

# Honor a Vet by Providing an Honorable Job

By Holly Culhane, Contributing Columnist



A number of workers today are enjoying a paid holiday – a day off from work, during which it is intended we pause to honor the veterans of our nation’s wars, including the wars that continue to rage in Afghanistan and other regions of the world.

Regrettably, many of the veterans we honor today have no job and paid “day off” to celebrate.

According to a U.S. Department of Labor report released last week, the unemployment rate for veterans of the second Gulf War and those who have served in the military since Sept. 11, 2001 rose to 12.1 percent in October, compared to the national unemployment rate of 9.0 percent.

With nearly 40,000 U.S. troops expected to be brought back from Iraq by year’s end, the jobless rate for veterans is expected to increase. Labor Department officials estimate that 1 million more service members are expected to transition to civilian life over the next five years as America struggles to reduce its national debt and wind down its involvement in foreign conflicts.

How will we greet the returning men and women who put their lives on the line and made great sacrifices so that we can enjoy the safety and privileges of being Americans?

The biggest “honor” we can give is to provide veterans with the “honor” of having a job. But a struggling economy is providing few jobs for everyone, including veterans. And partisan political bickering is providing obstacles to assisting them.

Although a political debate continues to rage in Washington over job-creation strategies, senators this week put partisanship aside, agreeing to allow the Senate to consider a small sliver of President Obama’s jobs bill, which includes a tax credit among incentives for employers to hire veterans.

Also this week, President Obama announced new programs, including a “gold card” program that directs customized job search assistance to veterans, and the establishment of a new Web page ([www.mynextmove.org/vets](http://www.mynextmove.org/vets)) to connect them with job openings.

Websites, such as the Military Family Network ([emilitary.org](http://emilitary.org)) also provide a wide array of resources. And public-private partnerships have been announced with such online “giants” as Simply Hired, LinkedIn, Google, Monster and Military.Com, Taleo, Indeed, BranchOut and Twitter to connect veterans to potential jobs.

But local employers do not have to wait for a “government program” to act.

Hiring a veteran is the smart and right thing for a company to do. But in this dire economy, it is not necessarily the easiest. It requires a thoughtful, creative assessment of a veteran-applicant’s experience

and skills set. It may require a willingness to provide job training in exchange for hiring a seasoned employee with tested leadership and personal qualities.

What should employers consider?

- **Military qualities.** During a veteran's service in the military, he or she has experienced a great deal of independence, acquired significant experience in leadership and supervision, and achieved technical expertise. Likely with repeat assignments abroad, the veteran has international and cultural awareness that will be assets to any company.
- **Training.** Military assignments require training. In today's modern military, this often means training and proven expertise in highly technical fields. A veteran who has had a successful military tour of duty or military career has received thousands of dollars in training and demonstrated his or her ability to master new and difficult tasks.
- **Military skills.** It's not all about "combat." Many military skills translate to civilian jobs. How they translate requires the veteran to articulate his or her wide range of skills and a private-sector employer to thoughtfully assess how those skills can be utilized. For example, "war-gaming" is a common military exercise to test strengths, vulnerabilities and develop action plans. Private companies call this process "strategic planning."

A veteran can bring qualifications to the workplace that are hard to measure. In a short period of time, he or she can be taught new skills, and will perform tasks at levels that meet or exceed their co-workers' performance. A veteran's leadership and crisis-management experiences can make a company stronger and more successful. These are qualities that are often forged by the heat of a battle.

We have asked these men and women to sacrifice themselves for their country. Hire a veteran and you may find they will do no less for the companies that provide them jobs.

***This article written by Holly Culhane first appeared online and in The Bakersfield Californian on Friday, November 11, 2011. Holly Culhane is president of the Bakersfield-based human resources consulting firm P.A.S. Associates. She can be contacted through her website [www.pasassociates.com](http://www.pasassociates.com) and through the [PAS Facebook](#) page or by phone at 631-2165.***

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