WISCONSIN BUSINESSES: VETERAN-READY

As employers increasingly compete to attract military veterans to their workforce, it is important that businesses are prepared to succeed. Military veterans and their spouses bring a number of valuable characteristics to enhance any workplace—dependability, responsibility, adaptability and leadership. Businesses that understand military culture and communication can greatly improve the recruitment and hiring of one increasingly valuable workforce commodity: the military veteran.

Businesses often describe themselves as “veteran-friendly” to express their desire to employ veterans and demonstrate their patriotic support of hiring those who have served and sacrificed on behalf of our nation. But are these businesses truly ready to employ veterans? Businesses are learning the key distinction between simply being veteran-friendly and being veteran-ready.

Military veterans are tight-knit, sharing their own vernacular and culture. Although their individual experiences may vary by branch of service, era of service, duty assignment location or combat experience, there are certain characteristics that are generally universal.

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<th>Teamwork</th>
<th>Dependability</th>
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These core values are integral to a veteran entering civilian employment, yet can often be overlooked. For any employer, developing a basic understanding of military culture and experience is equally as important as the set of best practices implemented by a company, and can greatly improve employers’ and employees’ abilities to effectively communicate.

With that said, there is no “one size fits all” approach to becoming veteran-ready. Rather, it is about finding the right mix of best practices that fits your company’s mission and culture. The goal of this document is to provide information on various state and federal resources, best practices and case studies so that businesses looking to enhance or launch their veteran hiring and engagement strategies have a clear place to start.
BEST PRACTICES

Enlist a veteran in your company to be involved in the HR resume screening process.
- Provide understanding of related skills to open positions and workplace culture.
- Translate military jargon into civilian terms.

Foster a relationship between the HR team and local veteran resources.
- Ensure the veterans you hire have access to all the benefits they’ve earned.

Connect with the veterans in your company.
- Know the number of veterans employed by your company.
- Establish an affinity group.
- Recognize veterans for their contribution to the company.
- Help veterans connect with each other within the company.

Establish a mentor/peer/resource group for veterans.
- Reinforce veterans’ feeling of belonging.

Extend information and resources to non-veterans.
- Help bridge cultural difference and build a sense of community.

Participate in external events as part of strategic recruitment.
- Transition summits, hiring fairs, military transition assistance program events, etc.
- Help veterans connect with each other within the company. Share your messaging with veterans.

Ensure recruitment and HR teams understand that veteran recruiting is different than civilian recruiting.
- Make a veteran-specific engagement plan (see DOL toolkit).

Sponsor/partner with the State of Wisconsin talent attraction initiative.
- Build your company’s pipeline to transitioning service members and spouses.

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

U.S. Department of Labor (DOL): DOL’s “Veterans’ Employment and Training Service (VETS)” division has numerous resources to assist veterans, their families, and employers seeking to hire veterans, including a “Hiring Veterans” step-by-step toolkit resource. Visit DOL.gov/vets/ahaw/

Department of Workforce Development: The Office of Veteran Employment Services has a number of services, including information directly geared toward employers, assisting with identifying veteran talent as well as grants to encourage veteran employment and training. Visit DWD.wisconsin.gov/veterans

Wisconsin Veterans Service Officers: Every county in Wisconsin has a dedicated Veterans Service Officer who advocates on behalf of veterans and is an invaluable resource in identifying eligible benefits for veterans. Visit WICVSO.org/locate-your-cvso/

Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs: This agency works on behalf of veterans and their families, providing a variety of services for eligible Wisconsin veterans. Visit WisVets.com

When an employer adds these tools to its hiring practices, it will not only be veteran-ready—it will have made significant progress to be eligible for recognition by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). The DOL Medallion Program recognizes businesses that employ and retain veterans, including efforts to establish employee development programs for veterans, and employers who offer veteran-specific benefits to improve retention.