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# **Military Transition:** **Defining Your Future Career** **Options for Current Military** **and Veterans**

## **A Job-Hunt Guide**

**Patra Frame**

## ***Job-Hunt Guides***

*Job-Hunt Guides* are short ebooks published by Job-Hunt.org to help job seekers master a topic that is important for a successful job search.

Each Job-Hunt Guide is written by a job hunt experts. Patricia (Patra) Frame is the author of this Job-Hunt Guide. She is Job-Hunt.org's Expert in Job Search for Veterans.

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## Planning for Success: Defining Your Future Career Options for Current Military and Veterans

Too often my conversations with military in transition demonstrate they have jumped into a job search with limited planning. Most took a transition class but admit it was so much information that they skipped a lot.

Whether you are transitioning after several years' service or are retiring, you face big changes. These changes go beyond the job search to selecting among options for future employment, additional education, where you want to live next, any family goals, and building a financial reserve before you transition. These all influence your job search and each requires thought.

**The first step is NOT to jump into a job search.** You may want to jump into an active job search and find a job fast. Or perhaps you think that you can move most easily into a government or government contractor job in your current field.

Many try these fast jumps, few succeed long-term. They often end up unemployed for a long period right after retirement/separation or in a series of jobs in the first few years. Even veterans who go into federal civil service jobs quit at a far higher rate than civilians do - often due to misunderstanding of job expectations.

- ◆ You need to understand your destination - and yourself - to successfully target and execute a job search that will result in career success.
- ◆ You need to consider what you want to do and how your past work achievements can be used to support your future.
- ◆ You need to learn enough to be realistic about the need for any new skills/education and the possibility of lower income for a few years.

For most military folks, the return to the civilian world is a big transition. The jobs are different, the language is different, the expectations are different. The longer you have spent in the military, or the shorter your previous civilian work experience, the bigger the knowledge gap. So, it is time for a plan.

Ready to get started on your next steps? Grab a notebook or open a new file, and let's go!

## *Stage 1: Focus and Process*

The most common failure in military transition to a successful civilian career is a lack of focus. This applies even if you expect to keep doing what you have done in the military.

A failure to research and focus on what specific career fields, jobs and employers are the best choices makes your transition far longer and harder. Too many transitioning military think "I can do a wide range of work" and then expect employers to provide job options based on our resumes. Employers will not do this for you.

*Other people you know or work with can help with ideas, but only you can decide what you are going to focus on doing next.*

To start smart, do research and planning before pushing ahead with resumes or job applications. Learn how to be effective in the job search process so that you can leverage your interests and desires into a new success. We will also discuss how you can see yourself as 'a product' to sell to targeted employers so you can create effective marketing materials, such as your resume and social media profiles.

Once you are comfortable that you understand your needs and interests correctly, start to create your strategy and then to build your job search plan.

### The Process

Planning for career and job search success is a process designed to help you think clearly about what you want. The point of it is to get you to:

- ◆ Be comprehensive in defining your future purpose,
- ◆ Assess where you want to go in career terms and develop specific goals,
- ◆ Learn how you can get there,
- ◆ Discover the requirements for preferred career options,
- ◆ Think more fully about the issues important to your transition success, and
- ◆ To do this before the daily realities of your last few active duty months.

This process is also a time to think of your mid-term and longer-range career/job destinations - what you want out of your work life, and how to get there. This is the strategic part of your transition. Once you have your basic strategy, you can move into tactics of job search - developing an action plan and executing it. Like any plan, you will probably make some changes along the way as you learn more - don't worry if this happens.

Military transition back to civilian life involves a large career change. This is true even if you plan to continue to work in a career exactly the same as your main military field.

Research shows that there are three critical elements of successful career change:

1. Figuring out what you want to do
2. Using your past to enhance your future
3. Demonstrating your value to employers

Skipping any of these steps means a longer job search and, often, a less successful career.

## ***Stage 2: Figuring Out What You Want to Do Next***

Your “mission” (finding a good job that launches a successful civilian career) won’t be achieved without an objective, and that objective can’t be as simple as “beat the enemy” (or “find a job”). Your objective must be specific or the chances of success are extremely low. So, put your military planning experience to work to the benefit of your civilian career.

Assessing your future career steps includes analysis of both personal and environmental factors. You will look inward to:

- ◆ Identify your interests, values, needs, and goals.
- ◆ Identify your strengths and how you want to use them.
- ◆ Figure out what you don’t know that you need to know.
- ◆ Start defining your past employment successes.

Then, once you have chosen some work options which interest you, look at external factors. These include

- ◆ The economy - nationally and in your preferred location,
- ◆ Validating your desired work/career assumptions,
- ◆ Global/national/local influences on your desired work or field,
- ◆ Technological changes,
- ◆ Current/future market forecasts for the work, and
- ◆ Common career options in your desired locations.

### **Step 1: Understanding Yourself**

In this preliminary thinking stage, you want to keep expanding your ideas and concepts as long as you are usefully adding information. Here you will think about what you want to do and what you need to learn about potential jobs and employers.

#### **Exercises**

##### ***A. The “Blue Ocean” Exercise***

Start with a blank page and write down those things you have done which you most enjoyed. Be sure to include both paid work and volunteer roles. Add in any hobbies or

other interests. Add to this several times over a week or two.

Once you have a full list, look for patterns which can provide ideas for your next career step:

- ◆ What are some skills you really enjoy using and what other careers may call for these skills?
- ◆ What roles were most satisfying and how could these influence your next step?
- ◆ What have you wanted to learn and apply but have not?

### ***B: Know What Is Important to You***

1. Create a list of 8-12 things you gain from your work (besides pay and benefits) which are important to you.

*Examples:* learn new technology, respect of peers, travel, growth opportunities, training and development opportunities, work alone, work in a team, big \$, social life, stability.

These offer insights into aspects of your next job and employer which are important for you to find.

2. Ask yourself these questions

- ◆ What do you enjoy doing, are good at, and want to do next?
- ◆ What really matters to you in your life, career, and finances?
- ◆ What are your personal values?
- ◆ What environment do you need to be successful and fulfilled?

Then, consider: what do these exercises tell you about the type of jobs and employer organization culture you need to succeed?

### ***C: Identify Your Successes***

Think about your past work successes. Identify at least 6-8 times you felt great about an achievement and make notes about each. These do not have to be some huge thing but must be something that made you feel good and that you enjoyed doing as you addressed the challenge or issue. Be specific: what was the environment, situation or challenge you faced, what did you do, and what were the results?



Then, look for patterns in your successes:

- ◆ What skills, knowledge, attitude did you use?
- ◆ Were there certain environments or tasks you most enjoyed?
- ◆ What can those successes and patterns tell you about your strengths?
- ◆ What do they tell you about the environment you need to succeed?

### ***D: What is your Self-image?***

Most of us have some self-image developed over time which may or may not be a realistic current image. We are many selves.

1. Start making a record of your "selves" in any format that works for you. Think about your own image of who you are - at work, at home, in the community, wherever.

- ◆ What do you think your image is?
- ◆ How did you develop that image?
- ◆ Is it current?

Expand your image to include as many attributes and strengths as possible. Now is the time to let yourself play with as many concepts and ideas about yourself as you can.

2. Think about how you see yourself and how that impacts your success. Answer these questions carefully:

- ◆ When you meet someone new at work, what do you tell them about yourself?
- ◆ What do you find exciting about your work? Your current/last job? Your life?
- ◆ What five or six activities do you really love to DO in your work?
- ◆ What would you hope other people would say to describe you to someone?
- ◆ Who relies on you for information? Advice? Assistance? Support? Mentoring?
- ◆ What three or four activities do you do outside work which you love to do?
- ◆ What do you dream of doing which might influence your choices?
- ◆ What aspects of past work or volunteering are really important to you?
- ◆ Which do you want your future to include?

3. Once you have answered these questions, ask someone you trust at work and another close friend or family member. How do they think you would answer these questions? What can learn about yourself from the differences?

## ***E: Consider Your Strengths***

Next, think about your strengths. Most of us rarely think about what our strengths are. Start with these questions. Make a record of your answers now, then you can review and expand upon them as you think more about what you want to do.

1. Think about what you enjoy doing that you are good at doing as well.

Whether you have thought about it or not, you have already established a pattern of success. You made it through basic training and probably several specialty courses. You have a record of achievement in your work. You have been promoted. Find or get your past records and ERs to create a master file of your experience.

The trick is to identify your successes in the areas that mean the most to you. And then to turn these successes into ideas for your job search.

2. Consider your longer-term goals or dreams.

Have you some dreams, tucked away until you can return to them? If so, what do you need to learn or do to make those dreams a reality? One of the NCOs I talked with dreamed of being a minister. But he did not just dream - he had been taking courses to get a divinity degree. He volunteered with his church and was about to become a youth minister there. After his retirement, he moved into a full-time minister role quickly.

Have you newer dreams, based on more recent events in your life, ideas or options which interest you? Think about your new and older dreams, interests and goals and other duties which you enjoyed or careers you thought you might like. Write them out and explore these as part of your planning process.

3. Analyze and quantify your skills and achievements.

Make time to remember your own successes and see what they tell you. Go through your entire work record. Look at the experiences and achievements that really meant something to you. Build on the list of successes which you started above by expanding those you are most proud of and enjoyed the most.

Then review the common elements among these for the skills you want to continue to use, those you want more of. Identify also the ones you never want to do again. Build-out the details of each accomplishment. As you do this, you are building a record to define your future job search.

#### 4. Identify your strengths.

Strengths include both specific technical or professional skills and soft skills which are primarily how you work with others. Here are some questions to think about.

- ◆ What specific tasks and types of work do you enjoy doing?
- ◆ Which are you really good at?
- ◆ What specific education, training, or experience do you have which supports your strengths?
- ◆ What strengths have been identified in your reviews and discussions with others which you might want to add here?
- ◆ Who or what could help you identify your strengths more fully?

As you document your strengths, remember that other people in your life can add a lot of information. Ask several who you trust what they think your strengths are and what work they think might suit you in to see what you learn.

The list of skills you enjoy using the most becomes a way to search for possible areas of interest as a career as well as for specific jobs.

#### ***Exercise: Identify Job Options***

Combine the top two skills and use a big job search engine, like Indeed.com, to see what jobs come up. Don't stop at the jobs on the first page; look at 75 to 100 jobs. Read in detail the ones that look most interesting.

- ◆ What skills, education, and experience do you already have?
- ◆ What additional skills, education, or experience do you need?

This is one easy way to find several options for jobs which may not have occurred to you already. And you can repeat it with your other skills. You can also do this with job titles that you think you are interested in.

#### ***F. Begin to Ask Others for Input***

Next, share your ideas of your future with several close contacts. These could include an astute family member, a peer or previous boss who has already transitioned, or anyone else whose business acumen and personal knowledge of you will allow them to assist you:

- ◆ Ask that person to listen critically and to give you feedback that will help you succeed in your job search.
- ◆ Ask about your strengths as another sees them.
- ◆ Ask for realistic feedback. This is also helpful to identify anything you may have over-rated or under-rated.

Many people over-rate their strengths in an area that is recent or they have been recognized for, while under-rating other strengths that could open doors. Others forget skills and knowledge gained in side projects or volunteering.

In expanding your discussions, you will start with your existing network. Your goals are to learn more about successful career change or transitions and to figure out what you might want to do next in more detail. Seek out:

- ◆ Peers you worked with who can assess/recommend some of your best attributes and skills to add to your self-assessment
- ◆ People who know you well and can suggest varying career options.
- ◆ Past co-workers who have already made the transition to a new career and can tell you what they did that worked well and what mistakes they made.
- ◆ People in your desired field or specific jobs who can offer information or contacts to help you learn more about the career fields you are assessing.
- ◆ Alumni of your university who are in the field who can tell you about career paths and employers.

### *Sample Questions to Ask*

- ◆ Based on our work together, what do you think my best skills and interests are?
- ◆ We worked together several times, what private sector work/new career options do you think I might want to consider?
- ◆ We worked together several times, I am thinking of making a new move into "X" field – how did you make that transition?
- ◆ I am thinking of making a new move into "X" field, do you know people in that field I might talk with to learn more about it?
- ◆ You have already made this transition, what do you think was the smartest thing you did in the process?
- ◆ Based on your transition, what would you have done earlier in the process? What did you waste time on?

Evaluate your military education in civilian terms via your service's program. This translation offers insight into skills as well as providing educational credit information.

There are tests available to help you identify your strengths if you are struggling or unsure. Check out what is available to you via your transition program, such as GPS-

TAP. There are also self-assessments and many other job related resources via <https://www.careeronestop.org/ExploreCareers/explore-careers.aspx>

## Step 2. Consider External Factors

What external factors influence your desired career choice in any desired location? This may include the economy, technology and market forces, local area influences, and specific career choices.

Career options are always changing. The 'hot job' of even a year ago may not be so hot now. The tendency of many veterans is to go into government or government contracting jobs which are subject to many political and economic forces as well as location driven.

As you look at the specific career fields which interest you, check to see if those jobs are common in the locations you want to live in. In developing a career, locations which have a lot of the jobs are always better than those which only have a few since such locations offer far more opportunity now and over many years. You can research this in part by looking at the number of such jobs in a big job search engine. The economic development agency of your desired location also will have useful information. An extensive online resource is City-Data.com.

Often retiring military want to return to their own hometown, a spouse's hometown, or a place they liked while on active duty.

- ◆ If you have a location that is the most important item to you in your job search, you may have to consider whether the work that interests you is available there.
- ◆ If not, reverse the process and find out what jobs are most common there. Then you can select your best matches from those jobs.

Too often I have seen people spend a lot of time and money on education, specialized training, and certifications for jobs which are not available where they want to live. Only you can decide, with your spouse if applicable, whether the location is worth any reduction in work options.

As you finish your self-analysis and focus on possible career choices, begin to expand your connections. Find those who can help you understand more about the work and your target employers or how to translate your skills effectively.

- ◆ Talk to people you know in the community.
- ◆ Look for local groups of people in each field to meet. Some may be chapters of

- professional or trade associations. Others could be found searching Meetup.com, Lanyard.com, EventBrite.com, and local business calendars for relevant events.
- ◆ A local job club will offer a range of useful information and connections.

If you are not in the U.S. or are far from the location you intend to move to, you can also build a network at your desired location by starting to connect using social media.

Online you can join networks on the specific field and groups on social media, such as LinkedIn. Look for the relevant professional or trade associations and their social media efforts too. Reach out to those whose advice or articles you read regularly online or in professional journals and see value in.

Talk to a range of people at each event you attend and learn about them. Follow-up with those who seem the best matches to your goals. As you build a relationship with each one, ask for their recommendations on other people who might be able to help you.

All these actions will help you narrow your potential career choice down to one or two real options. This is critical so you can focus effectively on what you need to learn. As you learn more about the field and its needs and requirements, you can begin to assess the value you offer an employer in your chosen field and how you will demonstrate that.

Taking the time early in your career transition process to assess your interests, to create realistic goals, and to help you learn how to make an effective transition. Too often, people in the change mode jump into the actions before they have a useful plan. This results in longer job searches or several jumps in rapid succession. You can create the conditions for your transition to be successful – and to make the process easier and more effective.

### *Stage 3: Using Your Past to Enhance Your Future*

Experienced civilian professionals who are looking for a new position commonly make a number of errors which hinder their success. For many military, these common errors carry even bigger negative results since their transition is more extensive. The most common errors include:

- ◆ Unfocused job searches
- ◆ A reactive stance
- ◆ Focusing mainly on job ads
- ◆ Expecting a recruiter to find the job for you
- ◆ Poor self-presentation

Adding to these challenges is that you are trying to juggle a life change, military job demands, and an unfamiliar job search process. Thus, the thought of doing research and creating a plan can be overwhelming. Given the breadth of experiences many military have, it is common to find an 'I can do anything' attitude. This often leads to stops and starts in selecting possible career options across far too big a selection. While you have much to do to find your best next success, wasting time on the wrong activities does not advance your search. But it is very common!

Planning and prioritizing your activities will help you leverage your time and efforts to be effective and successful.

#### Step 1. Goals, Dreams, and Job Choices

This step helps you decide upon your goals. This takes thought and focus.

- ◆ Think of your strengths above - where do they lead?
- ◆ What longer-term goals or dreams do you have?
- ◆ How do your past successes help you focus on what you want to do next?
- ◆ What jobs offer the opportunity to meet your desires and needs?

This effort forms the basis for your career goals and plans. It helps you start your research into specific jobs and target employers. Later it will help you create an effective resume and other job search materials.

## Step 2. Enhance your Analysis

### Exercises

#### **1. Identify career fields and jobs which interest you.**

Think about what you have already learned and check out some job titles which interest you. Use them to search a major job board or aggregator, such as Indeed.com or SimplyHired.com. Look at different combinations to see a variety of job options.

Then assess:

- ◆ Which jobs offer the opportunity to meet your needs, as identified in earlier steps?
- ◆ What are the specific job titles that best meet your goals?
- ◆ Which jobs do you best meet 90 - 100% of the common requirements?
- ◆ Which employers have such jobs?

#### **2. Do a SWOT analysis.**

SWOT = Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

Opportunities and threats include both your personal issues and external forces.

*Example - Threats: jobs in your field now specifically require degrees or certifications you do not have.*

*Example - Opportunities: advanced manufacturing jobs now demand basic computer literacy and teamwork skills you have.*

Remember to include the specific skills required by your chosen career field and the key "soft skills" most organizations seek in your SWOT analysis. Soft skills include:

- ◆ Effective communications
- ◆ Customer focus
- ◆ Teamwork
- ◆ Interpersonal skills
- ◆ Flexibility
- ◆ Comfortable working with diverse groups
- ◆ Similar human skills which transfer across many opportunities

Most military have excellent experiences in a wide range of soft skills.



### ***3. Develop Your Success Stories***

You started to identify your successes in Stage 2. Now use these same experiences and accomplishments to create stories of your successes. You know the formula:

- ◆ The situation or task you faced.
- ◆ The actions you took.
- ◆ The results you achieved.

These make a success story that can have many meanings and uses! Whether you lead a team or were part of a unit, you can describe your own role in big successes. You also can show smaller, important work you mainly did on your own. Don't forget successes in temporary assignments, volunteer work, or community activities. These also can offer valuable insights and skills for your search.

Then review the common elements among these for the skills you want to continue to use, those you want more of. Identify also the ones you never want to do again. Build-out the details of each accomplishment. As you do this, you are building a record to define your future job search.

Recently I talked with a Marine who felt that there was nothing in his service that could be useful in the civilian world beyond physical security work. He had been an Embassy guard in several difficult places. As we talked it became clear that one success story might be about his role in assessing difficult situations quickly and taking the right actions both to protect embassy staff and to ensure positive relations with the locals. Another was about his training work to support security in embassies. Both offered clues to potential jobs for him. He later took a training assistant job while going to school for a degree in training and development.

Your success stories are a terrific way to figure out what work really interests you. They also provide information you need to find the places where you can succeed, develop a great resume and cover letters, and interview effectively.

Take the time to create at least six to eight stories in detail. After you define them well, talk to trusted friends to learn how to improve the story and tell it effectively. You will learn more about yourself as you do this – incorporate that too. Later these stories will become a great resource for achievement bullet points for your resume. Then they become great answers to a wide range of interview questions.

### ***4. Matching Your Experience to the Jobs you Seek***

Use your self assessment based on the jobs which you selected as most interesting

above.

- ◆ How do you match up to the common requirements?
- ◆ What, if any, additional education, training or experience do you need for jobs you seek? How will you get it?
- ◆ Where are the jobs which most interest you?
- ◆ Are you willing to move to locations that offer a lot of these jobs so that you have future options in the career field?

### ***5. Test your own self-assessments.***

Use others whose advice you value to help you "product-test" your self-assessments. Research via your connections whether the market values what you are offering. Ask past mentors and bosses as well as others in your field you respect. You want to learn what they see in these areas:

- ◆ Best strengths and skills you offer.
- ◆ How you present yourself in person and on paper.
- ◆ Current demand and pay ranges for your top few job choices in your preferred location.

Use this information in planning your job search targets, building your network, identifying the value you offer an employer.

### **Step 3. Summarize your Results**

- ◆ What do you enjoy doing, do well, and want to do next?
- ◆ What environment do you need to be successful?
- ◆ Which careers and jobs offer the opportunity to meet your needs?
- ◆ What organizations offer the environment you need?
- ◆ Where are these jobs and organizations commonly located?
- ◆ Who is hiring people for this work and these positions?

Your career choices are the largest investments you will make now and in your future. Put some effort into your analysis and research and you will reap rewards. You are far more likely to find the right work and places for your future success. Employers will see the effort and how you have worked to demonstrate how you will contribute to their needs. Smart ones value this highly.

## Step 4. Deepening Your Knowledge

You now have an idea what your strengths, interests and goals are. You have picked some specific jobs in the career fields which most interest you. Where do you find the other information, advice and assistance you need to succeed?

Use and strengthen your networks to leverage and enhance your activities. Think of all your contacts: family, friends, co-workers, past bosses and peers, others you know. Connect or reconnect.

Once you are connected, begin a dialogue. Assess what information, ideas, contacts you might offer as well as what you need from each connection. Talk, email, or get together and rebuild your network. Then stay in touch. Ask for help as you need it and give information or assistance back regularly.

Build relationships in your civilian community if you are stateside. Develop some within your chosen career field, including via social media. If possible, join local professional groups in your field. Build more through hobby or sports groups, kids or community organizations.

Overseas? Consider professional and trade associations' information resources plus social media groups in your field.

Social media resources, such as LinkedIn and Twitter, offer very helpful professional networks and job search groups. You can also use them as a way to help you manage and maintain relationships. These are valuable no matter where you are currently located or plan to move to.

## *Stage 4. Demonstrating Your Value to Employers*

### Step 1. Job Search is a Sales Process with You as the “Product”

Learning to think of yourself as a “product” that you are selling to an employer is critical. Read some articles on personal branding to help you become comfortable with this concept.

Employers are always interested in the top-quality candidate who knows what challenges the company faces and can demonstrate how their skills, knowledge, or abilities will help the company succeed. You can be that candidate with a little research and good self-understanding.

You should have a personal sales plan which includes:

- ◆ Define the "product" - what are you selling?
- ◆ Position the product - set yourself apart from other "products"
- ◆ Target the correct buyers - do your homework on employers (“know the enemy”).
- ◆ Develop marketing materials (resumes, etc.) - tailored to your target market.
- ◆ Communicate the "benefits" - of hiring you.

The first step in the process is to begin to think of yourself as a product. This starts with the work done above. Understanding the job options that interest you helps you define your product and position yourself for the right job. That research helps you to find the right employers for your goals and values. Build on your past successes to demonstrate your value for such work. This allows you to create the right resumes and social media profiles and professional contacts - your marketing materials - to find the right job.

While a tightly focused search with careful selection of a few targets is an ideal; for most transitioning military the search for a new opportunity is a broader effort. It includes both targeted marketing and responding to known targets of opportunity like job ads.

### Step 2. Research to support your marketing and sales effort.

You need to find those organizations which do work that interests you and learn more about them.

- ◆ Start your research online but expand past that.
- ◆ Get research help at a local library, many have extensive business information resources. Ask the reference librarian for help.
- ◆ Ask the people you know to suggest potential employers or to connect you to people who work at your target employers to learn more.
- ◆ Use social media to find more contacts at potential targets.
- ◆ Validate your interest in each potential employer before you seek work there.

Many employers have employee referral programs. These get you faster attention than other means; so finding connections and building relationships with someone at your target employers helps get you referred internally.

Employers' veteran hiring programs are another smart resource, so connect to them via social media and at events. Then follow-up and follow-through.

Don't rely on the big job-boards or on recruiting agencies primarily. They are expensive for employers. Employers are more likely to use alternative sources, employee referrals, social media and direct contacts.

Employers also may concentrate advertising on niche job boards. Niche boards are focused by profession, by type of organization, and by speciality services. They include:

- ◆ Professional associations and union job boards, like SHRM.
- ◆ Those focused on a specific career field, like logistics.
- ◆ Type of employer, such as non-profits or associations.
- ◆ Those for jobs requiring security clearances, like ClearedJobs.net.

### Step 3. Begin to Create Your Marketing Materials

Using your research into your preferred job and career field as well as employers which interest you:

Create a business card for use in networking, informational interviews, meetings, etc.

Create a resume and social media profiles which incorporate your best successes using the keywords common in your preferred jobs and employers.

Consider creating your own personal website or blog, writing articles, and other ways to make your expertise known which are most appropriate for the work you seek.

## *Stage 5. Create Your Plan*

We know, based on research, that most successful people share three common practices. You can too! The three are:

Build on your strengths.  
Have goals, and act on them.  
Network consistently.

Defining your personal story - a record of your successes and key attributes - creates a positive underpinning for your search. It ensures you come across as a confident professional in networking and interviewing. Planning and learning to think of yourself as a product to sell helps you to see your value and understand how to demonstrate it in a way that makes the right employer interested in you. Growing and developing your personal connections allows you to tap into a vast store of knowledge, support, and help.

Define the steps you need to take to find the right opportunity. These include:

- ◆ Connecting with and building your personal network.
- ◆ Researching and developing your list of target organizations.
- ◆ Creating your marketing materials (resume, online profiles, business cards, etc.).
- ◆ Developing a decision matrix to assist you in making choices.
- ◆ Defining your time frame and needed weekly actions.
- ◆ Include these activities and time to do them in your plan.

Step 1. Build your transition job search plan.

- ◆ Define 3-4 specific goals - what do you need to do to achieve your short and mid-term goals? How does each relate to your longer term goals?
- ◆ Detail the actions needed to achieve each goal.
- ◆ What will you do to move yourself forward? Be specific about networking, calls, research, and so on.
- ◆ Make an appointment with yourself each week to work your plan.
- ◆ Take small but regular actions toward your goals.

Taking time at the beginning to do this pays off. It will shorten your search time. And make it far more likely that you will find and accept a position where you can succeed!

Meanwhile, don't get panicky and grasp at jobs which do not interest you. Applying and interviewing for jobs that are not right for you only will increase your feeling of failure and frustration. This is likely to make you less attractive as a candidate for the right jobs.

## Step 2. Get Help

Take advantage of every service available to you!

- ◆ If you are on active duty, use the transition services.
- ◆ After deployment, take advantage of career transition programs including Yellow Ribbon events and job fairs sponsored by your unit/installation.
- ◆ Use the Career Services available to you from colleges or universities you have attended to learn more about employers, build your marketing process, and connect to other alums in your chosen area of work.
- ◆ Seek out the Veteran's representative at your local CareerOneStop office.

All of these services offer useful information and assistance, although the quality varies. Each can help you figure out more about the process and your role.

## IN SUM

The old slogan "Proper Preparation Prevents Poor Performance" applies as much to your transition as it ever did to any of your military work. Taking time in the beginning to understand what you really seek next and how to find it creates the opportunity for the success you want.

**Good hunting!**

## Bonus Marketing Information:

### YOUR RESUME: TOP TIPS FOR TRANSITIONING MILITARY

*A resume is an advertisement for you - designed solely to show what you can do immediately for an employer, so that they will contact you.*

#### 1. ***Focus, Focus, Focus***

Before you create your resumes, focus on the type of work you want to do and the organizations you want to work with. Be very specific in your goals. Learn and use "civilian" terms. This is your "battle plan" foundation. Then create marketing materials: resume, social media profiles, business cards – which clearly show why hiring you is an obvious choice.

#### 2. ***Start with a Professional Summary. (skip "Objective" statements)***

Summaries show experiences, skills, and attributes as they apply to employer's needs. Objectives usually are about you. Create your summary by highlighting your most relevant achievements and strengths. Go for clear, concise, and memorable - grab the reader's attention. Do as bullets or a short paragraph. Examples:

- ◆ Experienced team leader known for training and developing highly productive staff and well-functioning teams rapidly.
- ◆ Recognized for intelligence data analysis and report-writing skills...
- ◆ Selected to work with foreign and US team to develop effective security practices under tight time limits.
- ◆ Created new maintenance practices which saved materials costs while reducing accidents.

#### 3. ***Show Your Achievements.***

Demonstrate how your past experience and knowledge will contribute to the job and organization right now! Don't pretend you were not in the military. But do use keywords and terms relevant to your targeted employer. Skip job descriptions, tell what you actually did. Detail the situation or task, your actions, and the results. Quantify what you can. Examples:

- ◆ Appointed to lead team revising supervisor training to support safety and security efforts in combat operations, created new program within 60 days which reduced accidents and injuries.
- ◆ Took over failing function, within 90 days built effective team, improved critical metrics, closed all overdue items, and function received high ratings on re-



- inspection.
- ◆ Researched, wrote, and presented daily intelligence summaries to national command authority.

#### **4. *Tailor the Resume to the Opportunity and Organization.***

Use the keywords that are current for your field and for the specific job. Focus on your experience and achievements that are most relevant.

#### **5. *Get the Basics Right.***

- \* Make it easy to read - plenty of white space, easy to read font, bullet points, limited use of fancy formatting. A Word document is the most preferred by employers.
- \* Have a professional email address, one phone number with voice mail, your LinkedIn URL.
- \* Keep it professional. Omit personal interests and activities unless directly related to the job.
- \* Two pages max! Most preferred format is reverse chronological with current job shown first.
- \* Tell more about most recent jobs, less about earlier ones. Dump jobs that are more than 10-15 years ago or create a simple summary sentence.
- \* Show education and training relevant to work you seek, not a long list of military schools.

## More from Patra Frame:

### ***Military Transition: Effective Networking Guide for Current Military and Veterans***

Networking is an intimidating idea, but it is essential for job search and career success. In this ebook, Patra breaks networking down into do-able steps. She provides the questions and conversation starters most people need to get started with their networking. As a vet herself, Patra understands how to leverage the skills you've learned to make your networking succeed.

Reviews:

*“We emphasize to the military transition classes we instruct that it’s never too early to start networking and talking to others about your career and your future. In fact, you should never stop doing so. That’s why this book, filled with step-by-step guidance, is so important.”*

**Rob Riggins, Marketing Director, ClearedJobs.Net | CyberSecJobs.com**

*“Networking is how employers prefer to fill jobs today, making it the most essential skill in job search and careers today. Unfortunately, it is also the most intimidating and least understood for many of us. In this book, Patra Frame offers step-by-step instructions for successful networking, from how to plan to what to say and how to follow up.”*

**Susan P. Joyce, President: NETability, Inc. Publisher: Job-Hunt.org**

Check out Patra’s [Effective Networking Guide](#) on Amazon.com.

Also read Patra’s articles on Job-Hunt.org –

[Guide to Job Search for Veterans and Transitioning Military](#)

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