

THE VETERAN ADVANTAGE:

**Unlocking the
Potential of
Military Talent in
Transportation
and Supply Chain**

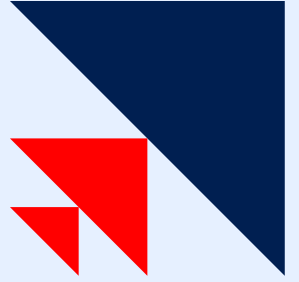
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Introduction

↘ As the transportation and supply chain industry grapples with digital disruption, market fluctuations, and driver shortages, tapping into the talent pool of veteran workers has never been more critical. Veterans bring unique skills, experiences, and leadership abilities that can help drive business success in an increasingly complex and dynamic environment. However, many veterans face significant barriers in transitioning to civilian careers, from translating their military experience and fighting damaging stigmas to finding employers who understand and value their contributions.

Spark Change Lab's June 2024 webinar aimed to bridge that gap by providing actionable insights and strategies for employers looking to support veterans in the workplace. By leveraging the expertise of industry leaders and veteran advocates, we hope to continue sparking meaningful dialogue and driving positive change.



The Current Landscape

Recent data from the Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) at Syracuse University sheds light on the current state of veteran employment. As of January 2024, the overall veteran unemployment rate stood at 3.3%, an increase from 3.0% in December 2023 (Institute for Veterans and Military Families, 2024).

However, these aggregate figures mask significant variations across different veteran demographic groups. Veterans aged 18-24 experienced a sharp increase in unemployment, jumping from 7.7% to 11.0% in January, a rate higher than their nonveteran peers (IVMF, 2024). Female veterans also saw a notable rise in joblessness, with their unemployment rate increasing from 3.3% to 4.8%, surpassing the rate for female nonveterans (3.4%) (Institute for Veterans and Military Families, 2024).

Interestingly, the IVMF (2024) report found that Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino veterans had lower unemployment rates in January compared to their nonveteran counterparts, at 3.4% versus 5.6% and 5.4% versus 5.7%, respectively. However, it's important to note that monthly data for specific veteran subgroups can fluctuate considerably.



Data from the Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) at Syracuse University

Unemployment Rates for:	Dec. 2023	Jan .2024	Change (+/-)	Annual Averages 2023
All Americans (18 and over)	3.4	4.0	+0.6	3.5
All Veterans	3.0	3.3	+0.3	2.8
Post-9/11 Veterans	3.3	3.7	+0.4	3.3
Gulf-War I Era Veterans	2.8	3.6	+0.8	2.3
WWII, Korean War, and Vietnam Era	3.1	3.0	-0.1	2.5
All Nonveterans	3.5	4.0	+0.5	3.6

Unemployment Rates For Veterans

Unemployment Rates For:	Dec. 2023	Jan. 2024	Change (+/-)	Annual Averages 2023
18-24	7.7	11.0	+3.3	7.8
25-34	4.5	6.7	+2.2	4.0
35-44	2.4	2.5	+0.1	3.0
45-54	2.8	2.2	-0.6	2.0
55-64	2.5	2.6	+0.1	2.3
65 and older	2.8	3.3	+0.5	2.6
Male	2.9	3.1	+0.2	2.7
Female	3.3	4.8	+1.5	3.2
White, Anglo, Caucasian	2.6	3.0	+0.4	2.7
Black or African American	4.9	3.4	-1.5	3.3
Hispanic, Latino/a, or Spanish Origin	3.4	5.4	+2.0	2.9
Asian or Asian American	3.6	6.8	+3.2	2.5

These findings align with the challenges veterans often face in transitioning to civilian careers. According to Indeed's recent research, the top obstacles include:

- Finding opportunities that match their skill set (39%)
- Adjusting to civilian workplace culture (24.8%)
- Translating military experience to a civilian resume (17.4%)
- Overcoming misconceptions about veterans (9.1%)

And despite veterans having leadership as a top skill and nearly 2x more work experience than nonveterans (LinkedIn, 2023a), veterans are half as likely to reach director or vice president leadership roles in the civilian workforce (LinkedIn, 2023b).

Recognizing these challenges, a range of government and nonprofit initiatives have emerged to support veteran career transitions. The Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) provides resources and funding to support veteran hiring, while programs like the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) help connect transitioning service members with employers.

However, experts agree that bridging the military-civilian divide requires a proactive and concerted effort from employers themselves. Creating an inclusive environment and supporting veterans' long-term career growth is essential for successful veteran hiring initiatives.



Insights from Industry Experts

During a recent Spark Change Lab webinar, a panel of industry experts and veteran advocates discussed strategies for supporting veteran careers in transportation and supply chain. The interactive discussion, moderated by Drive My Way CEO Beth Potratz, generated valuable insights and best practices.

Insights from Industry Experts



One key theme that emerged was the importance of taking a holistic approach to veteran hiring and retention. "Supporting veterans' transition is not just about skill alignment," emphasized **Sgt. Sarah Lee**, founder of Waypoint Vets. "It's about understanding the whole person and creating a sense of belonging and purpose in the workplace."

Panelists highlighted the role of mentoring programs, employee resource groups (ERGs), and targeted onboarding in helping veterans navigate the civilian workplace culture. "Mentorship is critical, especially for those transitioning out of the military," noted **Col. Adam Rocke**, President of Client Relations at Katie's Way Plus. "Having a support system of both professional and personal mentors can make a significant difference."

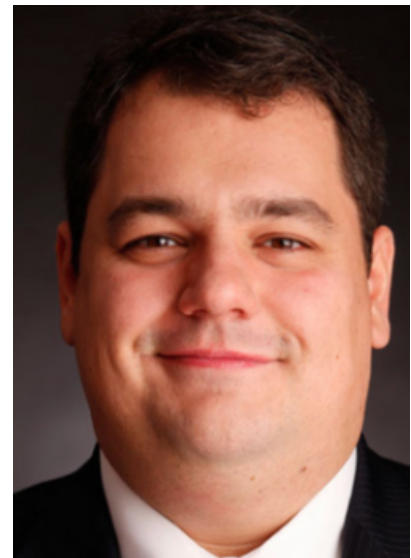


Insights from Industry Experts



As **Dan Donlon**, a Senior Talent Advisor and Strategist, emphasized, "I firmly believe in mentorship programs. They help with career growth, career trajectory, and just break down the silos within an organization." These programs should have clear expectations and desired outcomes and should be open to all employees to foster a culture of inclusivity and growth.

Another key insight was the need for civilian managers and colleagues to be educated and trained on the unique experiences and skills of veteran employees. "Breaking through stigmas and misconceptions is essential," said **Matthew Mahoney**, EVP at the Tunnel to Towers Foundation. "Showcasing the value veterans bring through data and success stories can help gain buy-in throughout the organization."



Insights from Industry Experts



Partnering with veteran-focused organizations and leveraging existing resources is another essential strategy. **Deputy Assistant Secretary Julian Purdy** highlighted the Department of Labor's HIRE Vets Medallion Program, which recognizes employers demonstrating a commitment to hiring and retaining veterans. "We recognize companies that have certain metrics, as far as how many veterans are in their workforce,

and whether they have the employee resource groups and affinity groups that are catered towards veterans," he explained. Industry associations can also play a vital role in advocating for policies and programs that support veterans' transitions and promote best practices among their members.

Panelists also emphasized the role of community partnerships in expanding the pipeline of veteran talent. "Companies shouldn't feel like they have to go it alone," advised **Joe Marino**, Executive Director of Veterans Florida. "Partnering with veteran service organizations, military bases, and local workforce boards can provide a direct line to qualified candidates."



Best Practices for Employers

Becoming a veteran-ready employer requires a multifaceted approach encompassing commitment, communication, community, inclusive practices, and strategic partnerships. Based on the insights gathered from our expert panel and research, we have developed a comprehensive set of recommendations for companies looking to recruit, hire, and retain veteran talent in the transportation and supply chain industry.

BEST PRACTICES FOR EMPLOYERS

01

Build Community:

Mentors, Advocates, Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), & Meaningful Experiences

- Implement mentorship programs that connect veteran employees with experienced mentors who can provide professional guidance and support their transition to civilian life.
- Encourage participation in Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) and organize activities such as volunteerism, team-building challenges, and welcome events to foster a sense of belonging and camaraderie among veteran employees.
- Establish an internal advocate community of veteran champions who can share their stories, showcase their strengths, and serve as resources for new veteran hires.

BEST PRACTICES FOR EMPLOYERS

02 **Target Communication, Awareness, and Recognition Efforts**

- Provide training and education for all employees on military culture, veteran experiences, and the unique skills veterans bring to the workplace. Work to overcome stigmas and misconceptions associated with hiring veterans.
- Ensure transparent communication about career paths, expectations, and opportunities for advancement within the organization.
- Celebrate veterans' contributions and achievements through recognition programs, PR initiatives, and storytelling campaigns that highlight their impact both within and outside the workplace.

BEST PRACTICES FOR EMPLOYERS

03 Solidify Commitment to Being a Veteran- Ready Organization

- Secure buy-in and accountability from the CEO and C-suite, demonstrating an enterprise-wide commitment to veteran hiring and support across all lines of business.
- Define what it means to be a veteran-ready organization, using programs like the Department of Labor's HIRE Vets Medallion Program as a guideline for best practices in recruiting, developing, and retaining veteran talent.

BEST PRACTICES FOR EMPLOYERS

04

Create Inclusive HR/People Practices: Hiring, Onboarding & Career Development

- Train HR personnel, recruiters, and hiring managers to understand military skill sets, translate veterans' experiences to civilian roles, and recognize the value of their unique perspectives and leadership abilities.
- Develop targeted recruiting strategies and partnerships with veteran service organizations, military bases, and local colleges to expand the pipeline of veteran talent.
- Offer structured onboarding and transition support programs that help veterans acclimate to the civilian workplace, understand company culture and benefits, and connect with peer mentors.
- Provide ongoing professional development opportunities, including leadership training, career pathing, and coaching, to support veterans' long-term growth and success within the organization.
- Ensure that benefits, policies, and workplace practices are inclusive and supportive of the unique needs of veterans and military spouses.

BEST PRACTICES FOR EMPLOYERS

05 Leverage Partnerships and External Resources

- Collaborate with veteran-focused nonprofits, government agencies, and industry associations to provide service opportunities, access to training and certifications, and support for veterans' career transitions.
- Participate in programs like the Department of Defense's SkillBridge initiative, which connects transitioning service members with civilian job training and work experience.
- Engage with peer companies to share best practices, benchmark veteran hiring initiatives, and drive collective impact across the transportation and supply chain industry.

BEST PRACTICES FOR EMPLOYERS

By implementing these best practices and continuously gathering feedback and data to refine their approach, employers can create a culture that not only attracts veteran talent but also supports their long-term success and retention. Investing in veteran hiring is not just a moral imperative - it is a strategic business decision that can drive innovation, resilience, and competitive advantage in an increasingly complex and dynamic industry landscape.



The Business Case for Hiring Veterans

According to LinkedIn's 2023 Veteran Opportunity Report, veterans represent a highly educated and skilled talent pool that can drive measurable results for employers. The report found that 60.5% of veterans have attained a bachelor's degree or higher and are three times more likely to have a graduate degree than nonveterans (LinkedIn, 2023). This educational attainment, combined with the rigorous training and experience gained during military service, equips veterans with a unique set of skills and qualities that can benefit organizations across industries.

The report also dispels the common myth that veterans struggle to adapt to civilian work, finding that 61% of veterans' first post-military jobs are in high-skilled positions (LinkedIn, 2023). Moreover, contrary to the belief that 50% of veterans leave their first civilian job within six months, the data shows that veterans are actually 27% less likely than nonveterans to leave their first jobs within that timeframe (LinkedIn, 2023). This suggests that veterans are not only capable of transitioning into demanding roles but also tend to exhibit greater loyalty and commitment to their employers.

THE BUSINESS CASE FOR HIRING VETERANS

Beyond their technical skills and educational backgrounds, veterans bring a wealth of intangible qualities that can strengthen any organization. As highlighted by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Hiring Our Heroes Program, veterans are known for their leadership abilities, teamwork skills, adaptability, and strong work ethic. These attributes, honed through intensive military training and high-stakes experiences, can translate into improved safety records, increased productivity, and a culture of innovation in the civilian workplace.

The evidence is clear: hiring veterans is not only the right thing to do, but it is also a smart business move that can provide organizations with a competitive edge in today's challenging talent landscape.

We call on transportation and supply chain leaders to join us in this mission and take action to support veteran careers. Whether you are just starting your veteran hiring journey or looking to enhance your existing programs, there are numerous resources and partners available to help. From tapping into the Department of Labor's employer resources to joining industry-specific coalitions like Hiring Our Heroes, every action makes a difference.

Conclusion

Employers can drive innovation, performance, and social impact by leveraging the unique skills, experiences, and leadership abilities of veteran talent, transportation, and supply chain.

Through our collaborative efforts at Spark Change Lab and Drive My Way, we are committed to fostering meaningful dialogue, sharing best practices, and driving action on this critical issue. We are grateful to our expert panelists and the many employers, government agencies, and nonprofit organizations that are leading the way in creating veteran-ready workplaces and supporting the successful transition of military talent into the civilian workforce.

But our work is far from done. We invite you to join us in this ongoing mission and take concrete steps to support veteran careers in your organization. Together, we can build a transportation and supply chain industry that is stronger, more inclusive, and more resilient for all.

↘ **About the Spark Change Lab**

The Spark Change Lab is an interactive accelerated learning experience that brings together companies and experts to tackle business issues in real time and generate immediate and actionable solutions that will drive positive change within the supply chain. By taking an outside-the-box approach emphasizing people, inspiration, action, evolution, and community, the Lab sparks practical innovation and has a lasting ripple effect on bettering workplaces.



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↘ **About Drive My Way**

Drive My Way is a truck driver recruiting platform completely focused on drivers and their needs. Using proprietary matching technology and dedicated matchmakers, Drive My Way helps professional CDL and non-CDL drivers find ideal jobs, with the vision of empowering truck drivers to live the life they want while doing a job they love. Drive My Way partners with employers to start recruiting for retention, creating meaningful connections for employers to turn into lasting relationships.



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