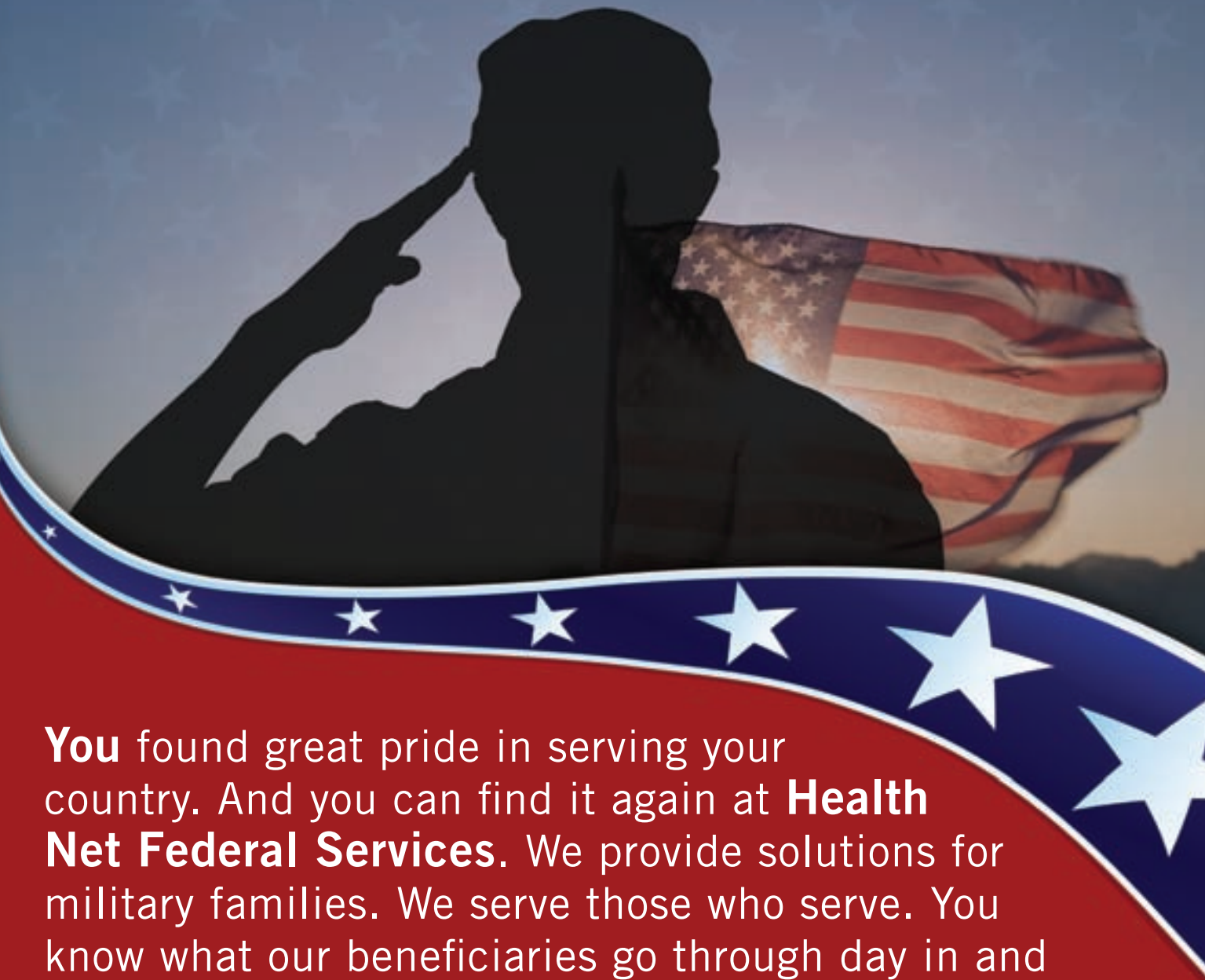
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