

september 2016

td

talent development

SUPPORTING AND DEVELOPING VETERANS

atd

Association for
Talent Development

SUPPLEMENT TO TD

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 2 The Value of Veterans in the Workplace**
- 3 Honoring Veterans Every Day**
- 4 Veterans Initiative Program Hits its Stride**
Recruiting, training, and onboarding veterans is at the heart of ADP's program goals.
- 6 A Decade's Worth of Initiatives**
Four pillars are a core part of EMCOR's Troop Support Program.
- 8 From the Battlefields to the Boardrooms: How EY Fosters Veteran Talent**
Diversity and inclusion are integral to the company's efforts.
- 10 FedEx Delivers Big on Behalf of Veterans**
Initiatives assist members of the armed services, veterans, and their families to re-enter civilian life.
- 12 The Opportunity to Serve in a Different Capacity**
Hilton Worldwide opens its doors to military veterans with its Operation: Opportunity initiative.
- 14 Integrity and Purpose Formulate IAP's Veterans Strategy**
A significant percentage of employees are former military or members of military families.
- 16 More Than Just Hiring Veterans**
Contracting with veteran-owned small businesses like Iron Sword is another way to support former military members.
- 17 Mercedes-Benz USA Is Driven to Include Those Who Served Our Country**
The recruitment team actively seeks out veterans who would make the right fit within the company.
- 19 Filling the Supply Chain**
Office Depot's partnerships and recruitment programs are expanding employment opportunities for veterans.
- 20 PenFed Credit Union's Philanthropic Arm Is Reaching Out to Assist Veterans**
The PenFed Foundation helps ensure military families have the resources they need for a secure financial future.
- 22 7-Eleven's Military-Oriented Business Practices Benefit Veterans**
The company's three-pronged strategy to help veterans involves hiring, franchising, and philanthropy.
- 24 Starbucks Serves Up Outreach and Support in Military Communities**
The company honors veterans through its numerous partnerships with veteran services organizations.
- 26 Rolling Out the Welcome Mat for Veterans**
Synchrony Financial's recruiting and hiring initiatives have resulted in a 100 percent increase in veteran hires over three years.
- 27 Empowering the Next Greatest Generation**
University of Phoenix offers a bevy of resources to veterans seeking to pursue higher education.
- 29 Think Global, Act Local**
Global hospitality company Wyndham Worldwide takes the local road in veteran recruitment.
- 31 A Dedicated Team at Xerox Is Committed to Making Military Hires**
Three program initiatives open the doors for service members to join the Xerox team.

ATD EDITORIAL STAFF

Vice President, Marketing & Communications: Jennifer Homer
Editor: Paula Ketter
Senior Managing Editor: Vanessa St. Gerard
Creative Director: Anthony Julien
Project Coordinator: Dawn Baron

©2016 ASTD DBA Association for Talent Development (ATD).
All rights reserved. Opinions expressed by contributors
are not necessarily those of the association.



The Value of Veterans in the Workplace

To the best of my knowledge, there never has been a compilation of best practices like this one for companies to use as a resource when designing their own talent development strategies. The content included in this supplement can make a tremendous difference to U.S. veterans. As a West Point graduate, I am proud to see the Thayer Leader Development Group at West Point partnering with the Association for Talent Development to organize and lead this remarkable effort.

Hiring veterans not only benefits those seeking to transition back into civilian life; it also benefits the companies that hire them. Veterans have the proven ability to learn new skills and concepts. In addition, they can enter the workforce with identifiable and transferable skills, proved in real-world situations.

Many young veterans already have been exposed to intense leadership situations that their civilian peers have not yet had the chance to encounter. Veterans already have learned to lead by example and through direction, delegation, motivation, and inspiration. They also understand the dynamics of leadership as part of both hierarchical and peer structures. Teamwork is the ultimate underlying foundation of all missions and initiatives within the U.S. military, and veterans already know the familiar camaraderie of working together and supporting all individuals in a team to achieve mission success.

In their military roles, veterans have frequently triumphed over great adversity and proved their resolve in critical situations, demanding endurance, stamina, and flexibility. All of these values and skills translate directly to veterans being exceptionally strong candidates for a variety of civilian jobs. It benefits companies to stretch their recruiting initiative to include veterans as high-in-demand talent that can add significant value and productivity to organizational teams.

Within all industries, companies need to challenge themselves to understand how to make the connection between a veteran's military experience and a civilian environment. There is a level of education, awareness, and openness needed to better understand the value of veterans and the skills they bring to the table.

As you will see from the exemplary examples in the following pages, veterans' initiatives include activities ranging from attracting, recruiting, retaining, and training, to networking within the company, honoring veterans, supporting National Guard and Reserves, supporting military spouses and children, and contributing to veterans philanthropies.

This publication is designed to address these factors by spotlighting the excellent programs that a variety of companies in different industries have put into place to successfully hire and support their growing veteran employee population. If your company is committed to hiring veterans, you are not alone in this honorable endeavor—and there are many organizations that already have laid the groundwork. Take the time to thoroughly read through these articles and learn about how each company uniquely dedicates itself to hiring and supporting our veteran population.

Thank you for supporting our veterans, and for making your company a better one in the process.

James Nicholson
Colonel, U.S. Army (Retired)
U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs, 2005-2007



Honoring Veterans Every Day

The Thayer Leader Development Group (TLDG) at West Point is proud to partner with the Association for Talent Development (ATD) to bring these best practices from 16 organizations that are leaders in supporting and developing veterans.

At TLDG, we honor veterans every day by teaching corporate executives the timeless military leadership principles that have helped the American military become the most powerful force in the world.

One of the greatest challenges facing the U.S. military today is the increasing “civilian-military” divide. TLDG is helping to bridge this gap by bringing corporate America to West Point to learn the leadership principles taught at West Point, which participants then take back to their companies and apply to their own business situations. Our unique approach to leadership development—founded on the Army’s leadership philosophy of “Be, Know, Do”—focuses on creating complete leaders through the development of character, knowledge, and application. Programs are fully immersive and interactive experiences with role models who have demonstrated superior leadership skills in highly challenging situations, leading teams in extraordinary circumstances.

Our corporate clients have partnered with us to learn military leadership principles and have come to trust the TLDG team’s expertise with veterans’ initiatives. Because of this expertise, while it is not part of our core business, we chose to create this partnership with ATD to bring these “best-in-class” military talent programs to ATD members, so they can be replicated across the United States.

After only six years, TLDG is now one of the premier leadership institutions for senior executives in the United States. More than 25,000 senior executives from Mercedes-Benz, JP Morgan Chase, EMCOR, Deloitte, Fidelity, 7-Eleven, the FBI, USAA, and hundreds of other organizations have come to West Point to enhance their own leadership skills. They leave West Point as better leaders. They also leave with a new or renewed appreciation for the service of U.S. veterans.

TLDG was founded by five West Point graduates, all veterans. Our company has 62 faculty members—typically retired colonels and general officers, 100 percent of whom are veterans or were faculty at West Point. We have 20 full-time staff members, the majority of whom are veterans or spouses of active-duty service members.

In addition to hiring veterans and teaching military principles to thousands of corporate executives, TLDG has organized countless events to help honor veterans and support veterans’ causes. These include the Veterans Day New York Stock Exchange Opening Bell (2013); the NASDAQ Closing Bell (2011); the NASDAQ Closing Bell Veterans Day (2015); sponsoring the granite markers on the West Point Golf Course (2013); inviting the Wall That Heals, a replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, to visit West Point for the first time (2015); and many other initiatives. The most meaningful effort has been our partnership with ATD to host “the Pledge” at NASDAQ on Veterans Day 2015 and to create this publication. We believe this effort can have a lasting, positive impact on our veterans and on our nation.

Dan Rice
President, TLDG
drice@thayerleaderdevelopment.com

Members of ADP's Military Strong business resource group work on-site at a Habitat for Humanity Veterans Build in Newark, New Jersey, in May 2016.



Veterans Initiative Program Hits its Stride

Recruiting, training, and onboarding veterans is at the heart of ADP's program goals.

BY TOM HIEBERT

AD P recognizes that it benefits from the diverse perspectives that veterans bring to the business and is committed to providing more opportunities for veterans. The company's core values resonate with veterans.

Those who have selflessly served their nation, and committed themselves to something bigger than themselves, want to do more than simply find a job. They want to serve and make a positive contribution to the world and the community they live in. ADP gives veterans an opportunity to do that.

A Pipeline of Veteran Talent

With a firm commitment from senior leadership, ADP has undertaken a comprehensive, strategic, four-pronged approach to its new veterans initiative program: hiring; onboarding and mentoring; expanding its military business resource group; and making a positive difference with veterans through corporate social responsibility programs.

Photo: ADP

In support of its veteran hiring initiative, ADP's talent acquisition team is working hard to build a pipeline of veteran talent across the United States, with a specific emphasis on its large offices in El Paso, Texas, and Augusta, Georgia. In El Paso, the company is doubling the size of its office from 1,200 associates to 2,500 associates over the course of the next three years. In Augusta, it is expanding by 450 new associates.

ADP is executing formal training sessions for HR leaders and hiring managers in both locations to educate them on the value of veterans. Hiring managers also are trained on how to translate veteran skills and talents to actual roles at the company, as well as the best techniques for interviewing veterans transitioning out of the military.

In addition, ADP is capitalizing on the abundance of veteran talent leveraging their post-9/11 GI Bill benefits to complete their college education. ADP campus recruiters are partnering with university veteran centers to identify these veterans and bring them aboard.

In both Augusta and El Paso, we are heavily engaged with the Army's Soldier For Life-Transition Assistance Program (SFL-TAP) offices at both Fort Bliss (El Paso) and Fort Gordon (Augusta). In addition to becoming a visible presence at the weekly Department of Labor job fairs that occur in these offices, ADP veterans in Augusta and El Paso are already making a positive difference by volunteering their time to coach transitioning service members on writing resumes, interviewing in the corporate world, and transitioning out of the military into the civilian workforce.

ADP also has partnered with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation through the Hiring Our Heroes program. We were a sponsor of the Fort Bliss Transition Summit in March and the Hampton Roads Transition Summit in June in Norfolk, Virginia, and we attended the Fort Gordon Transition Summit in June. ADP also is sponsoring the El Paso Fellowship Program, an extension of the Department of Defense Career Skills Program, by which active-duty service members at Fort Bliss will be able to participate in a 12-week internship at ADP's office in El Paso, and then, hopefully, be hired by ADP once they formally transition out of the Army.

Our veteran hiring initiative has hit its stride with measurable results. Between July 2015 and December 2015, the number of veterans ADP hired doubled compared with the prior 12 months. The company is on track to double that number again by the end of 2016. In its first full year, the ADP veteran hiring initiative will have resulted in a 30 percent lift in the overall veteran workforce.

Beyond the veteran hiring program, we launched a formal onboarding and mentoring program in April, along with the formal veteran onboarding and assimilation program.

The program will include all veterans who transition into the offices in Augusta and El Paso, and consist of formal one-week in-person training sessions, including a mentoring circle. Following the completion of the one-week training, veterans will be paired with experienced ADP veteran associates, and stay connected through a formal one-on-one mentoring program. The company plans a full rollout to all offices around the United States after an evaluation of the pilot later this year.

A Big Impact

Our commitment to current veterans continues to grow. Last spring, ADP launched a veteran business resource group called Military Strong. The company has launched new chapters in eight offices around the United States and increased the active membership of Military Strong by more than 90 percent since Veterans Day 2015.

ADP has sought to wrap its arms around its veterans while giving them outlets to positively impact other veterans in communities across the country. ADP veterans have partnered with Habitat for Humanity to build homes for veterans in Atlanta, Los Angeles, and Newark, New Jersey, with hopes of expanding this effort to Augusta, El Paso, Louisville, and Jacksonville, Florida, by the end of the year. ADP is now an official corporate sponsor of The Mission Continues in Newark, and is looking into expanding its support to Service Platoons in Atlanta and Jacksonville.

At its annual large-client management conference—ADP Meeting of the Minds—in Washington, D.C., this year, ADP associates and clients worked with Operation Gratitude to build 3,000 care packages that were then shipped to deployed service members all over the world.

To demonstrate to its veterans just how much the company values their service, ADP held a Veterans Day Recognition Breakfast at office locations all across the United States. At the event at its corporate headquarters in Roseland, New Jersey, company President and CEO Carlos Rodriguez spoke passionately to ADP veterans, saying, "I am proud to work alongside the more than 850 veterans who are part of the ADP family—men and women who have served in all branches of the military and in every major conflict since Vietnam. These inspiring men and women bring their collective talents, work ethic, and purpose to the workplace and to the communities in which we live."

In conclusion, he said: "Veterans are making a big impact each and every day at ADP. ... So, the fact that we are committed to hiring more veterans is not just the right thing to do, but it is also the right business decision."

■ **Tom Hiebert**, a 28-year Army veteran, is senior director of veterans initiatives for ADP and a retired Army colonel.



■ Among EMCOR's initiatives is sending care packages to deployed troops.

A Decade's Worth of Initiatives

Four pillars are a core part of EMCOR's Troop Support Program.

BY MAVA HEFFLER

Values that guide EMCOR Group—"Mission First. People Always"—also inform how our teams perform on job sites and the manner in which we interact with our clients and one another. As we perform work for our customers with integrity, discipline, and transparency, and as we strive for sustained excellence within our organization, we also continue to strengthen the commitment we've made to help those who have served, and are currently serving, our country.

Photo: Shutterstock

The multitude of skills veterans bring to work every day is a core part of who we are as an organization. It makes the company better and makes us better able to serve our customers.

EMCOR's support initiatives start at the top, with President and CEO Tony Guzzi, a West Point graduate, Ranger-qualified, who served as a light infantry captain in the U.S. Army. Bringing the military spirit to his words and actions, 10 years ago we initiated the Troop Support Program to give back in some measure to those who have given—and continue to give—so much to support our country. The program has four primary pillars:

- Provide jobs.
- Provide education.
- Say “we support you.”
- Support our future.

Provide Jobs: Hiring Initiative

EMCOR has exciting employment opportunities—from leadership and management positions, to skilled vocational and specialized trade jobs—for men and women who have valuable military experience. They have proudly served our great country, and now we welcome them to come serve our company.

We value veterans and their principles of discipline, hard work, and leadership. That's why we've built a culture that recognizes and rewards military experience. When veterans decide to work with us, they join more than 1,600 other veterans and will have access to EMCOR's special personnel training and vocational coaching, all designed to speed up their success in the business world.

Provide Education: Johnny Mac Soldiers Fund

EMCOR is a corporate sponsor of the Johnny Mac Soldiers Fund, whose mission is family—giving back through education to those who have given so much. The fund is inspired by Colonel John “Johnny Mac” McHugh, killed in action in Afghanistan in 2010. A West Point graduate and Army aviator, McHugh served 24 years in the U.S. Army and is remembered for his values of family, faith, and service.

Since inception in 2014, the Johnny Mac Soldiers Fund has awarded \$1.8 million in college scholarships to veterans and children who lost a parent in the line of military duty.

Say “We Support You”: Military Care Packages

For 10 years, EMCOR has been sending care packages six to seven times a year to our employees, their friends, family, and others who are deployed overseas. To date, we have sent packages to troops serving in Iraq, Afghanistan, Italy, and Germany.

These packages contain nonperishable food items, reading and writing materials, clothing, and other useful items that can be shared among the unit. It's our hope and intention that these small items can help bring “a little bit of home” to those serving in the U.S. military abroad.

When a recipient's deployment is nearing completion, we ask the soldier to provide the name of someone else within the unit who could benefit from receiving that soldier's care package, and we gladly continue the shipments.

Support Our Future: Army West Point Team Sponsorship

As a sponsor of the Army West Point team, EMCOR creates awareness for our military recruiting efforts and the value we place on supporting the U.S. military in general.

To this end, a range of tactics and media are deployed over the course of the year, including television, radio, video, web, social media, digital, and static signage in the stadium, all of which reach a wide audience estimated to be 300,000 people per football game.

Staying Strong by Hiring Strong

Just as we need military might to have a strong country, a company needs the power of its people to be strong. As a Fortune 500 company that leads the way in mechanical and electrical construction, industrial and energy infrastructure, and building services, EMCOR believes strongly that veterans serve our customers better because they were so skilled at serving our country.

We're proud that in numerous ways the company supports those who have served, and are serving, our country. The discipline, leadership, and teamwork veterans bring to work every day is a core part of what drives us as an organization.

■ **Mava Heffler** is vice president of marketing and communications for EMCOR.

From the Battlefields to the Boardrooms: How EY Fosters Veteran Talent

Diversity and inclusion
are integral to the
company's efforts.

BY NANCY ALTOBELLO

At EY, our people are our greatest asset. We rely on our people to deliver world-class solutions and exceptional service to our clients every single day. Each of our 230,000 professionals around the world also helps us achieve our purpose of building a better working world for clients and communities. And that includes our growing number of veteran employees.

We take great pride in the culture of diversity and inclusiveness that we've created throughout our organization. We value and respect the individual differences of our people and believe that integrating diverse perspectives and experiences can only make us work better. That's why we take a broad approach to ensuring all backgrounds are included, whether it relates to education, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or—of course—veteran status.

EY is dedicated to leveraging and promoting the valuable skills and experiences veterans bring to the table—and we're honored to support them. Veterans make great professionals; their military experience provides them with the leadership skills, confidence, and teaming abilities that can be gained in few other places.

In the United States, our veterans have earned our support and commitment as they return from service and begin the transition back to civilian life. Finding employment outside the military is just one of many steps in this journey. U.S. unemployment rates for veterans are falling on an annual basis across all age groups, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The unemployment rate for veterans over 18 years old was 4.2 percent in June 2016, compared with 5.4 percent in June 2014.

Veterans Jobs Mission Coalition

EY cemented its efforts around recruiting veterans in 2012 when the company joined the 100 Veterans Jobs Mission Coalition, a private-sector solution addressing U.S. military veteran unemployment. Since joining the coalition, EY has hired more than 750 veterans for roles across all service lines and sectors. Every day our veterans play a vital role in our organization. Helping us innovate and deliver exceptional service to our clients is only one of the ways they make a profound difference.

To find the top veteran talent, we have recruiting and onboarding specialists who focus specifically



Photo: Shutterstock

on improving EY's veteran hiring initiatives on U.S. college campuses, as well as for executive and experienced veteran professionals.

Last year, EY launched its first Veterans Entrepreneur Academy (VEA), a two-day series of workshops and networking events that provided veteran entrepreneurs access to critical business-building resources, personalized one-on-one coaching, and informational sessions that helped them take their businesses to the next level. Veterans are highly entrepreneurial and make significant contributions to the U.S. economy. According to the U.S. Small Business Administration, veteran-owned firms accounted for \$1.2 trillion in sales and employed 5.8 million people in 2011. The SBA's research also found that veterans are 45 percent more likely to be self-employed compared with those with no military experience.

VEA unites EY's passion for building a better working world through entrepreneurship with our deep commitment to helping veterans thrive in the workforce. Our veteran professionals are continuing their service to our country by growing our economy and creating jobs nationwide.

Organizational Support

According to *Employing America's Veterans: Perspectives from Businesses*, a 2012 report released by the Center for a New American Security, roughly half of the companies that seek to hire veterans also provide programs to meet their specific needs. To leverage veterans' talent and provide opportunities to ensure they succeed in their new jobs, some companies have started to provide mentoring programs or affinity groups that offer networking and support.

Our EY Veterans Professional Network helps to spread the word about the value of hiring and retaining veterans in the workplace. Members attend networking events, career fairs, and panel discussions specifically directed toward veterans. This helps our veterans connect with one another, our clients, and the larger veteran communities across the United States.

At bimonthly meetings, members plan communications, community projects, networking functions, and profes-

sional development initiatives. Many of these projects help bring our veterans together who are in different business units or geographies. For example in March 2015, EY's Veterans Network hosted 20 members of the U.S. Army War College for a one-day information-sharing session on leadership in the private sector and how EY supports veterans as they begin the transition from service to civilian life.

A key role of the network is to support and strengthen our veteran peer mentoring program. This program matches new veteran hires to peer mentors who help them transition successfully into their role and responsibilities at EY. Peer mentors help with career guidance, professional development, and networking opportunities.

In addition to the organizational support we provide to our veteran professionals, our internal network partners with external organizations and companies to help raise awareness around veteran issues and other issues affecting broader communities. Our network has long partnered with the Jericho Project, a New York-based charity that focuses on providing shelter and resources to the homeless. The network also has partnered with Johnson & Johnson to provide career counseling, resume review, and interview instructions to help transition military personnel to professional careers.

Diversity and inclusiveness is fundamental to EY's growth in today's economy and in new emerging markets around the world. Our own research shows EY groups with "best in class" engagement have better retention, stronger revenue growth, and higher profitability. As a result of our internal research, we have established deliberate methodologies for fostering an inclusive environment in which the differences, talents, and perspectives of all our people are maximized to deliver exceptional client service.

It is a privilege and an honor for EY to be the employer of choice for so many U.S. veterans as they navigate their post-military careers. We are committed to providing our veteran talent with an outstanding employee experience, empowering them to lead and inspire others in the business world as they have in the field.

■ Nancy Altobello is global vice chair of talent at EY.



FedEx Delivers **BIG** on Behalf of **Veterans**

Initiatives assist members of the armed services, veterans, and their families to re-enter civilian life.

BY CARLA BOYD

More than 40 years ago, FedEx was founded by a young Marine veteran recently returned from two tours of combat duty in Vietnam. Frederick W. Smith incorporated many tenets of the military into what was then known as Federal Express. To this day, many of those tenets still hold true, especially the FedEx commitment to recruiting veteran employees.

“The veteran community is a highly skilled workforce,” says Judy Edge, FedEx corporate vice president of human resources. “We very much value the many attributes and skills of our veteran recruits and are committed to helping bridge the gap between military life and corporate America.”

Photo: Shutterstock

Several career fields available at FedEx directly leverage the skills many veterans gain in the armed forces. Among the FedEx operating companies, job functions range from engineering, finance, flight operations, aircraft maintenance, communications, and IT positions to customer-facing positions such as couriers and drivers. Military training also can create excellent leadership and team building skills and strong work ethics.

Partnerships

FedEx fosters veteran relationships through several organizations, including Hiring Our Heroes, eMentor, AMVETS, University of Memphis Veterans Resource Center, Wounded Warrior Project, Joining Forces, and military installation events.

In November 2015, FedEx became a member of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Hiring Our Heroes Veteran Employment Advisory Council (VEAC). By joining the VEAC Chairman's Circle, FedEx continues to grow its commitment to America's military families by connecting military members and spouses to meaningful job opportunities.

As part of the relationship, FedEx will provide private-sector insights to Hiring Our Heroes leadership and has committed \$150,000 to sponsor hiring events and programming across the country. This included \$50,000 in transportation support, making FedEx the official shipping service for Hiring Our Heroes.

The VEAC is an advisory council comprised of more than 35 of America's largest employers across all industries and sectors. The council is committed to five fundamental principles:

- hiring veterans and military spouses
- sharing best practices and adopting next practices for veteran and military spouse employment
- reporting measures such as job opportunities, interviews, and job placements
- providing mentors to help transitioning service members and military spouses
- enlisting the commitments of thousands of small businesses to hire veterans and military spouses, and increasing the number of military-owned small businesses across America.

"FedEx is committed to providing opportunities for our nation's veterans," says Neil Gibson, a U.S. Air Force veteran and FedEx vice president of corporate communications.

"We have a proud legacy of commitment to equality and equal opportunity, and continually strive to encourage di-

versity and inclusion in our recruiting efforts, including the veteran community."

Military Relations Team and Military Veterans Network

To aid in veteran recruiting efforts, FedEx has a military relations team comprised of recruiters and veteran employees. The mission is to support military service members, veterans, and their families with transition into corporate America by forming a direct relationship between FedEx and all five military service branches as well as nonprofit military support organizations.

Efforts to recruit veterans at FedEx include conducting virtual career sessions at military installations, attending military career fairs, providing tools and support to hiring managers when considering military candidates, and participating in the White House initiative Joining Forces.

FedEx also launched the U.S. Military Veterans Network group, which is open to all FedEx employees. The group's mission is to create and foster a community that honors and supports the service of every military veteran associated with the company.

Importantly, the FedEx U.S. Military Veterans Network group serves as a resource for team members and their families, providing support for a variety of issues such as military leave adjustment, family matters, mentoring, care packages for deployed team members, FedEx discount programs, and participation in the annual Trees for Troops program. Led by the Christmas SPIRIT Foundation, that program features FedEx shipping live Christmas trees to active troops and their families. Since the Trees for Troops program launched in 2005, FedEx has shipped more than 157,000 real Christmas trees to service members and their families—covering every branch of the U.S. military at more than 65 bases in 17 countries.

The U.S. Military Veterans Network group also hosts an annual FedEx Veterans Day program for team members who have served in the armed forces.

"Since day one, the military has been a part of the FedEx DNA and we work every day to realize the full potential of our veterans, our nation's heroes," says Edge. "We at FedEx are grateful for those who now serve, all who have served and for those who, in the words of President Abraham Lincoln, 'gave the last full measure of devotion in service of their country.'"

■ **Carla Boyd** is the communications principal at FedEx.

Hilton team members serve food to veterans and active-duty military at a Veterans Day event in Washington, D.C.



The Opportunity to Serve in a Different Capacity

Hilton Worldwide opens its doors to military veterans with its Operation: Opportunity initiative.

BY KIMO KIPPEN

As veterans finish active service and return to civilian life, their futures contain many unknowns, including re-entering the workplace. At Hilton Worldwide, we believe veterans deserve more than a job—they deserve a meaningful career where they can put to use the skills and training they learned while serving our country.

Photo: Hilton Worldwide



It was with this in mind, and in memory of Conrad Hilton, our founder who served in the U.S. Army during World War I, that we launched Operation: Opportunity. This initiative is Hilton Worldwide’s commitment to providing extensive support to U.S. military veterans and their families, including the hiring of 10,000 veterans at the company by 2018.

Mutually Beneficial Program

“At Hilton Worldwide, we are strongly committed to supporting our veterans and their families. For nearly a century now, we have proudly welcomed veterans to our company. And many of our best leaders served in the military before joining us,” says CEO Chris Nassetta. “We found that people who have selflessly given so much to our country share many of the same values we look for in our team members, including integrity, leadership, and teamwork.”

Since Operation: Opportunity launched in 2013, Hilton Worldwide has hired more than 8,600 veterans, spouses, and dependents in roles that span operations, call center support, food and beverage, sales, guest services, engineering, IT, finance, and beyond—roles where our servicemen and servicewomen can apply what they learned in the military toward a successful career in hospitality. The program benefits both parties—it fills our critical need for skilled workers and opens the door to a purposeful career with opportunities for growth and development.

Operation: Opportunity also serves as a support structure aimed at helping veterans adjust to being in the workplace, and uses their skills—leadership, communication, teamwork, composure under pressure, decision making, and problem solving—that are integral in the hospitality industry to provide guests with a meaningful experience.

“The hospitality industry requires many of the same skill sets as the military. It’s a 24/7 operation that requires a high degree of professionalism and expertise in order to be successful,” Nassetta adds.

To create a sense of community for our veteran team members and to set them up for success, we started a veterans team member resource group, which supports professional development and also offers a military sponsor program for team members. These initiatives help create a sense of belonging for new team members; increase productivity and acclimation to our culture; help with seamless transitions for inbound team members; and build new relationships among team members to improve morale.

Commitment of Support

Soon after the launch of Operation: Opportunity, Joe Berger, executive vice president and president, Americas, marked another milestone in the company’s support of servicemen and servicewomen when he signed a National Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve Commitment. By signing it, we pledged to support the readiness and strength of the National Guard and Reserve units, and to offer support to team members who still serve and make their professional experience with Hilton Worldwide an outstanding one. To celebrate and raise awareness of this pledge, Hilton’s leaders traveled to 10 of our largest markets in the United States and held local “commitment of support” signing ceremonies.

Hilton Worldwide, which is listed on *Fortune’s* 100 Best Companies to Work For, is only as strong as its team members, and we want to attract the best talent. Our experience shows that people who have served in the military, or are still active through the National Guard or Reserves, meet these criteria and truly are “the best of the best.” Through Operation: Opportunity, we can give something back to our nation’s heroes, and we can ensure that our veteran team members are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to fulfill the roles of the future.

■ Kimo Kippen is chief learning officer at Hilton Worldwide.

IAP is an employer of choice with a veteran workforce that brings a wide array of technical and operational experience.



Integrity & Purpose

Formulate IAP's Veterans Strategy

A significant percentage of employees are former military or members of military families.

BY MAUREEN FITZGERALD

Customers around the world consistently rely on IAP Worldwide Services to deliver ingenious solutions to their most demanding challenges. They know IAP quickly deploys teams of highly skilled professionals who have the experience to tackle the toughest assignments with tenacity and agility—professionals whose unwavering commitment to mission ensures optimal results in any situation. More than 30 percent of these key contributors are veterans who are critical to our success.

Photo: IAP Worldwide Services

IAP is a government services company, and our culture reflects our great respect for the armed services. Our proven track record of hiring employees with military backgrounds testifies to that. More than one-third of the company's workforce are veterans, and many of our customers and partners are active-duty or retired service members. Our veteran members take great pride in continuing to serve the nation's interests at IAP.

With more than 2,000 employees in 20 countries, 78 percent serve on U.S. government contracts, 32 percent are veterans, 28 percent belong to military families, and 10 percent currently serve in the National Guard or Reserves. IAP was named a 2014 Top Veteran-Friendly Company by U.S. *Veterans Magazine* and a 2012 Top Military Spouse-Friendly Employer by *Military Spouse* magazine, and is considered a model employer of veterans within the government services industry.

Fundamentals

IAP recently answered three fundamental questions:

- Why do we exist as a company?
- What are the principles that clarify our strategy?
- What inspires us to care?

As a corporate team, we concluded that “Ingenuity and purpose drive us to seek and solve the toughest challenges facing our Nation and its Allies.”

Doug Kitani, U.S. Army veteran and IAP CEO, says, “We apply ingenuity and purpose in everything the company does, to include its veteran strategy. We build community among prior service employees, family members, and supporters around the values and other business benefits the military veteran experience offers to IAP.”

IAP strives to recruit, hire, and retain veterans because we know that no matter where their career takes them, they strive for excellence in all they do. Careers at IAP offer veterans the perfect medium to apply their skills and technical abilities. As our customers include all branches of the U.S. armed forces, it's a great way for veterans to transition to civilian life while continuing to serve their nation.

“IAP was the kind of company I was shooting for as a veteran,” says Surah Shittu, a member of IAP's U.S. Naval Academy Project. “It's hard to find a job with a company that understands what you can bring to them as a veteran and appreciates what you can contribute. IAP gives you the opportunity to show your leadership skills, contribute ideas, and provides you with a career path.”

IAP Values

We know veterans possess excellent leadership qualities and incorporate the military values of integrity, trust,

dignity, passion, and respect in their daily work lives. The IAP Values Charter reflects a common vision, goal, and code with which military members identify and have served their respective communities:

- Practice intellectual curiosity and rigor.
- Act with integrity and humility.
- Provide inspirational leadership and followership, enabled by empathy.
- Act nicely, responsibly, and swiftly.
- Act with resolve, adapting to and embracing change.
- Allow ourselves and others to be happy and successful.
- Pursue growth and learning.
- Partner with colleagues, customers, and community for our mutual success.

Our corporate giving program reflects the commitment by providing 47 percent of the total contributions to veterans/military family programs (for example, the Green Beret Foundation; AVET Project in Brevard County, Florida; and military academies), and 53 percent to community initiatives (such as the American Heart Association, Brevard Schools Foundation, and United Way). These contributions are shared between Florida, Oklahoma, Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, D.C.

Service in the armed forces offers broad opportunities to develop thoughtful solutions, leadership skills, and strong commitments to teammates and missions. We salute the nation's troops and invite them to contribute their considerable skills and knowledge as members of our team.

Thousands of former and current IAP employees, all veterans, have enjoyed successful careers at IAP. Their experience transitions well to our services and capabilities. For these men and women, a career at IAP is an opportunity to grow professionally, and do so with purpose.

Veterans have the service, experience, training, and education that our customers and partners value. Our teammates have government or government-contracting experience, or have security clearances, and continue to serve the nation and its allies in government services and national security, expeditionary infrastructure, logistics, power solutions, IT and communications, and aviation engineering solutions.

IAP's corporate headquarters is in Cape Canaveral, Florida, and operates in more than 100 locations in 20 countries. IAP also maintains offices in the Washington, D.C., area; Oklahoma City; Panama City, Florida; the United Kingdom; and the Middle East.

■ **Maureen Fitzgerald** is director of corporate communications and public relations for IAP.

More Than Just Hiring Veterans

Contracting with veteran-owned small businesses like Iron Sword is another way to support former military members.

BY GREG LOUKS

Iron Sword Enterprises is a VA-certified service-disabled veteran-owned small business (SDVOB). Established by three veterans in 1999, Iron Sword is a construction manager and general contractor, and provides owner representation services to project owners. Working in the federal and private sectors, the company seeks to set a positive example as an ethical and reliable business partner.

This article is less about what we do to support our veterans and more about what large companies can do with their acquisition arms to support veterans. When considering support for veterans, many large companies think first and foremost about hiring veterans. Yet one of the most important contributions that large companies can make in support of veterans is to focus on subcontracting to and acquiring products and services from veteran-owned small businesses.

More than half of the American workforce is employed in small businesses. Entrepreneurial spirit is the primary engine of the American economy and one of the top job creators for veterans.

Recent federal legislation has aimed to increase support for veterans. For example, in 1999, the Veteran Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development Act established an annual government-wide procurement goal of 3 percent for SDVOBs. This goal stipulates that not less than 3 percent of the total annual value of all prime and subcontract awards should be awarded to small business concerns owned and controlled by service-disabled veterans.

Four years later, the 2003 Veterans Benefits Act established a procurement program specifically for SDVOBs. This national program, administered by the Small

Business Administration, is designed to help agencies to meet the 3 percent procurement goal by allowing contracting officers to restrict competition to SDVOBs and to award sole-source and set-aside contracts where certain criteria are met.

And in 2006, the Veterans Benefits, Health Care and Information Technology Act created the Veterans First Contracting Program. This initiative applies only to acquisitions made by the Department of Veterans Affairs, an important distinction. The Veterans First Contracting Program gives the VA sole-source contracting authority and permits-restricted competition for both SDVOBs and veteran-owned small businesses.

Many states (including New York) have passed legislation similar to the federal SDVOB programs in which a percentage of their procurements must be set aside for veterans. Clearly, large companies seeking federal and state contracts benefit through engaging SDVOBs and veteran-owned small businesses in that they satisfy veterans contracting requirements. But, of course, the benefits extend far beyond mere procurement rules.

Subcontracting to and teaming with veteran-owned small businesses means employment for veterans. Like Iron Sword, many SDVOBs are not just veteran-owned; they endeavor to provide employment to other veterans. And, also like Iron Sword, veteran-owned businesses do not want handouts; we want opportunity, a chance to work, and a chance to apply the leadership skills we learned in the service of our country.

■ **Greg Louks** is CEO of Iron Sword Enterprises.



Members of MBUSA's Vetwork participated in the recent Carry the Load campaign in Atlanta.

Mercedes-Benz USA Is Driven to Include Those Who Served Our Country

The recruitment team actively seeks out veterans who would make the right fit within the company.

BY BILL WOODWARD

The challenges faced by many veterans as they depart active service can be difficult to overcome. Oftentimes the unknowns related to business skills, civilian compensation, promotion requirements, corporate culture, and even corporate language are intimidating to the most seasoned of transitioning service members.

Photo: Mercedes-Benz USA

The team at Mercedes-Benz USA (MBUSA, the corporation responsible for the distribution, sales, service, and genuine parts for Mercedes-Benz passenger cars in the United States) understands these difficulties and has created a unique combination of hiring, training, and networking support to help ensure incoming veterans overcome the obstacles to making a successful transition.

MBUSA knows the value veterans' experiences bring to the company (especially leadership experience), which is why you will find former service members and active reservists at every level of the organization. MBUSA's former CEO, Stephen Cannon, was an Army officer and is a graduate of West Point. The offices and meeting rooms at MBUSA headquarters are occupied by former commanding officers and corporals alike. From finance to operations, field support to marketing, service members are given real opportunities to positively affect the company's ability to accomplish its mission: to deliver the best in product and customer experience.

The talent acquisition team at MBUSA is familiar with military resumes and actively searches for veterans with the right attitude and skill set to join the organization. While some veterans are hired through the traditional careers portal at MBUSA.com, others are found via professional social media sites such as LinkedIn.

Most recently, MBUSA expanded its recruiting efforts to include events hosted by Recruit Military in an effort to bring veterans into any one of MBUSA's more than 370 dealerships nationwide. The car company's commitment to veterans transcends rank or education; MBUSA ensures hired service members are given an opportunity to contribute to the brand, while developing their post-military career.

Service pride and rich heritage are inherent to all branches of the military service. Regardless of unit, military occupational specialty, or duty station while serving, veterans understand that they are part of something larger, something great.

Carl Benz founded the first automobile more than 125 years ago and later teamed up with Gottlieb Daimler to

create what is now Mercedes-Benz. The company's rich heritage gives veterans that familiar sense of being part of something bigger, something to be proud of.

To create that feeling, MBUSA sends all hires to a three-day action-packed corporate experience called "Brand Immersion." The training provides employees with an opportunity to learn about the company's history, see how it manufactures the technologically advanced cars, and (my personal favorite) drive several of the brand's vehicles on a closed course. The experience creates an immediate sense of pride for the company and inclusion into the brand of "The Best or Nothing."

After attending Brand Immersion, veteran new hires are invited to join our Veteran's Network (Vetwork), a monthly coffee group created and represented by veterans from all divisions of the company. The group is supported under MBUSA's diversity and inclusion department and meets regularly to share a cup of coffee, support veterans within the company, and serve veteran initiatives in the local community.

The Vetwork's most recent endeavors include supporting Wake for Warriors, which is a local veteran nonprofit, and working with a visiting group from the U.S. Naval Academy to clean up a park in southeast Atlanta. The group's activities and close support provide some of the often-missed camaraderie veterans become accustomed to during their time in the service.

A veteran's jump from active service to civilian professional can be daunting, but is made easier and more successful when supported by a team that understands the challenges. MBUSA has done much to support transitioning service members, from recruiting to onboarding and sustainment, and continues to explore new ways to bring veterans into the brand.

So whether they aimed high or served as one of the few, military veterans are offered an amazing opportunity to continue to do something great at MBUSA.

■ **Bill Woodward** is the department manager of aftersales training for Mercedes-Benz USA and a major in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserves.

Filling the Supply Chain

Office Depot's partnerships and recruitment programs are expanding employment opportunities for veterans.

BY MICHAEL ALLISON

Office Depot is proud to support many ongoing programs and recruiting efforts that recognize veterans. There are many opportunities within our \$14.5 billion, multichannel, global corporation for veterans to use their skills and experience—from e-commerce and IT to retail, supply chain logistics, and delivery, among others. We've enjoyed strong partnerships with veterans organizations, and we look forward to inviting even more veterans to apply their skills and experiences to the company.

Office Depot is a member of the Veteran Jobs Mission (formerly 100,000 Jobs Mission), which is a coalition of companies committed to hiring 100,000 veterans by 2020. Together, member-companies already have hired more than 300,000 veterans, exceeding the original goal much earlier than planned. Building on this momentum, the Veteran Jobs Mission has now increased its commitment to hire 1 million veterans.

The Veteran Jobs Mission partnership is just one of many ways that Office Depot reaches out to veterans to provide employment opportunities after military service. The company has an alliance with the U.S. Army Partnership for Youth Success Program, which connects outgoing Army soldiers with Office Depot and other companies to interview for employment following military service.

Many veterans come back from the military with invaluable skills such as leadership, time management, discipline, and the ability to think rationally in stressful situations. All these skills can position veterans for success in the business world.

A shining example of a successful veteran at Office Depot is Kevin Ach, senior director of loss prevention and safety. He has been with Office Depot for 12 years with varying responsibilities—including supporting retail, contract sales, supply chain, and international—and found that he was able to relate his military experience with civilian life.

“While each experience has been diverse, the common theme of leadership and a drive for results runs through

each of them. I credit my success at Office Depot to my time in the Army,” Ach explains.

“The U.S. military is one of the best-trained workforces in the world, and our veterans have numerous skills and values that translate well to the business environment,” says Roland Smith, chairman and CEO for Office Depot. Smith is a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy and served in the Army as an aviation maintenance officer and pilot.

In May 2015, the company announced a partnership with Veterans Advantage, a military benefits program, to provide veterans and their families with an exclusive 20 percent discount on select purchases in our retail stores and online at OfficeDepot.com.

Beyond these partnerships, our recruiters are trained on military resume reviews and participate in resume writing and interview skills sessions through our partnership with the United Way of Broward County's veterans initiative, Mission United.

Office Depot posts thousands of employment opportunities to Military.com's Veteran Employment Center, where active and retired service personnel can view and apply for jobs. All Office Depot positions posted to the company's career page and to Military.com will connect to Military.com's military skills translator tool to help veterans find the most appropriate employment positions based on their military specialties and experience.

Company recruiters recently attended the Service Academy Career Conference and identified many supply chain and logistics candidates for senior management positions. Our biggest success has been the placement of veterans within our supply chain organization. These candidates are motivated, experienced, and qualified.

■ **Michael Allison** is executive vice president and chief people officer for Office Depot.

PenFed Credit Union's Philanthropic Arm Is Reaching Out to Assist Veterans

The PenFed Foundation helps ensure military families have the resources they need for a secure financial future.

BY T.V. JOHNSON

PenFed Credit Union is one of the largest in the United States. It was established in 1935 by 10 share subscribers who, between them, subscribed for \$40 in shares. The company has since grown to about 1.4 million members and more than \$20 billion in assets.

“We’ve experienced unbelievable growth during a span of more than 80 years, but our ability to remain true to the spirit of the credit union ethos—people helping people—is the real measure of success,” says President and CEO James Schenck.

Schenck is a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and served as an Army officer for 13 years. The Army gave him important leadership lessons and opened his eyes to the unique challenges facing service members, veterans, and military families.

Reflecting on his time in uniform, Schenck says, “The Army did a wonderful job of reinforcing something I had always believed to be true: Good leaders are men and women who hail from every corner of the country, reflect every race, creed, color, religion, and national origin. The military is one of the country’s top producers of leaders, and PenFed has had the pleasure of placing former members of the military in some senior-level positions in the company.”

PenFed Foundation

As an institution, PenFed is driven to go the extra mile for service members not only by providing market-leading products, but also by perpetuating a corporate culture that respects military service and harbors the sincere belief that it is truly an honor to serve those who have sacrificed so

much for the nation. It was out of that corporate culture that PenFed’s philanthropic arm, the PenFed Foundation, came to be in 2001.

Schenck also serves as the president and CEO of the PenFed Foundation, a national nonprofit organization committed to helping members of the military community secure their financial future. Its financial assistance programs stave off financial hardships that could, if left unchecked, result in poverty, hunger, and even homelessness. The financial readiness counseling offered by the foundation helps service members and veterans make sound, informed decisions about their finances.

“We believe that by changing the way people think about money, we can promote financial independence and financial freedom,” Schenck explains.

The PenFed Foundation provides service members, veterans, their families, and support networks with the skills and resources they need to improve their lives through programs on financial education, credit building, home ownership, and short-term assistance.

The credit union provides \$2 million annually to the PenFed Foundation, which covers all the foundation’s personnel costs and most of its operating expenditures. As a result, PenFed Foundation donors and partners can be assured that nearly 100 percent of their contributions directly benefit those in need. The foundation effectively reaches military communities across the United States, builds strong partnerships, and engages a dedicated corps of volunteers.

Photo: PenFed Credit Union



■ PenFed employees relax after participating in the 2015 Navy 5 Miler in Washington, D.C.

Four Core Programs

The PenFed Foundation recognizes that financial challenges for those in the military and veteran communities are often the result of limited financial education and a lack of resources. Thus, the foundation is committed to helping the nation's defenders, veterans, and their families gain financial relief, recovery, education, and ultimately financial self-sufficiency. It assists the military and veteran communities through four core programs.

The Military Heroes Fund provides emergency financial assistance for wounded veterans experiencing an unexpected financial setback resulting in a delinquent essential bill such as rent, mortgage, utilities, car payments, and other urgent needs. This fund includes the Family and Caregiver Transition Support Program, which provides financial support to caregivers for child and respite care, short-term training and educational expenses, and in-home healthcare for the veteran. The Military Heroes Fund has provided financial support to thousands of service member households totaling more than \$4 million.

The Dream Makers program offers matching down-payment or closing-costs assistance grants for qualifying low- to moderate-income service members and veterans buying their first home. The foundation also provides veterans with direct grants for qualifying home rehabilitation of their primary residence. The Dream Makers program has provided grants in excess of \$4 million.

The Asset Recovery Kit program offers interest-free, short-term microloans to help service members who are experiencing an immediate financial challenge. This program helps them avoid falling into the difficult-to-escape

cycle of debt as a result of high-cost payday loans. PenFed Credit Union approves 100 percent of service member applicants, regardless of credit, and assumes all loss risks. PenFed Foundation has made more than 17,000 Asset Recovery Kit program loans totaling nearly \$8 million.

Finally, the Lee & Penny Anderson Defenders Lodge was built in response to a gap in services of the VA healthcare system in providing short-term lodging while veterans seek treatment at the Palo Alto VA Healthcare Center. The gap in services resulted in a financial strain for many veterans. The lodge eliminates a potential financial barrier by providing veterans cost-free accommodations in a safe and secure environment that promotes healing and wellness.

This facility serves veterans (and their caregivers) who are in an outpatient status and receiving medical care for multiple, combat-related injuries such as brain or organ damage, chemotherapy, amputations, and physical and occupational therapies. The Lee & Penny Anderson Defenders Lodge has provided 43,000 nights of stay, saving veterans and caregivers \$7.5 million in hotel accommodation costs.

"The role of charitable organizations like the PenFed Foundation is simple," says Schenck. "Anyone, who at one time or another, wrote a blank check made payable to the United States of America—for an amount of up to and including their own life—has paid their citizenship dues in full, as far as I'm concerned. It's up to the rest of us to ensure that when these heroes need heroes, someone is there to answer the call."

■ **T.V. Johnson** is vice president of corporate communications for PenFed Credit Union. He retired from the U.S. Marine Corps in 2014.

On Veterans Day every year, 7-Eleven provides free car washes to military veterans.



7-Eleven's Military-Oriented Business Practices Benefit Veterans

The company's three-pronged strategy to help veterans involves hiring, franchising, and philanthropy.

Among the most honored and cherished patriots are U.S. military veterans. And at 7-Eleven, it's a corporate priority to support U.S. military personnel, both past and present, and their families.

One of the more stunning realities is that less than 1 percent of Americans serve in the U.S. military, but they bear 100 percent of the burden of defending the United States, its freedom, liberty, and fundamental way of life.

Since September 11, 2001, more than 2 million U.S. troops have been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. Statistics show that 55 percent of U.S. military personnel are married and 40 percent have children. Furthermore, there are approximately 700,000 active-duty U.S. military spouses, and an additional 400,000 spouses of military Reserve members.

More than 7,000 U.S. military personnel have died in the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, and well over 50,000 have been wounded. When service members enlist, their families serve with them, and an overwhelming number of U.S. military families face economic and educational challenges that go above and beyond what other citizens face in everyday life.

Photo: Shutterstock

A Sense of Duty

7-Eleven is the largest chain in the convenience retailing industry. We operate, franchise, and license more than 10,700 stores in North America. Globally, approximately 58,500 7-Eleven stores serve customers in 17 countries.

As a neighborhood store operating in thousands of communities across the United States, the company believes giving back is one way we can genuinely live up to the 7-Eleven customer promise of “making the everyday better;” and it’s a salient focus of our “servant leadership” culture.

Included on 7-Eleven’s business roster are many U.S. military veterans, serving at all levels of the company, and 7-Eleven therefore has a strong affinity with vets. The company deals quite personally with veterans’ issues, and that leads to a significant and established corporate sense of duty.

That sense of duty is quantified in three fundamental military-oriented business pillars: hiring, with military-friendly hiring practices; franchising, with 7-Eleven’s Veterans Franchising Program; and philanthropy, with 7-Eleven supporting several military-centered organizations and initiatives.

Leadership Standards

Among other highly favorable characteristics, 7-Eleven recognizes the incredible value and standards of leadership that veterans have to offer. The company takes military experience seriously, recognizing that service in the military teaches the vital importance of structure to any successful mission.

We are committed to veteran-preferential hiring. During the past year, more than 60 veterans and military spouses have been hired in a variety of roles, including field consultant trainees who provide business-consulting services to franchisees, store manager trainees, and store support center employees. Those veterans are encouraged to interact within the company, learn about support services, and network with their peers through 7-Eleven’s Veteran Resource Group initiatives.

Not only do U.S. military veterans serve in nearly all capacities, from 7-Eleven store sales associates to headquarters personnel, but numerous U.S. military veterans have become franchisees.

As a company, 7-Eleven knows that veterans already have developed the skills, honed the focus, and demonstrated the dedication to lead a successful business. So, to qualified U.S. military veterans interested in business ownership, 7-Eleven offers up to 20 percent off the initial franchise fee (savings up to a maximum of \$50,000); up to 65 percent financing through 7-Eleven; and other special financing for the business. Also, Operation: Take Command is an annual competition that enables a veteran to win a fee-free 7-Eleven franchise (valued at up to \$190,000).

In a timeframe of about five years, the company has provided more than 80 veterans with more than \$1.5 million in discounts in franchise fees.

7-Eleven considers it a corporate imperative to serve those who have served the rest of us, through the company’s staunch support of military organizations. During the past several years, 7-Eleven employees, franchisees, guests, and business partners have contributed more than \$4 million in cash and product donations to organizations, including Folds of Honor, Warrior Gateway, the USO, Hire Heroes USA, Reserve Aid, Operation Homefront, and Operation Mend.

One of the most straightforward ways in which 7-Eleven honors U.S. military veterans occurs each year on Veterans Day, when we provide free car washes to military veterans across the United States.

Another critical initiative that the company strongly supports is the Johnny Mac Soldiers Fund, which provides substantial financial backing for the education of veterans, their spouses, and their children. The fund is named for John McHugh, a West Point graduate who, as a U.S. Army colonel, was the highest-ranking officer at that time to be killed in action in Afghanistan.

Also, 7-Eleven is a founding partner, along with the George W. Bush Presidential Center, of the center’s essential initiative that was established to enhance the ways military veterans are served as they return home, ready to continue their service to the nation.

Notable Measures

7-Eleven has been recognized by veterans organizations for its military-friendly business opportunities, hiring practices, and philanthropic support for military families.

To cite just a few examples, 7-Eleven was selected a 2014-2015 Best for Vets franchise by *Military Times*; a Top 100 Military Friendly Employer by *G.I. Jobs* and *Military Spouse* magazines in 2014, 2015, and 2016; one of *U.S. Veterans Magazine’s* Top 100 Veteran-Friendly Companies; and a Most Valuable Employer for Military by *CivilianJobs.com* in 2014.

But for 7-Eleven, it’s really not about the awards and recognition. These are simply indicators that the company’s approach to veterans has had some notable measure of positive impact.

Trusting thoroughly in U.S. military veterans, 7-Eleven is not averse to putting its money where its mouth is—to the firm and lasting benefit of all of us who live in freedom, with the opportunity through hard work to carve out even better lives for ourselves and our families.

U.S. military veterans have served their nation, and served it well. Now it’s time to serve them.



■ Since 2014, Starbucks has personalized veterans' aprons with employees' military affiliations.

Starbucks Serves Up Outreach and Support in Military Communities

The company honors veterans through its numerous partnerships with veteran services organizations.

BY TOM TICE

At Starbucks, we believe we have a responsibility to honor our veterans and their families for their service and sacrifice. This honor goes beyond saying “thank you”—we must put our gratitude into action and collectively help those who are making the transition from military to life out of uniform. We have a moral duty to engage veterans once they leave the service, and we know that doing so in a meaningful way will not only strengthen the communities in which they live, but also the United States as a whole.

Photo: Starbucks

To this end, in 2013 Starbucks committed to hiring at least 10,000 veterans and military spouses by 2018. Since then we have dedicated resources to help transition service members and their spouses, build a culture of understanding military service, and foster holistic connections of goodwill, ultimately increasing our relevance within our military communities.

Internal and External Connections

Starbucks is partnering with like-minded companies, non-profit veteran services organizations, and government organizations to create successful transitions for military members and their spouses, which will help bridge the divide between military and civilian communities. Our partnerships include, but aren't limited to, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Hiring Our Heroes, Hire America's Heroes, Hire Heroes USA, USO Transition 360 Alliance, JP Morgan Chase Veteran Jobs Mission, and Onward to Opportunity (Schultz Family Foundation). Our efforts to date have surpassed the halfway mark on our hiring commitment, with more than 6,500 veteran and military spouse hires.

Our success isn't found only in the numbers. All throughout our organization, we have created a workplace that truly recognizes, honors, and celebrates the services and efforts of our veterans. We created a platform called Roll Call to encourage our partners to self-identify their military status and share their story during the employment onboarding process. As a result, we've seen increased military community engagement by both our retail and enterprise partners who are inspired by the talent and demonstrated value that veterans and military spouses bring to Starbucks.

In addition to hiring and investing in our communities, we also have an internal military network and employee affinity group, the Armed Forces Network, with more than 16 chapters and many more coming online in the future. The Armed Forces Network is an additional layer of support for veterans, military spouses, and any Starbucks partner

wanting to show support for our veterans. These chapters focus on the needs of their local population and participate in activities that support veterans both inside and outside of the company.

Military Friendly Stores

The extension of our commitment into the communities we serve expanded in early 2015, when we began engaging military communities in a meaningful way through our Military Family Stores, which enable us to create lasting partnerships between local military communities, veteran services organizations, and Starbucks stores. This exciting component was designed to enhance the connections between veterans, military spouses, and local resources while functioning as a hub within our communities to accelerate outreach and support.

To date we have dedicated 20 Military Family Stores across the United States, with plans for more to come. These stores have branch-specific military-themed art developed in partnership with the Starbucks Armed Forces Network to highlight components of our military communities, as well as a Military Family Store Community Board to honor and recognize local veteran and military spouses partners. Our partnerships for this concept are Blue Star Family, The Mission Continues, Army Community Services, and Team Red, White and Blue.

Every day across the globe, incredible stories unfold about military service members and veterans connecting over Starbucks coffee. Whether in our stores or giving direct support to our deployed service members through tons of coffee donations, Starbucks has a mission to use our scale for good to advance veteran- and military spouse-related causes while creating meaningful opportunities for those transitioning to civilian life.

■ **Tom Tice** is the recruiting manager for military talent acquisition at Starbucks.

Rolling Out the Welcome Mat for Veterans

Synchrony Financial's recruiting and hiring initiatives have resulted in a 100 percent increase in veteran hires over three years.

BY MARISSA LARA

Synchrony Financial, a consumer financial services company and a large provider of private label credit cards in the United States, aims to be an employer of choice and a source of inspiration for those who have served in the armed forces and their supporters.

The business traces its roots back to 1932, financing GE appliances during the Great Depression era. It has since grown to work with many businesses of all sizes in tailoring credit card programs, to help engage their customers where they shop. Synchrony has more than 12,000 employees helping to service hundreds of thousands of our partners' locations across the United States and Canada.

As part of GE Capital, and following its planned separation in 2014 to become a stand-alone company, Synchrony Financial has strongly supported the recruiting and hiring of veterans and members of the Reserve and National Guard.

During the past three years, we have put policies and strategies in place to help demonstrate our support. From 2012 to 2015, the company has doubled its hiring of veterans into professional roles through its many initiatives, including:

- Forming a Veterans Network, an internal network comprising both veterans and patriots that support veterans and their families. The network is focused on attracting veterans to Synchrony Financial and facilitating their growth and retention through professional and personal development, career management, mentoring, and networking. Veteran champions were selected at each office site to help support the network's message across the company.
- Participating in the U.S. Department of Defense Military Spouse Employment Partnership, which helps connect military spouses with more than 295 employers who have committed to recruit, hire, promote, and retain military spouses. This program will enable military spouses to continue their employment with Synchrony, even as they move from base to base.

- Participating in Service Academy Career Conference events.
- Participating in Recruit Military events across the United States in partnership with RecruitMilitary.com, identifying and inviting veterans to on-site hiring events. Many hiring events include special job interview training and job aids customized to assist veterans transitioning into the civilian workplace.
- Partnering with BestJobsUSA's 50 Best Veteran-Friendly Employers.
- Providing tuition reimbursement for employees, which enables veteran employees to then transfer their GI benefits to their children.

The Synchrony Financial Veterans Network Recruiting Committee's 2016 goals include plans to attend 10 on-site recruiting events with the support of Synchrony Financial veterans, as well as recruiting at local military job fairs and integrating their efforts into its campus recruiting program at local colleges with high veteran populations. This also will include seeking out interns to join Synchrony's Business Leadership Program, which gives rising juniors and seniors an opportunity to work cross-functionally in the company, gain a more diverse understanding of the business, and increase their chances of obtaining a professional position upon graduation. A battle buddy or fellow veteran mentor will be provided to new hires to help improve assimilation into Synchrony's culture.

In addition, the Veterans Network has plans to establish a webpage on SynchronyCareers.com specifically for veterans, with links to the Military Spouse Employment Partnership, links to materials on how veterans can successfully interview with the company, and a video display on why veterans are welcomed at Synchrony Financial.

■ **Marissa Lara** is the chief diversity officer at Synchrony Financial.



■ Staff and veterans participate in the university's annual Memorial Day flag-planting ceremony.

Empowering The **Next Greatest** Generation

University of Phoenix offers a bevy of resources to veterans seeking to pursue higher education.

BY ADAM SUCH

University of Phoenix was founded on the principles of innovation and access to career-relevant, quality higher education for working adults—a traditionally underserved segment of the population. In 1976, founder John Sperling provided unique programs to first responders that enabled them to improve their skills, enhance their careers, and help have a greater impact in their community while continuing to serve. By developing and tailoring programs, including leading the online delivery of higher education, University of Phoenix changed the face of adult higher education in the United States and has helped empower more than 1 million adults to engage, lead, and impact their communities.

Photo: University of Phoenix

Today, anywhere between 240,000 and 360,000 highly trained, skilled, and experienced members of the U.S. armed forces depart the service annually, the White House reports. University of Phoenix recognizes, values, and honors the unique skills and experiences of these veterans and their families. The university's goal is to empower this next greatest generation of service members to join in leading communities into the 21st century. The debt of gratitude owed to military service members can be paid in many ways, but perhaps the most important is to support the military community's transition into the workforce and continued service out of uniform.

Career Readiness

According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers, the most valued competencies sought in employees include critical thinking, problem solving, teamwork, collaboration, leadership, professionalism, and work ethic. A recent University of Phoenix survey among 1,007 U.S. adults aged 18 or older who are serving or have served in the U.S. military found that 86 percent of hiring managers have considered hiring employees with a military background. Of those same hiring managers, 80 percent cited having hired employees with military backgrounds.

The highly valued career-readiness competencies are gained and refined through service and forged in combat. By recognizing and giving credit for service-related skills, training, and education, coupled with career-readiness competencies, University of Phoenix adds career-relevant training and education that helps prepare student veterans to pursue entry into the workforce.

In addition to relationships with thousands of employers, local community engagement, participation in educational and employment activities, and partnerships with leading organizations, the university provides a critical component in the transition journey. University of Phoenix is committed to ensuring veterans are well informed, know how to effectively access the benefits earned in service, and make smart choices in using those benefits. Last year, tens of thousands of veterans chose University of Phoenix to use their entitled education benefits to meet their goals of attaining career-relevant higher education.

A Team Effort to Provide Support

Student veterans considering University of Phoenix will work with enrollment representatives, academic counselors, and financial advisers specifically chosen, trained, and certified to work with military students. Many are former service members or dependents and understand the unique experiences and requirements of these prospective students. Additionally, more than half of the executive deans across the university's schools and colleges are veterans.

Enrollment representatives assist veterans through tools that help prospective students explore their interests, research programs of study that help prepare them to pursue their career of interest, assist with understanding the total

cost of their chosen program, and help them decide on a responsible method for paying for school. Prospective students also are provided information on how to locate and are explained how to properly use the College Scorecard, College Navigator, and the Paying for College websites, and have access to the University of Phoenix Financial Plan Tool, which helps them estimate the tuition and expenses of their chosen degree program and explore ways to pay for their education. The goal is to provide as much information as possible to enable student veterans to make an informed decision.

Academic counselors are responsible for providing quality academic advisement and leadership for all new and continuing students, serving as liaisons between the student and university and discussing degree programs, requirements, transfer credits, academic progress, transcripts on file, and course waivers. Academic counselors also educate students about resources and tools available to them while tracking their academic progress and providing support throughout their educational journey.

Finance advisers help students understand their financial obligations to the university. Like academic counselors, these advisers remain in contact with students through the duration of their academic careers. Emphasizing responsible borrowing, finance advisers inform students of their financial options and assist with questions regarding paperwork for financial aid processing, tuition assistance, the GI Bill, and vocational rehabilitation.

Military service provides a solid foundation for career growth even though it may not be immediately clear how military skills and experience directly translate to a civilian career. University of Phoenix has developed the Phoenix Career Guidance System to help students explore career options both before enrollment and during their time at the university.

Using the Military Skills Translator Tool, veterans can begin to discover civilian job opportunities based on military experience and how these jobs align with degree programs. Additionally, veterans can start their career search by completing the Career Interest Profiler to determine where their individual skills and passions may align. Upon selecting a career goal, the Job Market Research Tool provides information about current and recent job and labor market information for their career of interest as well as typical salary ranges. Additional tools include career advisers, goal planner, skill builder, resume builder, and interview prep.

University of Phoenix recognizes, values, and advocates on behalf of veterans and is committed to leading best practices, educational, and service programs in adult education to empower this next greatest generation of service members lead the nation into the 21st century.

■ **Adam Such** is vice president of military and veterans affairs at University of Phoenix and a retired Army Special Forces lieutenant colonel.



Think Global, Act Local

Global hospitality company Wyndham Worldwide takes the local road in veteran recruitment.

BY PATRICIA A. LEE

When a large, international employer sets out to grow its veteran employee base, it typically announces grand goals with great fanfare, media, and PR campaigns. Global hospitality company Wyndham Worldwide has preferred a different approach, by taking its global efforts to the local level. No expensive ad campaign or celebrity spokesperson, but rather a focused grassroots effort to look in the communities where the company operates. The goal is to find veterans jobs and set them on a true career path that respects and values their military experience, and apply it successfully in the industry.

While many large organizations have multifaceted national campaigns, Wyndham Worldwide has focused on grassroots efforts where “thinking globally and acting locally” rings true. Through professional and personal networks and local relationship building, the company has made it clear it is open for business for veterans.

Recruitment Efforts

To tap into its existing veteran employee base, the company created I-VOW, a dedicated associate business group, to engage veteran associates and supporters in a forum to promote Wyndham Worldwide as a veteran-friendly organization that provides support to veterans through mentoring, identification of work opportunities, and engagement in community projects. I-VOW, which stands for Impacting Veteran Opportunities at Wyndham

Photo: Shutterstock

Worldwide, boasts more than 300 members today and has active chapters in the company's corporate offices in New Jersey and Indiana. Along with supporting the company's recruitment initiatives, I-VOW hosts developmental opportunities for associates across the organization to learn about important topics affecting veterans in the workforce, provides community support for local veterans organizations, and adds a higher level of celebration and recognition on Veterans Day for both office- and field-based veteran associates.

"Recruiting veterans leads to a more engaged workforce with higher productivity. Wyndham is an organization that respects the unique experience veterans can offer and views veteran recruitment as an ingredient of its success," says Scott LePage, senior vice president of brand operations and franchise services for the Wyndham Hotel Group. He also is a former member of the U.S. Navy. "Our recruitment teams collaborate with our I-VOW group to develop strategies and approaches to effectively tap into personal, organizational, and local networks to attract great veteran candidates."

Such collaboration is reflected in the pilot program Wyndham recently launched with one of its preferred suppliers, Cameron-Brooks, a recruitment firm dedicated to fostering and hiring veterans across corporate America and enhancing their transition from the military into the workforce. "We have partnered with Cameron-Brooks with the shared goals of building relationships, hiring quality veteran talent, and providing more opportunities to the expanding number of veterans," LePage explains.

Another local pilot program is the hospitality and resort management "Schools Program" in San Antonio, Texas, where veterans are hired into frontline resort operations management positions, leveraging their skills and experience in technology and the ability to solve problems.

"One of the most important aspects of effective veteran recruitment is the ability to help candidates identify how the skills developed during their military service can translate to careers in business," says Bill Malcolm, recruiting director for Wyndham Vacation Ownership and senior master sergeant, U.S. Air Force (retired). "As a veteran, I understand the mindset and the skill set these candidates can bring to our organization, and while it can be a challenge to be a veteran, helping other veterans and their spouses find jobs after service is deeply rewarding."

These programs augment Wyndham's overall recruitment efforts, including its partnership with Zero Chaos, the company's temporary and contractor resource firm, to provide opportunities as a prominent entry point for veterans as their first nonmilitary job experience. Then, once in the door, Wyndham's recruitment team partners with the company's I-VOW members to provide mentoring, training, and coaching to all Wyndham veteran new hires to ensure they are supported and set up for long-term success.

"Part of what makes the hospitality industry special is the diversity in the job opportunities we can provide, and the longevity of the career paths where jobs can lead," says Lee.

Supply Chain Diversity

Beyond recruitment, Wyndham Worldwide also is a recognized industry leader in supply chain diversity, with veteran-owned suppliers actively recruited and welcomed to join the company's wide and growing range of suppliers for everything from linens to software systems. Its award-winning supplier diversity program is consistently ranked among the top in the nation, and was recognized by U.S. *Veterans Magazine* for its commitment to supporting veteran-owned businesses.

"As a global provider of hospitality, we aim for our suppliers to be as diverse as the customers we serve, and that includes veterans," says Jose Nido, vice president of global supplier diversity for Wyndham Worldwide and a retired lieutenant colonel of the U.S. Air Force. "We take pride in knowing that our supplier diversity program includes many successful diverse-owned businesses that make vital contributions directly to our economy while maintaining a culture at our company that combines individual strengths to help promote better business solutions."

Wyndham also participates in Hotels for Heroes, a program run by Fisher House, a network of "comfort homes" where families of wounded, injured, and ill military service members can stay at no cost while a loved one is receiving treatment. Hotels for Heroes provide hotel rooms when no Fisher House room is available.

Looking forward, Wyndham only sees more opportunities for veterans, and a continued focus on expanding the deep connections and relationships the company and its associates have in identifying veteran talent to join the organization. For recruitment, the company is widening its focus on hiring not only veterans, but veteran spouses. Wyndham also is seeking to expand its reach by attracting veterans interested in hotel franchise ownership.

"At Wyndham Worldwide, our culture drives us to do good for the people and the communities around us," says Lee. "We aim to conduct our business in a way that our associates, partners, and shareholders can be proud of."

"And we know that a focus and a commitment to veterans is not only the right thing to do, but it's also the right thing to do for our business. We are extremely proud of our military and our veterans and thank them for their service and all that they and their families have sacrificed. Our commitment to our heroes today is helping to build the future leaders of tomorrow."

■ **Patricia A. Lee** is senior vice president and chief diversity officer at Wyndham Worldwide.



A Dedicated Team at Xerox Is Committed to Making Military Hires

Three program initiatives open the doors for service members to join the Xerox team.

BY CARLA WEBSTER

At Xerox, diversity and inclusion is much more than just a goal; it is a business imperative. Fostering a diverse workforce has always been part of our culture and goes hand in hand with our people strategy. One of the many ways we extend our commitment to cultivating diversity is through military recruitment programs that help service members seamlessly return to civilian work life.

Photo: Shutterstock

In fact, Xerox was recently recognized by *G.I. Jobs* as a Military Friendly Employer. The list features companies that boast the strongest job opportunities, hiring practices, and retention programs for transitioning service members and military spouses seeking civilian employment.

“As I transitioned from a military career to a civilian career, I quickly realized I needed to translate my skills into terms that civilian hiring managers could understand,” says Beth Rowley, a U.S. Navy veteran and a Xerox business development vice president. “Xerox recognized the number of skills the Navy bestowed upon me—the ability to effectively manage, appraise, monitor, and develop service members—and offered me a wonderful job opportunity. I am truly grateful.”

Through a wide variety of programs, Xerox’s dedicated Military, University and Disability Outreach Team works daily to identify and employ U.S. military veterans.

The Veteran Jobs Mission

In 2011, to support First Lady Michelle Obama’s Joining Forces program, President Barack Obama challenged businesses to hire and train 100,000 veterans and military spouses. Named the Veteran Jobs Coalition, the program includes 200 companies that collectively hired 292,645 veterans through October 2015.

Xerox has always supported corporate initiatives to identify, interview, and recruit individuals with disabilities, military veterans, and military spouses for open positions within the company. But after receiving the challenge from President Obama, we knew we had to up our game.

In 2013, Xerox joined the Veterans Job Mission—committing to hire 10,000 veterans by 2018—and we are well on our way to meeting our commitment. “It just makes good business sense to hire veterans, and Xerox has a strong commitment to military recruitment,” says Amber Hayes, vice president of global talent acquisition. “We have a long history and focused programs that encourage veterans to apply for positions throughout the company.”

National Chamber of Commerce Hiring Our Heroes

Each month Xerox participates in the National Chamber of Commerce’s Hiring Our Heroes campaign events. Launched in March 2011, HOH is a nationwide initiative to help veterans and military spouses find meaningful employment.

Thanks to more than 975 live HOH job fairs across the United States, Xerox recruiters from around the country can educate people about our business, provide tips on transitioning to civilian work life, and identify potential new talent for the company.

“Our continued participation in these events affords transitioning servicemen and women direct contact with Xerox recruiters,” explains Jennifer Bishop, a member of Xerox’s Military, University and Disability Outreach Team. “It has proven to be a great channel for us to recruit veteran talent.”

Military Spouse Employment Program

Part of the Department of Defense’s Spouse Education and Career Opportunities initiative, the Military Spouse Employment Program (MSEP) seeks to strengthen education and career opportunities for military spouses. By providing career exploration opportunities, the program helps military spouses understand their skill sets, explore their goals and interests, and create a path toward achieving their career goals.

The company participates in ongoing MSEP career fairs, meeting one-on-one with potential hires, educating them on the Xerox brand, and working together to match the right candidates to the right jobs.

Susan Villafane, director of U.S. military relations, knows the difficulties of being a military spouse. In August 2005, her husband was severely wounded in the Iraq war. After numerous surgeries and a lot of time in physical therapy, he retired and the family had to quickly move off base. In addition to adjusting to a new life, Villafane faced the challenge of looking for a job in their new location with a resume that made her appear as a job-hopper due to the family’s history of frequent moves.

“I have had the opportunity to change the perspective of hiring managers and bring greater awareness to the value of hiring military spouses,” she says. “I am proud of Xerox’s affiliation with MSEP. They understand how to help spouses overcome obstacles in attaining employment.”

Carry the Load

For the past three years, Xerox also has been a proud partner and supporter of Carry the Load, a nonprofit organization that works to restore the true meaning of Memorial Day.

“We realize that you may never walk a mile in one of our nation’s heroes’ shoes,” explains Clint Bruce, co-founder of Carry the Load and a former Navy SEAL, “but you do have the opportunity to walk alongside them to honor what they’ve done.”

Through the foundation’s annual Memorial March in Dallas, Xerox employees have the opportunity to honor the sacrifices of our military, law enforcement, firefighters, and rescue personnel. Whether it’s by joining in the march or cheering in the crowd, we are given the opportunity to honor service members and their families for their sacrifices and celebrate the true meaning of Memorial Day.

Xerox is committed to providing employment and development opportunities for military veterans and spouses. We recognize the value they bring in creating a diverse and inclusive work environment.

■ **Carla Webster** is program manager of the Military, University, and Disability Outreach Team at Xerox Corporation.



Special Thanks to the Thayer Leader Development Group at West Point

TLDG was founded in 2010 and has trained more than 25,000 executives and leaders from more than 500 companies. Its mission is to help build leaders of character by offering leadership and ethics education grounded in the U.S. Army leadership philosophy of “Be, Know, Do” and U.S. Military Academy values of “Duty, Honor, Country.” Learn more at www.thayerleaderdevelopment.com.

The Association for Talent Development (ATD), formerly ASTD, is the world’s largest association dedicated to those who develop talent in organizations. ATD supports the work of professionals locally in more than 125 chapters, international strategic partners, and global member networks. Learn more at www.td.org.