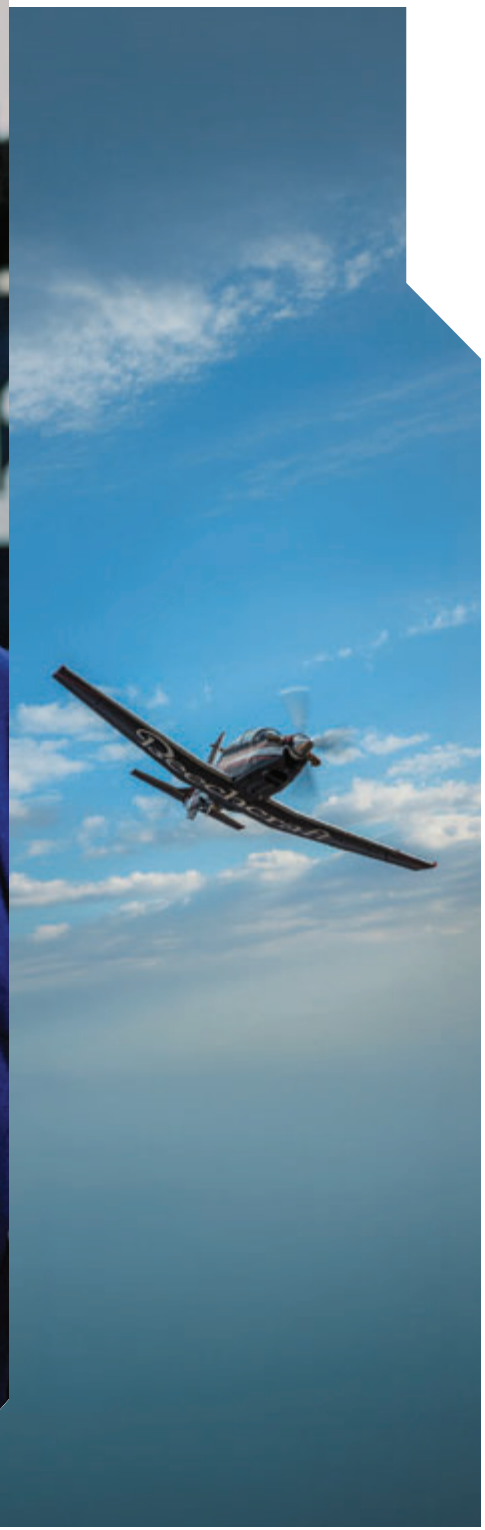
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MILITARY-TO-CIVILIAN TRANSITION GUIDE

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,"

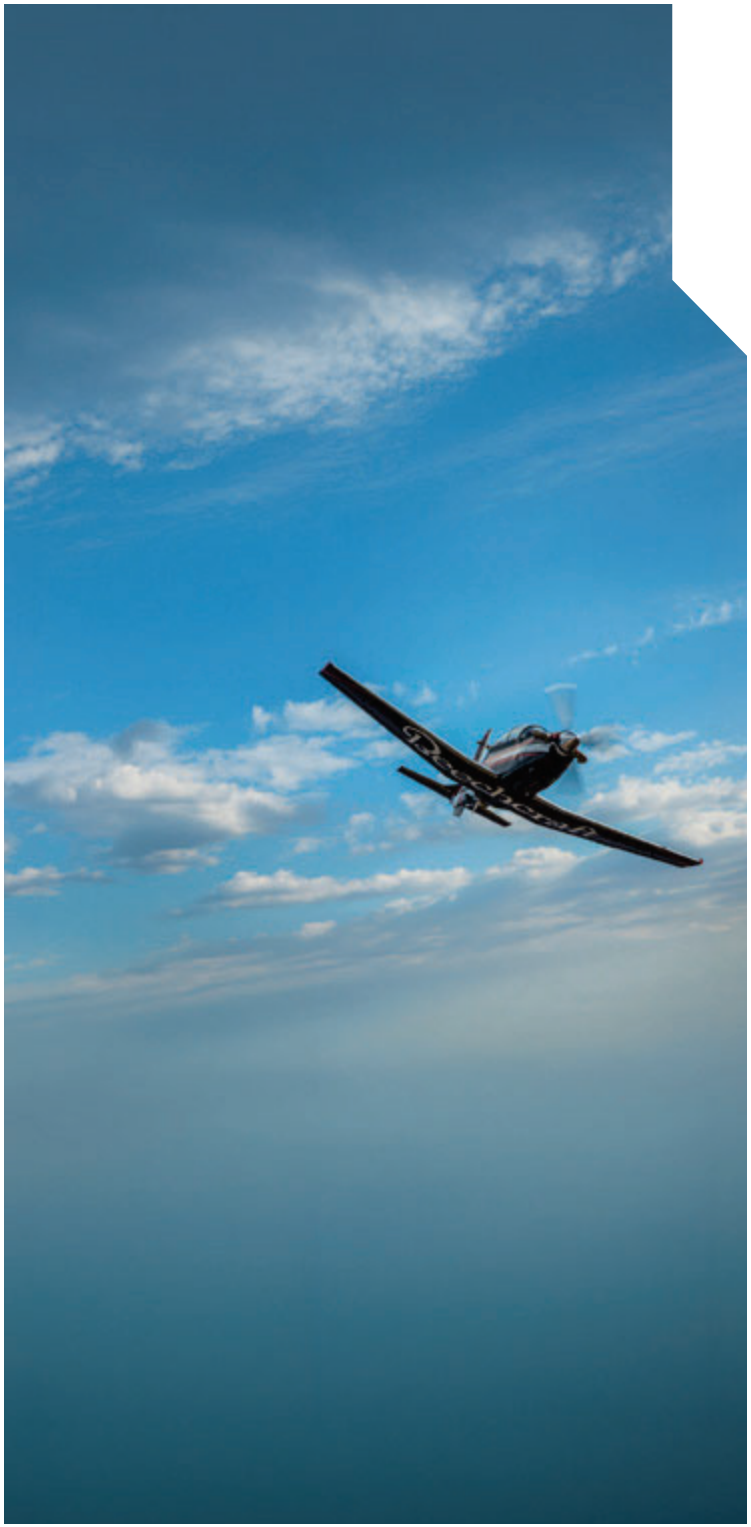


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This guide uses military terminology such as "war," "enemy" and "combat," as a strategic lens to help translate your operational planning experience into career transition success. These terms are not literal. Recruiters and hiring teams are not adversaries. 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.



MILITARY SPOUSE EMPLOYMENT

On a battlefield, force multipliers often turn the tide of a conflict. A military spouse's career can be a force-multiplier. It amplifies financial stability, morale and readiness. It can create a strategic advantage for the entire military community.

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MILITARY SPOUSE EMPLOYMENT

On a battlefield, force multipliers often turn the tide of a conflict. A military spouse's career can be a force-multiplier. It amplifies financial stability, morale and readiness. It can create a strategic advantage for the entire military community.

In combat, every member of the unit plays a critical role—if one soldier is pinned down, the entire mission suffers. Military families operate the same way: when a spouse struggles to find meaningful employment, it creates pressure on the whole household, impacting morale, readiness and even retention. Their success strengthens the entire force.

HIGHLY EDUCATED AND SKILLED – YET, UNDERUTILIZED

Military spouse unemployment rates hover around 20-25%, far above the national average.

WHY IT MATTERS

- Military families often rely on two incomes to maintain a reasonable standard of living. Unemployment can create financial stress, impacting morale and retention.
- Employment provides purpose, identity and independence for the spouse. Lack of career opportunities can lead to isolation, depression and lower family satisfaction.
- Without employment, the spouse may lose valuable experience and networking opportunities which will negatively impact employment opportunities when the military service member separates.
- Spouses are highly educated and skilled, yet underutilized.

COMPLEX MILITARY LIFE

- Frequent relocations. Permanent changes of station (PCS) or moves to support the military member's career occur every 2-3 years. They disrupt career continuity.
- Licensing and certification barriers. Professions like nursing, teaching, real estate and cosmetology often require state-specific licenses, which do not easily transfer. After a PCS move, more money is required to secure the license or certificate in the new state.
- Employment gaps. Time off for moves or deployments or for recertification can create resume gaps. Many employers criticize these misunderstood times away from the workforce.
- Childcare and family responsibilities. Deployments often leave spouses as sole caregivers, limiting job flexibility.
- Limited local opportunities. Many military installations are in rural or less economically diverse areas, reducing job options.
- Employer misconceptions. Some employers fear military spouses will leave quickly, so they hesitate to hire.

MILITARY SPOUSE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

- **DoD Military Spouse Employment Partnership (MSEP):** Connects spouses with vetted employers committed to hiring military families.
- **Hiring Our Heroes Employment Roadmap:** Offers step-by-step guidance for career planning, networking and job search.
- **MySECO (Spouse Education and Career Opportunities):** Provides career coaching and education resources.

WHY THESE DIFFICULTIES EXIST

- **Systemic Issues.** Licensing reciprocity between states is inconsistent.
- **Economic Factors.** Base locations often lack industries aligned with spouses' skills.
- **Cultural Misunderstanding.** Employers may not understand the resilience and adaptability military spouses bring.
- **Policy Gaps.** While programs exist, awareness and accessibility vary widely.

STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME THESE CHALLENGES

- Leverage military spouse employment programs. They will be connected to employers who are committed to hiring military spouses and family members.
- Use local workforce resources. Every community has a workforce center, and many will employ Local Veteran Employment Representatives (LVER). They will be well connected to businesses and employers.
- Overcome licensing barriers. DoW covers up to $1,000 for license transfer costs, and some states have reciprocity laws which means they will accept your license from another state.
- Build a portable career. Focus on remote work, freelancing, or gig-employment. Or use Heroes MAKE America resources to become a certified production technician. Manufacturing jobs exist all over the country.

MILITARY SPOUSE PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES

- **Hiring Our Heroes Employment Roadmap:** Helps spouses plan careers, network and find portable opportunities.
- **DoD Military Spouse Employment Partnership (MSEP):** Connects spouses with employers committed to hiring military families.
- **MySECO Career Coaching:** Offers personalized guidance for education and employment.
- **Heroes MAKE America:** Training for manufacturing and skilled trades—portable careers that align with industry needs.

Supporting military spouse employment strengthens family stability, improves military readiness and taps into a highly skilled adaptable workforce.