

MILITARY-TO-CIVILIAN TRANSITIONS FINDING SUCCESS IN THE SECURITY ARENA

By: *Michael Green, PMP, CPP; David C. Martin, CPP; and Michael D. Reiner, CPP, SPIPC*

Introduction



The transition from military to civilian life should be a deliberate process, which sets a service member up for success. Yet, nearly half of post-9/11 veterans describe their experience as somewhat or very difficult, according to a recent survey conducted by the Pew Research Center taken right before the COVID-19 pandemic materialized. The amount of information and resources available can seem daunting at first, especially for those who fail to plan ahead or delay taking a deliberate approach to the process. Post-military employment preparation, the Department of Veterans Affairs medical disability claim process, post-separation benefits, educational opportunities, and career skills programs should remain the top areas of consideration for transitioning service members and veterans. Each of these broad categories contains their own sub-components, which veterans must

thoughtfully navigate to positively impact their transition.

Transition Challenges & Legislation

Approximately 200,000 veterans transition from military to civilian life each year in the United States, according to a US Government Accountability Office report published in 2019. What makes any one of them stand out to a potential employer among a sea of applicants in any career field? Preparation remains the common thread for a successful transition experience, and taking charge of one's own transition process remains a best practice.

But other aspects, many well within a veteran's ability to influence, also contribute to perceived difficulties. Current economic conditions certainly play a role. Many veterans speak differently than the civilian business leadership who might hire them when the time comes. They sometimes struggle to translate their military experience to non-military jobs. A veteran may also feel unfamiliar with the nuances of effective job search strategies. Additionally, transitioning service members sometimes leave the military with unrealistic expectations. Not only in terms of salary, but also with a new work environment, company benefits, and work-life balance. Learning how to overcome these barriers enables the veteran to properly educate prospective

employers to better understand the skills they acquired during military service and how they can positively impact the organization and its culture. Legislative changes that took effect in 2019 also aim to assist.

The John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for fiscal year 2019 significantly altered the [U.S. Department of Defense Transition Assistance Program \(TAP\)](#) for the first time since 2011. The outcome-based program bolsters opportunities, services, and training for transitioning service members in their preparation to meet post-military goals. Select TAP services include enhanced individual counseling, a variety of workshops, elective tracks, and special events. The mandatory components of TAP apply to all service members with at least 180 continuous days or more on active duty, including National Guard and Reserve. The NDAA also requires they begin the process no later than 365 days in advance of their anticipated separation date. An early start, however, remains the key. Personnel should begin up to two years (for retirees) and 12-18 months (for non-retirees) to take full advantage of TAP services and achieve maximum results prior to separation.

Service members use all the tools at their disposal to accomplish the mission while in the military. The process of transition is no different, particularly for individuals who intend to pursue a career in the security profession. Fortunately, a wide variety of knowledge-based resources exist to aid service members in their transition from a successful military career to a promising career in the security industry.

Education, Associations, and Certifications

Serving in the military, your experience and credentials in the security arena were relatively easy to interpret from the badges on your uniform, the rank on your shoulders, and the comments in your performance reports. To best translate those experiences to future employers, you must understand the language and expectations of your targeted sector within the civilian security industry. In this section, we will present some of the opportunities for training, education and certifications, within the Department of Defense (DoD), outside the DoD, and in related positions outside the security arena.

Department of Defense

The Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency (DCSA) manages the [Security Professional Education Development \(SPeD\) Certification Program](#) as part of the DoD's initiative to professionalize the security workforce. This initiative ensures there exists a common set of competencies among security practitioners that promotes interoperability, facilitates professional development and training, and develops a workforce of certified security professionals. Many civilian positions in the security administration career field (GS-0080 series) now require one or more SPeD certifications, which include:

- [Security Program Integration Professional Certification](#)
- [Security Fundamentals Professional Certification](#)
- [Security Asset Protection Professional Certification](#)
- [Industrial Security Oversight Certification](#)
- [Physical Security Certification](#)
- [Special Program Security Certification](#)



The Center for Development of Security Excellence (CDSE) provides online training materials to prepare for any of these certifications, all at no cost. It is best to complete these certifications prior to separating from the military. You are only eligible to pursue a SPêD certification if you work for DoD, serve as a federal employee, or are a contractor assigned to a security position. To maintain an active SPêD certification, you must earn 100 professional development units within your 2-year maintenance cycle, at least 50 of which must relate to security. Once you separate from military service, you cannot extend your certification beyond the 2-year cycle, unless you again become an eligible employee.

Outside the Department of Defense

The leading global professional organization in the civilian security industry is [ASIS International](#). Their [Certified Protection Professional](#) (CPP®) certification is widely recognized as the gold standard of security certifications. ASIS also offers the [Associate Protection Professional](#) (APP®) for early-career security professionals, as well as specialized certifications in physical security and investigations.



ASIS members also enjoy opportunities for education and networking through local

[chapters](#), online [subject-area communities](#) (such as the [Military Liaison Community](#)), and the annual [Global Security Exchange](#).

Related Sectors

Depending on your specific roles and experiences during your military service, you may be interested in branching into a related sector. The skills you bring from the military translate well into fields, such as emergency management, business continuity, and disaster recovery. If you served in more senior leadership positions, project or program management roles may also interest you.

[FEMA](#) is the best source for free training and education in emergency management, with a broad range of online and in-person courses. Choose from a list of [independent study online courses](#), or consider a group of related courses organized into a [program](#), such as the Professional Development Series, Advanced Professional Series, Continuity of Operations, or Critical Infrastructure Security and Resilience. In addition to online courses, many FEMA classes are delivered in-person by state emergency management agencies, particularly in the counties of [Virginia](#) and [Maryland](#) nearest to the National Capital Region. The leading professional organization for emergency management is the [International Association of Emergency Managers](#), which administers the Associate Emergency Manager (AEM®) and Certified Emergency Manager (CEM®) certifications.

Disaster recovery is another area where your military experience is valued. The [Disaster Recovery Institute International](#) (DRI) is the oldest and largest nonprofit that helps organizations around the world prepare for and recover from disasters by providing education, accreditation, and thought leadership in business continuity, disaster recovery, cyber resilience and

related fields. DRI offers 15 individual certifications, including the globally recognized [Certified Business Continuity Professional](#) (CBCP). DRI's [Veterans Outreach Program](#) provides certification scholarships to active duty or recently separated veterans (within 5 years) of the United States military.

Another highly valued certification that can bolster your resume is the [Project Management Professional](#) (PMP®) from the Project Management Institute. Depending on the length of your service, you may already meet the experiential requirements for this certification, but there is also an educational component and a challenging exam. Fortunately, Syracuse University's Institute for Veterans & Military Families offers [Onward to Opportunity](#) (O2O), a free career-training program that provides professional certification and employee support services to transitioning service members, veterans, and military spouses. O2O combines industry-validated curricula, strong partnerships with leading veteran service organizations and private sector companies, and comprehensive career coaching services to prepare and match you with your next career.

Networking – Where, When, How, and Why

Did you know that 96% of mid- and senior-level positions are hired from within a company or as a result of a referral to the hiring manager from a current employee? Does it seem too good to be true? It probably is not true. A review of published literature and studies vary widely when quantifying the percentage of hires based on a referral. However, the vast majority of articles agree. Referrals provide a higher return on investment when applying for a position, rather than relying solely on training, education and certifications. To get

a referral you need to start networking now, understand why you are networking, and network strategically.

Networking Starts Now

When deciding when you should start networking, the answer is now. Networks take time to create, and they take time to mature. Your network probably consists of people you know through your military experiences up to this point. These are great connections, but they are not likely the hiring managers or senior leaders in your post-military profession. By starting to network now you accomplish three things: you build and mature a network to support you in your transition, you begin to build your reputation outside of the military circle, and you can begin to narrow the target area for your post-military career.

You don't have to use a social networking platform to



network; however,

without one of these platforms you may find it onerous keeping in touch with your connections. Two strong networking platforms for the security professional are LinkedIn and ASIS Connects.

Even if you are starting at zero, you can build a strong network with time and patience. Matt



Quick, Director of Training & Development at [Hire Military](#), a free transition life-cycle resource for service members and employers, says it takes time to establish your reputation outside your current circle. You can build your brand as deep as you want, all you need it time. He recommends you develop a wide base to start your network by reaching out to ten people each week until you have around 500 connections. This will give you breadth in

your circle and allow you to establish depth as you connect with people of similar interest. You want to identify professionals in companies or fields where you desire more information as your number of connections grow.

Mr. Joe Olivarez, Vice President of the Operational Center of Excellence and Chief Security Officer at Jacobs, recommends being up front with your connections if you seek a mentor. Transparency will assist with the building of a trust relationship. Matt Quick urges veterans to remember, with the growth of your network comes the establishment of a personal brand. It is a by-product of the network and is based on your posts, comments, interactions and connections. A coach or a Certified Digital Networking Professional can help you understand how to make the most of your brand. Continue this process into the companies where you see yourself working. Not sure what you want to do next or how to target those companies? No problem.

Tools for Effective Networking

Veterans have a dizzying number of opportunities to connect with each other and professionals in industry. Let's look at three top-notch networking opportunities: [Vets 2 Industry](#), [Veterati](#), and [American Corporate Partners](#). These organizations are presented in a very intentional order. Vets2Industry is a great way to get started on your journey because of its quick access to other veterans expanding their networks. Veterati offers a wide range of mentors and you are encouraged to engage with many different leaders based on a review of their profile and your interests. American Corporate Partners seeks to match veterans with a coach for a long-term mentorship.



When describing why he started Vets2Industry, Brian

Arrington says he, "...started Vets2Industry to provide a free resource library for the military community." Vets2Industry is a great way to gain connections with other veterans while working on networking and interviewing skills. Vets2Industry will introduce you to many resources you did not know existed and broaden your network faster than any other program.

Another great program, Veterati, is well known for free one-hour calls with industry



professionals. The veteran selects these mentorship calls after reviewing a database of hundreds of profiles. You are not limited to one or even ten mentor calls. Most veterans select four mentors, while some select as many as 25! Veterati is the only program with an almost limitless opportunity to cold-call professionals for informational interviews.



The last resource on our list is American Corporate Partners (ACP).

Recognized for providing long-term, one-on-one relationships with knowledgeable industry leaders, ACP also offers assistance with networking, mentorship and career advice. Veterans will gain the most benefit if they have an idea of what sector they want to pursue post-military and align their mentorship accordingly. It is not uncommon to gain a mentor and a friend.

Why We Network

Right now, it may be hard to focus on anything except a job. This is not unusual. Just for a minute think beyond your next job and let's talk about a post-military career. We network to build a community to support us in our transition, to help us grow and remove blind spots in our own professional development, and we network to return

value to other professionals. Assuredly, effective networking will result in future job referrals and may lead to a better job or two. It may even lead to you providing referrals for others. But that is the short game. The long game is recognizing networking provides a professional support structure and helps us with a diversity of thought. Joe Olivarez encourages the development of networks with geographic diversity, occupational diversity, and socio-economic diversity. Remain open to new connections and enjoy the journey.

Summary

You decided to leave the military. Now make the most of it. Transition from military to civilian life is a significant emotional event, and service members should approach the process accordingly. Know your separation requirements, plan your post-separation budget, and learn about the benefits you earned.

Separating members depart with varying skills, education, and experience levels. Individual factors also affect the ease of transition, including, level of disability (if any), family status (e.g., spouse employment, dependent children), and preferences. Whatever your desired end state when you begin, there's no doubt the journey towards a successful transition requires detailed planning, patience, and the same drive you displayed in the military to accomplish your mission. Therefore, an early start remains paramount. The information contained in this document is a good start for any transitioning service member, but particularly so for those focused on a career in the security profession. Now it's up to you to take charge.

Author Bios

Michael Green, PMP, CPP, is the Security Forces Chief, DAF-CJIC, located in Quantico, VA. He is a 26-year veteran of the United States Air Force where he commanded a Mission Support Group, three squadrons in garrison, and two squadrons deployed. He now serves as the Senior Program Manager for the Air Force's Law Enforcement Organization indexing, biometric collection, and dispositions program. Mike also serves on the ASIS Military Liaison Community Steering Committee.

David Martin, CPP, is a 22-year veteran of the United States Army, in which he served in a variety of protection and military law enforcement leadership positions from the tactical to strategic level at home and abroad. Martin currently serves as a civilian Training and Leader Development professional in the Headquarters, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, a 4-Star Army Command at Ft. Eustis, VA, responsible for training over 750,000 service members annually. He also continues to counsel current and former military personnel on military-to-civilian transition and currently serves as the Chair of the Military Liaison Community's Content Development Sub-Committee.

Michael D. Reiner, CPP, SPIPC, is the Assistant Vice President of Public Safety at Creighton University. During his 25-year career as a Security Forces officer in the United States Air Force, Reiner commanded an air base group, three Security Forces squadrons, and a cadet squadron at the US Air Force Academy. He transitioned to the private sector to assume his current role, protecting a community of over 10,000 students, faculty, and staff who live, learn, and play on a 130-acre university campus in Omaha, Nebraska. Reiner serves on the ASIS Military Liaison Community Steering Committee and is Chair of the Omaha Chapter.