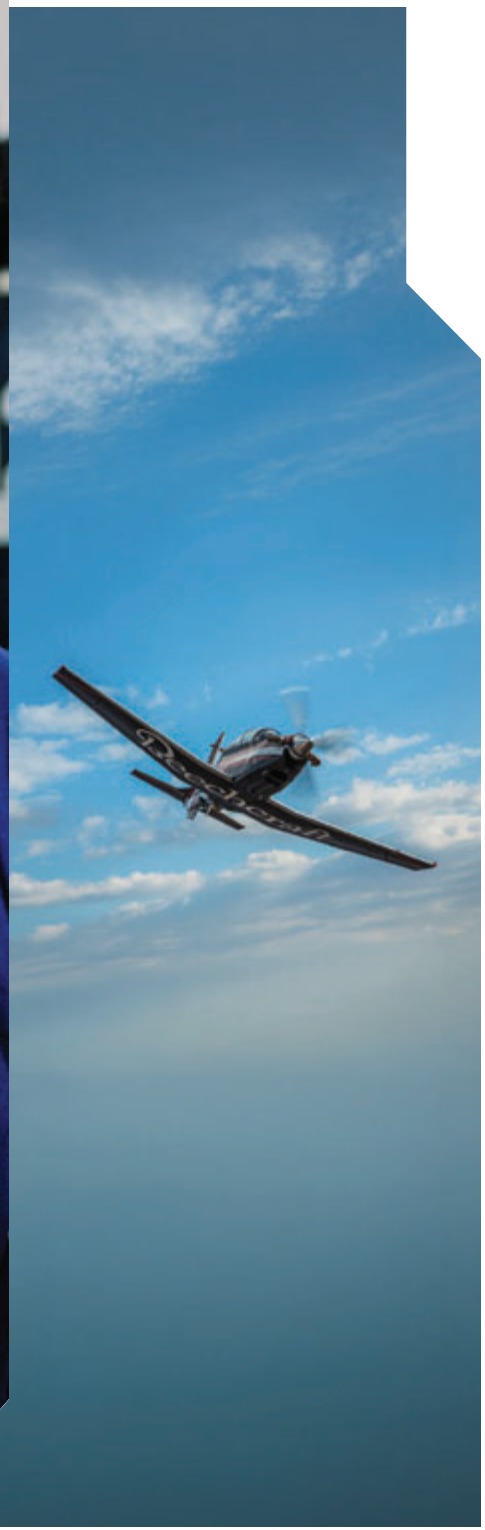
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VETERANS WORK HERE



MILITARY-TO-CIVILIAN TRANSITION GUIDE

THE ULTIMATE PLAYBOOK FOR THE MILITARY COMMUNITY

FOREWORD

Despite 33 years of service to our nation – including multiple combat and peacekeeping tours – my transition into the private sector was one of the most difficult periods in my life. As an honorable soldier though, I conducted an after-action review to capture my lessons learned. A summary of my notes is presented in this transition guide so you might benefit and enjoy an easier transition into your new civilian career.

I began my transition woefully unprepared for the challenges that awaited me. I was wildly shooting resumes downrange in hopes of hitting an unseen target – a blind, Kentucky windage-style approach. I received no feedback in return. It wasn't until I put structure to my problem and began using military problem-solving tools that my performance and results improved. Sun Tzu, a military strategist and philosopher, became my guide:

"If you know the enemy and know yourself,
you need not fear the result of a hundred battles."
– Sun Tzu

I realized to achieve success in my military-to-civilian transition "war" I needed to properly prepare for combat. So, I studied the "enemy" (the recruiter), their methods of war (the application process) and myself (by defining my own career interests). Soon, I stood victorious.

"I will never leave a fallen comrade!"
– Warrior Ethos

The Warrior Ethos, the principles that define my values, was the driving force behind the development of this guide. I won my transition battle, and I knew I had to turn around to help the next transitioning military member. Whether you are transitioning into the private sector from active duty or a Department of War (DoW) civilian career, looking for civilian employment while continuing to serve in the reserve component, or completing your advanced degree, exploring a change in civilian careers, or are a military spouse, I am confident these tips will help you endure the rigors of your transition and lead you to an overwhelmingly successful career in the private sector.

"Charlie Mike,"

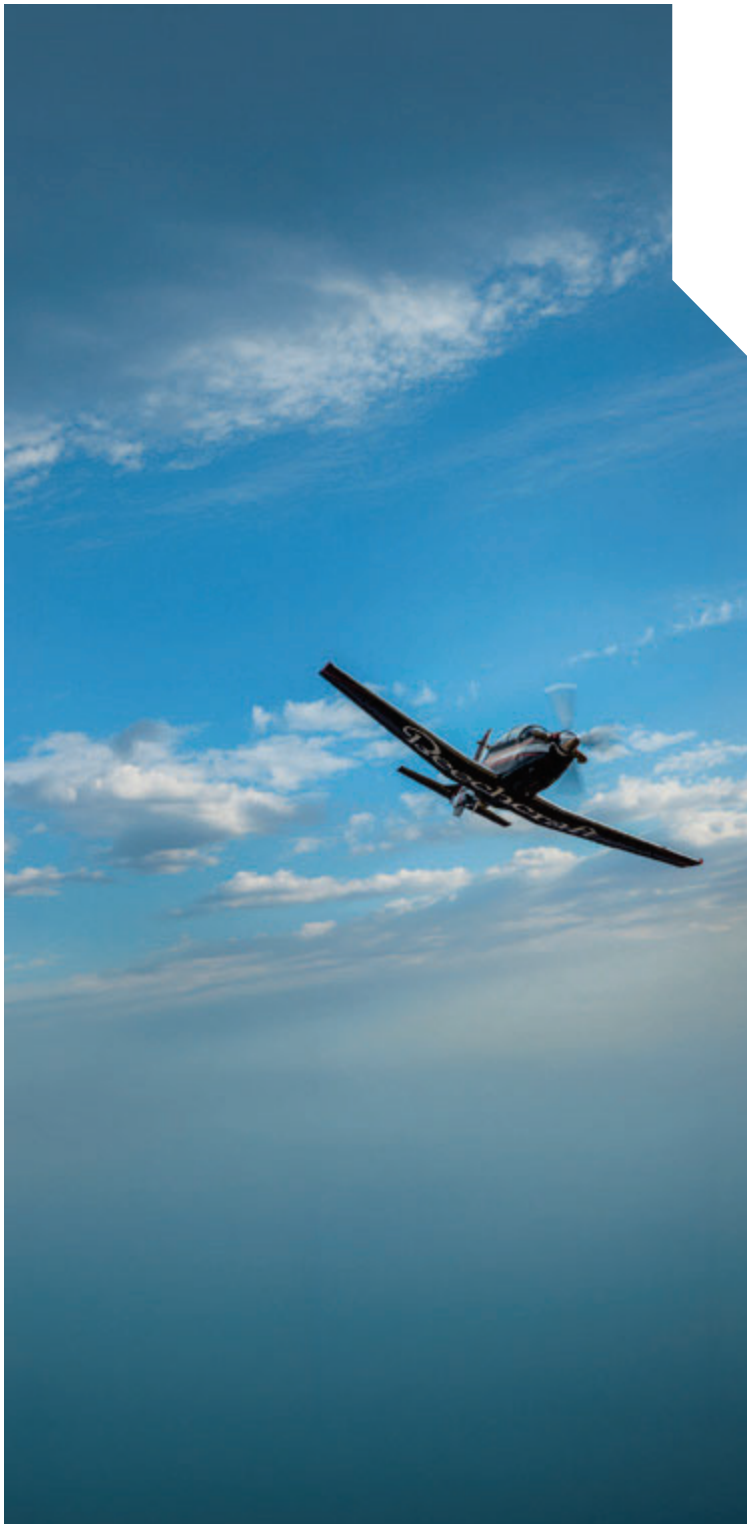


John C. Buckley, II
Colonel, U.S. Army (Retired)
Textron Aviation Senior Manager – Military Programs

Cessna | Beechcraft
BY TEXTRON AVIATION

VETERANS WORK HERE

This guide uses military terminology such as "war," "enemy" and "combat," as a strategic lens to help translate your operational planning experience into career transition success. These terms are not literal. Recruiters and hiring teams are not adversaries. On the contrary, they are key players and important potential allies in your success. This framework simply enables you to approach the hiring process with the same discipline, preparation and strategic mindset that defined your military service.



WRITE AN "UNCLASSIFIED" RESUME

A solid resume could score you an interview for the job of your dreams, so make sure yours is well prepared using the following tips and tools.

56 How to Write a Unique, Customized Resume for a Specific Job Description
58 How Your Resume is Typically Used
60 The Enemy's Weapon of Choice Strikes Again (ATS)
61 30 Seconds to Make an Impression
64 15 Resume Tips
65 Speak Their Language
67 Make it Relevant
68 Translate Your Military Skills
70 Failed Resume Writing Strategies

HOW TO WRITE A UNIQUE, CUSTOMIZED RESUME FOR A SPECIFIC JOB DESCRIPTION

The Job Description contains the unclassified treasure map that gives you the clues you need to find the gold – an offer for employment. Just follow the map!

For each job to which you apply, you must have a unique and customized resume. You must introduce only relevant and comparable skills and experiences to those presented in the job description. Then highlight the related outcomes and accomplishments. And, normally, you must eliminate practically everything else from your career experiences that are not pertinent to responsibilities or expectations in the job description.

A recruiter will not have a "top secret clearance" needed to read your "encrypted" or "classified" resume, so include only words and phrases that are common in your targeted career field(s) and that you learned during your informational interviews. In other words, do your best to eliminate military words -- titles, terms, noun and nomenclature of equipment, references to deployment or exercise names, military processes, ship names, etc.

An "unclassified," customized resume provides a relevant (to the basic qualifications) summary of your skills and comparable (to the responsibilities) experiences and abilities. It also emphasizes qualitative or quantitative outcomes (the "so what" of an accomplishment). And it focuses on the value you created while doing activities like those presented in the job description.

KEYS TO WRITING AN "UNCLASSIFIED" RESUME

1. Focus very narrowly on the job description.

2. NOTHING More.

- Understand how the resume is used, who reviews it and what they are looking for during their review.
- Study the job description; do a Mission Analysis-like review to identify what skills and experiences the company is looking for.
- Present ONLY your relevant skills and comparable experiences that the company is looking for in the job description.
- Eliminate the use of all military terms, titles, references, nomenclatures, exercise names, ship names, etc.
- Quantify ONLY the right things – the value that you created or what can be called the "so-what!"
- Include a "so-what" for every accomplishment or experience that you include in your professional summary; ALWAYS!

DON'T LOOK BACKWARDS

Let someone read your resume for 30 seconds, then take it away and ask them one question:

"WHAT CAREER FIELD AM I PURSUING?"

If they don't answer with your targeted career field, then you have *NOT* written an appropriate resume.



RICKI

U.S. Army Reserves, 2 years + U.S. Navy, 4 years



HOW YOUR RESUME IS TYPICALLY USED

In combat, it is crucial you understand your enemy and know how they apply their "weapons of war." Without this knowledge, you won't know how to beat them. In this transition war, it is critical you understand how your "enemy" – the recruiter or hiring manager – will use your resume. Otherwise, you will not win this conflict.

Only if all qualifications are met will anyone even access your resume.

1. Your resume is first touched by the recruiter, and most likely reviewed in under 30 seconds (The National average for this first review is 13 seconds):

- **Recruiter's Objective:** Identify which fully qualified candidates should undergo additional screening to confirm experience, and to also create the opportunity to do initial assessment of your character – is your character appropriate for the company culture?
- **How:** Recruiters do a crosswalk between your resume and the relevant skills, pertinent experiences and ability to fulfill responsibilities presented in the job description. Remember, they helped write the job description.
- **Result:** On average, about 1/3 of all applicants will receive additional screening.

2. If the recruiter determines you are a fully qualified candidate, and you possess relevant skills and comparable experience, your resume and the notes taken during the additional screening will be forwarded to the hiring manager for interview consideration.

   On average, less than 50% of those candidates who underwent additional screening will be recommended for interview consideration.

3. The hiring manager is the next to touch your resume and will most likely study your resume.

- **Hiring Manager's Objective:** Identify which fully qualified candidates should be invited to an interview.
- **How:** Hiring managers will complete a comprehensive review of your resume while studying the recruiter's notes developed from the additional screening.
- **Result:** On average, around 1/3 of those who underwent the additional screening (between 3 and 5% of all applicants) will be extended an invitation for an interview.

4. Everyone on the interview team will be given your resume to prepare for your interview.

- **Interviewer's Objective:** Confirm that your professed skills and experiences are truly relevant and comparable to those expected in the job; also, and usually more importantly, confirm your character is consistent with the company culture.
- **How:** Interviewer will study your resume to develop situational-based as well as direct questions related to your skills and experiences.
- **Result:** The company will deliver an offer to only one applicant.

5. After the hiring manager selects you for an offer, a compensation team will be given your resume. They confirm critical information to develop salary and bonus considerations.

- **Years of experience:** More experience justifies a higher salary within the pre-approved range.
- **Relevant skills and certifications:** Specialized or in-demand skills can influence salary premiums.
- **Education level:** Advanced degrees may bump the offer, especially in technical or leadership roles.
- **Career progression:** Demonstrated growth, promotion, or increasing responsibilities and advancement may support a higher compensation tier.
- **Industry background:** Experience in high-paying industries may be taken into consideration.

THE ENEMY'S WEAPON OF CHOICE STRIKES AGAIN – APPLICANT TRACKING SYSTEMS (ATS)

The ATS relies on specific formatting and keyword recognition. Understanding this should encourage you to avoid the hazardous effect of the ATS – and lead you to properly presenting ONLY the key facts (your relevant skills and comparable experiences) in a professional format.

KISS – Keeping your resume simple will allow the ATS, recruiters and hiring managers to quickly grasp why you are a good fit for their job. This will ensure you receive an invitation to an interview and can keep advancing towards a victory in your military-to-civilian transition.

- Use a simple and clean format.
- Present only relevant skills, credentials, degrees and only professional credentials – the job description will define what these are.
- Write with industry-specific terms, not military-specific titles, rank, references, jargon, etc.
- Label sections clearly.
- Do not use headers, footers, fancy fonts, columns and boxes.
- Do not try to "trick" the ATS by including keywords in white font or adding a section labeled "keywords."
- Avoid acronyms and abbreviations.
- Save your resume in a compatible file format – .docx or .pdf.

Here are ten (10) online resume writing tools you should consider for helping you defeat the most dangerous effects of the ATS:

- Zety.com
- LiveCareer.com
- ResumeGenius.com
- MyPerfectResume.com
- ResumeLab.com
- Resume-now.com
- EnhanceCV.com
- ResumeHelp.com
- ResumeNerd.com
- KickResume.com

30 SECONDS TO MAKE AN IMPRESSION

Recruiters review hundreds of resumes for each job opening they manage and often manage multiple requisitions simultaneously. On average, they spend much less than 30 seconds scanning each resume. They will not read long paragraphs. They will read clear, concise, bullet points.

YOUR RESUME OBJECTIVE

Present your relevant skills and comparable experiences so you get invited to an interview.

Recruiters (and hiring managers) quickly evaluate your professional skills, experiences, outcomes and accomplishments.

YOUR MISSION

Your mission is to make your resume:

- Easy for the recruiter to scan.
- Aligned to the job description.
- Focused on relevant outcomes.
- Written in civilian, not military language.

PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY:

- Open with a short, targeted summary that highlights what you will do, not everything you already did.
- Deliver a mission statement about who you are professionally (e.g., maintenance technician, supply chain professional, warehouse manager, engineer, help desk technician, etc.).
- Keep it 3 to 5 sentences or bullet points – concise and operationally relevant to the job description.
- Focus on capabilities and impact, not rank or military jargon.

PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

- **TELL THEM WHO YOU ARE:** Lead with capabilities, not rank. (Employers hire for abilities, not hierarchy.)
- **TARGET THE OBJECTIVE:** Orient on the job description, not your history. (It is not a recap of your entire military career.)
- **SITUATIONAL UPDATE:** Discuss what you can do, what results you have delivered in critical related areas, and what value you will bring to the hiring manger.

COMPETENCIES:

- Identify six to eight skills that are essential to the mission the employer is asking you to perform.
- Ensure you can confidently perform each competency.
- Write them in civilian terms.
- Make sure they amplify the capabilities you highlighted in the professional summary.
- These skills must appear in the job description – explicitly or implicitly.

CORE COMPETENCIES - CHECKLIST

Ask yourself:

- Is it relevant to the job?
- Does it reinforce my Professional summary?
- Can I demonstrate it with experience?
- Is it written in “civilian” language?

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES:

- Highlight only critical, relevant experiences that directly support the job description.
- Connect your skills and experiences to the specific outcomes the employer is asking for.
- Quantify the value you created — metrics are the strongest proof of impact.
- Include at least one bullet point per major task listed in the job description (more is fine).
- Prioritize your bullet points so the most impactful and relevant appear at the top.
- Use clear bullets, not paragraphs.
- Start each bullet with a strong past-tense action verb, followed by the outcome or result (led, managed, improved, coordinated, increased, reduced, produced, enabled).
- “More” is not better; “relevant” is.
- Be concise, direct and focused on impact.

BULLET POINT ORIENTATION

ACTION - What did you do?

SO WHAT? What was the impact?

- Write the task and present the outcome
- Write the activity and what it resulted in
- Write the experience and the difference it made
- Write the accomplishment and the value it created

QUALITATIVE OUTCOMES – WHY YOUR EXPERIENCE MATTERS

- Hiring managers will want to know:
  - Why is your experience important to them.
  - How your skills will help their team accomplish their goals.
  - The value you created in previous roles.
  - How your outcomes translate to the role they need.

- Prioritize your bullets relative to the Job Description.

OUTCOME AND ACCOMPLISHMENT CONSIDERATIONS:

- **Saved money**
- **Won contracts or bids**
- **Increased revenue generated**
- **Increased individual/team contributions**
- **Improved safety performance**
- **Increased sales or revenue**
- **Increased efficiency in performance or production**
- **Entrusted with (specify) high-value assets or responsibilities**
- **Enabled continuous operations**
- **Mitigated risk to operations**
- **Achieved benchmarks**
- **Earned recognition or awards**

NOTE: Use tools like O*NET Military Crosswalk, My Next Move for Veterans, Hiring Our Heroes Resume Engine, or your Local Veteran Employment Representative (LVER) to translate skills into civilian terms.



15 RESUME TIPS

Use one of our suggested term translators and these helpful tips to define your skills in terms a civilian recruiter will understand.

1. **Write to the job.** Every job description is unique, so each resume should also be unique.
2. **Eliminate the "objective" paragraph** to give the recruiter more time on the body of your resume. (Plus, your objective is clear when you submit the application, so there is absolutely no need to waste precious seconds of the recruiter's time on wasteful words.)
3. **Limit your core competencies (areas of expertise or strengths) to four to six.** Emphasize strengths suitable for the responsibilities presented in the job description. Anything more, and you'll be perceived as a "Jack of all trades, master of none!"
4. **Highlight any education, or practical application of leading teams** that you successfully led or managed to success.
5. **Know your audience.** Use words that are understood in the private sector, business or targeted career field(s) and that you learned during the informational interviews.
6. **Your resume should not look like an efficiency report or an awards citation.** Rather than listing previous duties and responsibilities, highlight qualitative outcomes and accomplishments – show how you added value to your organization.
7. **Never allow the recruiter to assume what skills you acquired through your experiences;** clearly state them.
8. **Write straightforward, active statements that showcase your relevant skills and experiences** aligned with the expectations presented in the job description.
9. **Don't oversell your abilities.** Just because you worked on a high-level staff does not mean you are an executive leader.
10. **Do include specific and relevant leadership and management experiences,** especially if you are applying for a leadership or management role.
11. **Other than job titles, remove military references** – ranks, organization names, titles, military school names, equipment titles, military jargon, exercise titles or names, etc.
12. **Highlight your risk management experiences** and concentration on safety, emphasizing compliance, including environmental compliance.
13. **Mention teamwork, cooperation and collaboration** – highlight the soft skills the business will most assuredly be looking for, including problem solving and analytical skills.
14. **Be concise.** Easy-to-read resumes get read. Reduce the amount of text on the page.
15. **Never use "I."**

Though this list is not all encompassing, it was gathered from the experiences of one military recruiter, and verified by numerous hiring managers and recruiters.

SPEAK THEIR LANGUAGE

A resume is your chance to highlight your relevant strengths and accomplishments. Use the following examples and helpful tips to define your skills in terms a civilian recruiter will understand.

Weak: Hold a top-secret security clearance.

Stronger: Integrity, trustworthiness and ability to manage information resulted in being given greater responsibilities, authority and access to sensitive data.

Weak: Prepared and disseminated daily activity reports to higher command.

Stronger: Enabled senior management to make timely decisions by increasing their awareness of the organization's overall performance by collecting relevant information, then drafting succinct reports.

Weak: Commendation Medal awarded by Major General _____, Commander of _____.

Stronger: Commended by the leadership team for enhancing operations and increasing the team's efficiency while performing under pressure, and by meeting the needs of every customer through personal diligence.

Weak: Maintains accounting system associated with supply management.

Stronger: Enhanced management of critical supply chains by ensuring the continuous flow of essential information through successful operation and maintenance of an enterprise-wide information technology system.

Weak: Successfully planned current and future military training exercises for an organization in excess of 1,000 personnel.

Stronger: Expert in analyzing operations and individual performance to identify organizational and individual training needs. Developed multiple training plans and inspections, which improved and sustained the team's effectiveness.

Weak: Named "Best Leader" in a Company of 150 personnel during a live-fire training exercise resulting in the second highest score in a unit of more than 1,000 personnel.

Stronger: Critical thinking skills, risk management and safety program experience and superb leadership led to being designated as a top leader in the organization.

Weak: Supervises or performs duties involving request, receipt, storage, issue, accountability and preservation of expendable supplies and equipment.

Stronger: Improved the efficiency of several supply chains servicing multiple customers by identifying their needs and establishing priorities of effort. (You could also be more specific by quantifying how many units or customers you served.)

LEAD VS MANAGE

You "lead" people but you "manage" processes.

- Use "lead" or "led" when pertaining to people.
- Use "manage" or "managed" when referring to processes or programs.

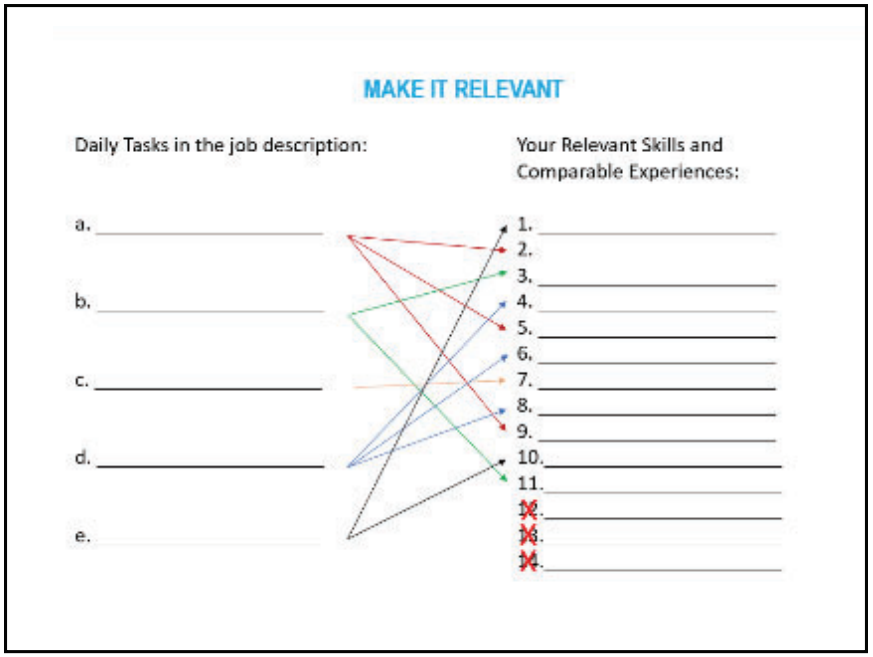
MAKE IT RELEVANT

Want your resume to reach the hiring manager? Customize it – for every role for which you apply. Then, double-check that your details are relevant to the job description using this easy exercise.

1. Make a photocopy of the worksheet to the right, or simply make your own version using a blank sheet of paper or spreadsheet.
2. On the left, list the specified, implied and essential daily tasks from your job description analysis. (Learn how to analyze a job description in the "Using the Job Description to Your Advantage" section in this guide.)
3. On the right side of the worksheet, list the experiences, skills and certifications you will detail in your resume.
4. Connect the daily tasks on the left to your qualifications and experiences listed on the right.
5. If something in the right list doesn't connect back to items on the left, you should probably remove it from your resume.
   Exceptions: Retain quality comments that can quantify the value you created in leadership, management, or risk management.

TAKEAWAY

- On a solid resume, the job's daily tasks on the left will connect to a skill or experience you've listed on the right. Remember that these skills and experiences came directly from your resume. If they don't match up, you might not be qualified for the job.
- There should be little or nothing in your resume that doesn't have a line going back to the List derived from your job description analysis. This ensures that you don't conceal your relevant strengths with a lot of unnecessary verbiage.



MAKE IT RELEVANT

Daily Task in the job description:

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

D. _____

E. _____

F. _____

G. _____

Your Relevant Skills and Comparable Experiences

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

11. _____

12. _____

13. _____

14. _____



JOSH

U.S. Air Force, 22 years

TRANSLATE YOUR MILITARY SKILLS

Swap military jargon with universally understood words using this easy tool.



MILITARY	CIVILIAN BUSINESS
Commander	Director or Senior Manager
Executive Officer	Deputy Director
Field Grade Officer	Manager
Company Grade Officer	Operations Manager or Section Manager
Watch Captain	Supervisor
Warrant Officer	Technical Specialist or Department Manager
Action Officer	Senior Analyst
Senior NCO (Enlisted)	First-Line Supervisor
Branch or Division Chief	Executive or Manager
First Sergeant / Senior Enlisted Leader	Personnel Manager
Sergeant Major	Senior Advisor
Chief Master Sergeant	Senior Advisor
Commander	Director, Senior Manager, President
Executive Officer (XO)	Deputy Director, Assistant
Chief	Principal
Squad Leader / Lead Petty Officer	Team Leader
Enlisted or Assistant Crew Member	Assembler, specialist, team member, technician
Supply Sergeant /Logistics Specialist / Materiel Manager	Supply Manager or Logistics Manager
Operations NCO	Operations Supervisor / Operations Leader
NCOIC	Manager or Coordinator
Platoon Sergeant	Supervisor, instructor, trainer
Medic	Paramedic
Radio Operator	Communications Technician
Seabee	Construction Worker
Infantry	Security-Force
AI or ASI	Additionally Skilled In
Combat / War	Conflict / Hazardous conditions
Combat Arms	Security-Force

MILITARY	CIVILIAN BUSINESS
Company or squadron or wing	Company, department, or section
Medal	Award or commendation
Military personnel office	Human Resources
Mission	Task/function/objective
Operation	Continuous Operations
Military occupation specialty (MOS) / Specialty Code / Rating (AFRC)	Career Specialty or career field
Squad or platoon or flight	Team or section
Reconnaissance or ISR	Data collection and analysis
Regulations	Policy or Guidelines
Security clearance	Integrity and Ability to manage sensitive information
Service members	Employees
Subordinates	Direct Reports or Employees
Deployed	Temporarily assigned, traveled
TAD or TDY	Business Trip
PCS	Relocation
NCO Academy	Leadership or Management Training
OER / NCOER	Performance rating or Evaluation
Soldiers / Marines / Sailors / Airmen	Personnel, staff, employees, individuals, people
Uniform Code of Military Justice	Legal Action
ANCOC / BNCOC / PLDC	Advanced leadership development course
Officers Career Courses	Training Courses, Career Development Training
Battalion	Unit, organization, agency, team
Headquarters	Corporate offices
After Action Review	Performance Review, Debrief, Postmortem
Chain of Command	Organizational hierarchy
Commanded	Supervised or Directed
Field Exercises (FTX)	Training, Operations training

FAILED RESUME WRITING STRATEGIES

Recruiters routinely reject military community resumes primarily due to their irrelevance to the job description.

- Last year, more than 30% of military community applicants had their applications rejected because of their poorly aligned resumes; they were not customized to the job description.
- Rejected applicants often presented resumes that highlighted superb skills and experiences, but which had nothing to do with the skills and experiences presented in the job description.
- Rejected applicants often presented resumes that were full of military terms, titles, references, nomenclature, etc.
- Including quantitative data can be a difference-maker, but this is a common shortfall for military community resumes noted by recruiters because the military applicant tends to quantify information related to the task instead of quantifying the outcomes or accomplishments.

FOUR FAILING STRATEGIES

1. Providing something resembling more of a curriculum vitae – a comprehensive listing of one's entire professional experiences regardless of the desired skills and experiences presented in the Job Description.

2. Attempting to describe complexity by quantifying information related to the task instead of quantifying information related to the results or accomplishments.

3. Cutting/pasting accomplishments directly from military efficiency reports and award citations.

4. Including military terms, titles and references that turn the file into a "classified" document intended only for military audiences with a "need to know.".

WHAT TO AVOID

- One-size-fits-all approach – every Job Description is different; therefore, every resume is different.
- Listing "tasks" you were assigned or "responsibilities" in your previous jobs even when not relevant to the job.
- Copying expectations verbatim from the job description.
- Excluding how you added value – to every bullet.
- Including irrelevant experiences that have nothing to do with the job description.
- Quantifying your responsibilities instead of your outcomes and accomplishments.
- Forgetting to proofread.
- Creating an inappropriate file name for your resume

HOW TO PRESENT MILITARY DATA

Military members often quantify the wrong things. They often present military data to address size, scale and complexity of the challenge.

- Size of units and numbers of soldiers in a military organization does NOT equate to numbers of direct reports. E.g. a Platoon leader has 3 direct reports -- not 30. But military community resumes often present “led a platoon of 30.”
- Size of or dollar amounts of military budgets is not relatable to the private sector. Most private sector companies do not manage budgets as in the military; instead, they intend to MAKE a profit.
- Value of assigned military equipment is not comparable to the private sector. Most companies focus more on the ability to maintain equipment to enhance continuous operations.

Business leaders don’t understand the relevance of what military community applicants quantify.

- Business leaders often misunderstand the data because the information is not relevant to the business world.
- Business leaders often cannot appreciate how this data relates to their needs or to their team’s objective.

  – Remember 94% of the American population never served in the Armed Forces.

The value you created with an accomplishment is more important to business leaders.

- Business leaders want to know what value you created and see its relevance to job description responsibilities.
- They prefer to learn about the “so-what” of your outcomes and accomplishments.
- They want to know how your actions contributed to the success of the organization.
- More importantly, they want to know how you will add value to their team/company.

Recruiters and hiring managers will spend much less than 30 seconds on your resume.

- Numerous studies reveal that businesses will spend less than 30 seconds on a resume.
- It’s preferable to present information that quantifies the value created instead of focusing on quantitative data explaining the size, scale and complexity of the challenge.

It is important to realize that recruiters and hiring managers are not only investing money and resources when they select you to join their team. They are also putting their reputation on the line.

It is recommended that your resume is not focused on yourself or what you did in the past which you think defines you; instead, make it about the employer’s needs.