

Marketing Yourself *for a Second Career*



Marketing Yourself for a Second Career

Changing jobs can be stressful and challenging — especially when it’s a transition from the military to the private sector. MOAA wants to help make the job-search process easier for you. We hope you find this guide a valuable resource. For additional career-transition information, visit www.moaa.org/career.

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Making the Transition

Stages of Transition

Emotional Challenges

Personal Factors to Consider

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Analyzing the Choices

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Chapter 1 Getting Started

MAKING THE TRANSITION

Changing jobs is an intricate process that affects every member of your family. In addition to trying to find the right niche for your professional life, you must consider whether you are willing to relocate, disrupt your spouse's career and your children's schooling, and change your lifestyle to accommodate a different compensation level. Unlike military relocations, in which the stress of frequent moves is mitigated by sponsor programs and a supportive network on both ends of the move, this time you might be on your own.

For senior officers who have reached retirement eligibility, the most common reasons to consider a career transition may include a desire to support your spouse's career, developing geographic stability for your family, reaching statutory retirement, or a missed promotion.

Younger officers are more receptive to change. Their most frequent reasons for leaving military service may include visions of higher pay and greater responsibility in the civilian sector and a preference for less family separation, more geographic stability, and a more flexible career path.

STAGES OF TRANSITION



Regardless of the reasons that brought you to this crossroads, it's important to realize all military officers have a wide variety of skills, experiences, and passions to offer the civilian sector. And because you do many things well, you might find it difficult to assess what is right for you at this juncture. For example:

- Should I seek a position that uses my transferable military skills, or embark on a radically new course?
- Should I go to a Fortune 500 company or seek a more freewheeling, entrepreneurial firm?
- Is now the time to buy a business, become a consultant, head to graduate school, or enter public service?
- Would an international opportunity be a career-catapulting move at this time?
- Is this a time to seek outlets for aspects of my personality that haven't been previously expressed?

Often in midlife, parts of the self that have been neglected begin to bubble up. Accordingly, this might be the time to do something you always have wanted to do.

Finally, as you ponder these infinite possibilities, ask yourself how much risk you are prepared to tolerate. Robert Rubin, President Bill Clinton's second

secretary of the treasury, always reminded his staff that "even the best decisions are probabilistic and run a real risk of failure."

As you prepare to make the leap, remember MOAA has assisted thousands of officers in making the transition from military service to civilian career success. We offer a full suite of career-transition tools, including résumé-development assistance, focused career-transition seminars, and experienced career-management consultants to help guide and monitor your progress. However, the perfect job opportunity won't fall into your lap; you'll have to be proactive. Successful career transitions require tracking a multitude of details, being receptive to new ideas, being your best self, and generating at least one new networking contact every day.

EMOTIONAL CHALLENGES

As a successful military officer, you are accustomed to some degree of responsibility, success, status, and respect. Consequently, as you separate from military service, you might experience a sense of loss, lowered self-esteem, isolation, and negative feelings such as shock, anger, disbelief, and confusion. At the very least, you might feel out of

focus at the thought of being on a path without a known destination for the first time in many years.

Although no two people react exactly the same way, most deal with a variety of conflicting feelings as they move through the different stages of transition. (See the Stages of Transition graphic on the facing page.)

It also might be difficult for you to separate yourself from the organization, respected colleagues, and the structure that defines military service. Officers who have served for 20 or more years can have a difficult time letting go. This is an understandable, but necessary, part of the process.

PERSONAL FACTORS TO CONSIDER

Understanding who you are and what you would like to become for the next phase of your professional life requires much introspection and consultation with people you trust and respect and who have successfully made the transition into a new career.

The following checklist might be helpful as you plot the way ahead in your professional life.

- Consider the model for professional success outlined by Jim Collins in his book *Good to Great* that has enabled many good companies to make the leap to great, best-in-class companies:

- Seek a balance between your skills/experience, your passion, and a desired/reasonable economic motivator for the goods and services you provide.



Check out MOAA's military-to-civilian financial calculators at

www.moaa.org/calculators to help you determine how much civilian pay you'll need to match your existing military pay.

- Avoid a dollar-driven decision.
- Consider that the employer offering a lower salary could be the best fit for your skills and experience and your long-term goals. Moreover, it might be the place where you ultimately will attain your greatest monetary and nonmonetary rewards.
- Determine whether the job or geographic location has priority before you begin active research and networking.






- Assess your financial needs and the income level needed within the household to handle family expenses, including children’s education, unforeseen medical expenses, retirement savings, long term care, etcetera.
- Evaluate your own energy level and consider the level of stress/typical work hours that are acceptable to you.
- How do you feel about a job that requires travel? What percentage of travel time, if any, feels right to you?
- Are social needs — such as major sports teams, cultural attractions, or a long outdoor activity season — a factor in your selection of location?
- What aspects of your recent work have you enjoyed doing?
- What parts of your job would you prefer to avoid in your new career?

Other factors that might influence your choices include stability for your family; proximity to extended family members who might require assistance with daily living; your spouse’s career requirements; and tax-planning considerations. (See www.moaa.org/statereport.)

ANALYZING THE CHOICES

Speaking with former colleagues, getting insight from mentors, and availing yourself of career-assessment tools can help you think through what might be the best career path for you. There are many career choice options, and these are just a few you might want to consider. (See the Characteristics Table on the facing page.)

- **Public sector (federal, state, or local government):** What types of agencies/work

JOB-SECTOR CHARACTERISTICS			
	GOVERNMENT	FOR-PROFIT	NONPROFIT
	CHARACTERISTICS		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support on all sides • Driven by political realities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important to build cross-functional relationships • Sell or perish 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees wear multiple hats • All-hands-on-deck mentality
	ADVANTAGES		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geographic stability • Defined path • Greater work-life balance • Job security • Defined benefit retirement • Culturally closer to military • Telecommuting opportunity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High income potential • Prestige • Entrepreneurial environment with greater opportunity for creativity and upward mobility at some companies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with passionate people • Some work/life balance • Meaningful work • Some job security • Potential for greater impact
	DISADVANTAGES		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lengthy hiring process • Slower pace • Entrenched bureaucracy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less work/life balance • Difficulty breaking out of military-type pecking-order • Minimal job security • Mentoring challenges posed by remote reporting relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower pay • Limited upward mobility

VETERANS HAVE A STRONG PRESENCE IN U.S. BUSINESSES

3.8%

the unemployment rate of Post-9/11 veterans in 2018


1 in 3

employed veterans with a service-connected disability worked in the public sector in August 2018

BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS,
EMPLOYMENT SITUATION OF VETERANS — 2018



- would be of greatest interest to you? Are jobs plentiful in those fields?
- **Private sector:** Are you interested in becoming an employee of a large, medium, or small company? Which industries are of particular interest to you? Are you up on current trends within each of those industries? Do you bring skills and talents that can help companies within those industries save or make more money?
 - **Nonprofit sector:** Are passion and a meaningful mission more important to you than financial compensation? Is there a cause especially near to your heart that could readily become your full-time focus/occupation?
 - **Entrepreneurship:** Are you interested in starting your own business? Are you a risk-taker? Do you have the financial wherewithal or the investors you will need to get your business off the ground and growing? Is owning a franchise of interest to you? If so,

 It can be very helpful to speak with people you know or friends of friends to learn more about the various avenues and the pros and cons of each path.

of the thousands available (and they are more than just food related!) what kind of franchise has the greatest appeal? Do you prefer an owner-run model or a manager-run model?

- **Academia:** Are you interested in teaching? If so, at what level? Do you need additional degrees or certifications to be competitive for those opportunities?

A job that might seem appealing at first glance could have hidden downsides not readily apparent to those outside the field. It’s important to do your

research and talk to contacts in each field so you understand the unique characteristics of various employment sectors.

UNDERSTANDING WHAT YOU CAN CONTRIBUTE TO AN ORGANIZATION

Recognize every organization, whether public, private, or nonprofit, transitions through a series of four cycles as it navigates changes in leadership, in the macroeconomic environment, in the competitive landscape, and in the regulatory environment.

The broad types of organizational life cycles include:

- start-up
- turnaround
- realignment, transformation, and change implementation
- sustaining success




Reflecting back on your career, in which of these cycles do you have experience? Are there employment opportunities where your organizational lifecycle experiences could be particularly helpful?

For example, many of the skills needed to commission a newly constructed warship or lead a newly activated battalion are the same skills required in a civilian start-up organization, including a broad knowledge across the enterprise, the ability to wear many hats, and the capacity to excel when stretched outside of your comfort zone.

In the majority of cases, your next employer will hire you because of your ability to optimize time, create efficiencies, or make or save money. Focus on what specific skills you possess that can help your next employer make or save money or help achieve organizational goals and objectives.



PROS AND CONS OF BIG VERSUS SMALL COMPANIES

BIG COMPANIES		SMALL COMPANIES	
CHARACTERISTICS			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More competition for internal resources• More task specialization• More leadership turnover• Predictable pay and benefits		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Generally less stable• More agility• Faster hiring process• Less leadership turnover• More collegial• Informal structure requires more adaptability and flexibility
PROS			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Name recognition• Training and onboarding• Informal mentorship opportunities		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Greater access to senior leadership• Less bureaucracy• More influence• Employees more vested
CONS			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Larger bureaucracy• Less internal and external visibility• More internal competition for promotions		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Less external name recognition• Fewer promotion opportunities• Fewer benefits• Might be undercapitalized

As you review employment opportunities, also try to determine whether the organization is considering both internal and external candidates. In most cases, if a search has started, the company might not have internal talent options. As an external candidate competing with internal talent, it becomes even more important to generate networking connections inside the firm to identify challenges and opportunities that might be known only to insiders. The greatest enemy of the internal candidate is complacency. The greatest challenge for the external candidate is understanding the informal organizational structure and identifying the opportunities where your skills, experience, passion, and education can help the organization make or save money.

TRADE-OFFS TO CONSIDER

As you evaluate competing opportunities, it's important to consider the trade-offs of each.

- For example:
- trading a higher salary for a less well-compensated job where you feel more passion
 - trading a title or an organizational position for a role with more responsibility or one that might be a better match for your skills and experience

- trading a higher-powered role for one with more work-life balance
- trading a role in a larger, more recognized organization for a position in a smaller organization with greater responsibility, authority, opportunity for growth, or the chance to learn all phases of the business. (See Pros and Cons of Big Versus Small Companies, above.)

THE WAY AHEAD

This chapter is intended to provide a broad overview of the self-assessment and research you should complete as you prepare to leave military service. In the chapters that follow, you will be introduced to all of the essential steps in a successful career transition.

If all of this seems a little overwhelming, you might want to begin by focusing on these six essential steps for a successful career transition:

- priorities (money, location, work/life balance, impact, and family needs)
- résumé, biography, business cards
- LinkedIn profile development
- network expansion
- Survivor Benefit Plan and insurance transition
- interview prep



Résumés
Cover Letters
Biography
References
Résumé Best Practices

Chapter 2

Self-Marketing Essentials and Social Media

RÉSUMÉS

Your résumé is you on paper. It is a reflection of your capabilities, experience, and accomplishments. Everything in and on the résumé counts. Style, format, and accuracy are sometimes as important as content. For many, writing the initial résumé is an intimidating and uncomfortable experience. This process is challenging, but a successful and effective résumé is one that generates an interview.

The two cardinal rules for résumés are 1) focus on the needs of the employer and 2) cite your accomplishments — the impact of your efforts and the difference you made. Your résumé is not a biography. Every entry should support your objective and emphasize skill sets the employer is seeking. Use the job announcement and key words as sources for the employer’s needs. Adding specific results, impacts, and accomplishments is a way to prove you can add value to an organization.

Résumé types and styles

When it comes to résumés, one size does not fit all. Different kinds and styles are used in different situations and designed to generate slightly different results. There are two general types of résumés:

Networking

- provided to those in your network, never to a potential employer for a specific job
- usually a broad-based document
- written in language any reader can understand

Job-specific

- focuses on the needs of an employer and is tailored to reflect desired skills
- summarizes your career history in three to five lines
- includes an experience section full of specific accomplishments — results and impact of your work

Next consider the style you want to use. There are three styles of résumés:

Chronological

- starts with the most recent job and works backward through the career history, covering (at a minimum) the past 10 to 12 years
- can be used when past experiences and accomplishments match or are directly related to the type of job you are seeking
- should show a track record of progressively more responsible assignments; avoid unexplained gaps in work history
- use when applying to federal government jobs

Functional

- showcases a wide variety of skills and experiences that fully support your job and career objectives



Some industries and career fair sponsors prefer one-page résumés. Check with your networking contacts.

- cites experiences and accomplishments in specific functional areas for skills that are critical to a specific job or industry
- used when you are contemplating a major career change and want to highlight relevant skills but downplay previous position titles or employers
- used when seeking to return to a function or skill set you employed early in your career, experience that would be lost in a chronological format
- can be a red flag to hiring managers because people can use this style to minimize issues, such as gaps in employment. If you're interested in taking this approach, we recommend the hybrid/combination style, described below.

Hybrid/Combination

This style combines aspects of both the chronological and the functional style résumés.

- lists specific accomplishments and where they were achieved on the first page of the résumé, immediately preceding the employment history
- first two-thirds is written in the functional style and the last one-third includes a short chronology of the professional work experience, starting with the most recent position and working backward, emphasizing the past 10 to 12 years

Basic parts of a résumé

Every résumé should contain these basic parts:

- Identification (name, city, state, email, phone number, LinkedIn Public Profile URL)
- Summary of Qualifications (professional qualifications or brief career history)
- Clearance Level (for federal résumés or defense-related positions or jobs requiring it)
- Professional Experience
- Education and Professional Development
- Certifications and Licenses applicable to the position

Curriculum vitae (CV)

Résumés and CVs generally contain the same information, but CVs are longer in length, much more detailed, and include information about research performed, articles and books written or published, presentations made, and honors and awards received. CVs commonly are used in academia, particularly by those seeking or holding faculty positions, as well as the medical profession, research positions, and other unique or specialized professions. Consult your network for best practices in your targeted area.

The federal résumé

The federal job-selection process is governed by the Office of Personnel Management. The most common way to access federal employment is via the USAJOBS.gov portal (www.usajobs.gov).

When seeking federal employment, have a targeted position in mind as well as a job-specific, tailored résumé. Use the résumé builder on USAJOBS.gov to ensure your résumé is in the proper federal format. Keep in mind, federal résumés might be several pages in length as opposed to the preferred one or two pages by the private sector. Use a chronological style, and include your supervisor's name and contact information and your salary history, which is very important because it demonstrates you have the right level of experience and grade.

The federal job-search process can be complex. Most military installations also offer classes on federal résumé writing and the federal job-search process.

COVER LETTERS

There is no standard style for a cover letter, but it should be in standard business letter format. Cover letters usually have three parts:

- opening paragraph — tells the person why you are sending the letter and résumé and

how you learned about the position. It should be addressed to a person by name rather than saying "sir" or "madam." Use LinkedIn to determine the appropriate recipient at your target company.

- body of the letter — should gain the attention of the reader and connect your skills, experiences, education, and passion to the job requirements
- closing paragraph — thanks the reader for his or her consideration, states you are looking forward to interviewing with the organization, and provides your contact information

For federal jobs, do not send a cover letter unless the job announcement asks for one.

If you're sending your résumé in via email and need a "cover letter" email:

- Your subject line should state what the email is about, or it might get lost in the shuffle (e.g., "Application for Business Analyst – Robert Smith").
- Use a professional greeting, just as you would for a business letter.
- Be brief when explaining why you're writing.
- Use a professional close — Sincerely, Sincerely Yours, Best Regards, Regards, etcetera.
- Your signature block should include your full name, email address, and phone number.
- It's best to send emails to very busy people at the very beginning of the day or at the very end of the day to increase the likelihood they'll see it and respond.

BIOGRAPHY

A biography is an excellent way to paint a coherent picture of yourself to someone other than a potential employer. While a résumé might scream, "I'm looking for a job," a biography is a softer sell that can be used to introduce yourself to a networking contact or as a read-ahead for a meeting or for an engagement with someone you might not know well. What you choose to include depends on what you want to accentuate and how you want to be perceived by those who are reading it. Biographies can raise your visibility and establish your credibility.

Biographies are not used during the federal job application process. But if you're selected for the position, you might be asked to provide a biography that can be used to introduce you to the organization.

NETWORKING
JOB-SPECIFIC
CHRONOLOGICAL
FUNCTIONAL
HYBRID



Biography best practices

- Include a photo taken in business attire.
- Do not try to hide your military experience by using civilian job titles (e.g., CEO, COO, etcetera).
- Do not burden your reader with lengthy sentences of personal information unless it applies directly to the subject for which the biography has been prepared.
- Avoid excessive acronyms and military jargon.
- Consider what you want to emphasize and how you want to be perceived.
- Focus on your achievements and accomplishments rather than jobs.
- Write in the third-person (e.g., “John has extensive experience as a project manager”), and use a conversational tone.

Biography format

- First paragraph: Connect with your reader or audience by highlighting a major career

achievement. Include your name and former military rank.

- Second paragraph: Describe some of your proudest accomplishments from throughout your work history.
- Third paragraph: Emphasize special skills and strategic connections that could have significance to the reader.
- Fourth paragraph: Validate your achievement by citing educational credentials and business-related honors.

Business cards

- Have networking business cards printed; do not use one from your current job.
- Do not include a photo.
- Include name, credentials if relevant to position sought, phone number, email, and personalized LinkedIn address.

REFERENCES

References are an important part of the job-search process and, because they are needed at the end of the interview cycle, can sometimes be an afterthought until requested by an employer. To avoid this situation, consider the following tips to help manage your references:

- Carefully select four to six professional references.
- As a professional courtesy, ensure you obtain permission to use them as references.
- Prepare your references to best represent you by giving them a copy of your résumé.
- Ask for résumé feedback.
- Keep them informed of your job-search progress.
- Have your reference list ready to present when requested.
- Always keep your references’ contact information updated.
- Don’t list references on your résumé.

SOCIAL MEDIA SAVVY

Social media sites such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter dramatically and significantly have changed the way job searches are conducted today. To be effective, you must have a digital persona online that readily can be seen by a prospective employer.

Social media allows you to find people and for people to find you. LinkedIn has moved firmly into first position where social media platforms are concerned. As Scott Monty, prior global head of social media at Ford Motor Co., said: “LinkedIn is like a board meeting. Facebook is like the water cooler. And Twitter is like a cocktail party.”

More and more companies are using social media channels to find and hire talent. They also post positions on popular sites, and to capitalize on this, you should be following your target companies.

According to a 2017 CareerBuilder survey, 70 percent of employers use social media to screen potential hires, and according to Betterteam, nearly 95 percent of recruiters use social media to post and promote job openings.

CREATING YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA IMAGE

Always be cognizant of your professional appearance. Before posting a picture or comment, ask yourself, “Would I want a potential employer to see this?”

Refrain from anything that doesn’t portray you

RÉSUMÉ BEST PRACTICES

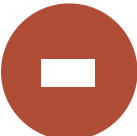
It is critical to keep the potential employer’s needs foremost in mind as you prepare your résumé. Consider the following tips.

DO



- keep private-sector résumés to no more than two pages
- eliminate pronouns (e.g., I, me, my, our, etcetera)
- write in the past tense, except for your current or most recent position
- keep it simple, and avoid fancy fonts or symbols
- use industry-specific key words found in the job announcement
- focus on accomplishment-based bullets versus job descriptions
- include only the past 10 to 12 years of your professional work history or experience

DON'T



- italicize words or use special texts or elaborate fonts
- use a font size smaller than 11 or 12 points
- use graphics or art
- include references with your résumé
- pay anyone to prepare your résumé. You have the ability to do it and you must be able to defend the contents in an interview.

in a positive light, including —but not limited to — excessive partying, overly strong political views, negative experiences, and complaining rants.

Also be vigilant about being tagged on Facebook. If you are tagged in a photo, it means there is a photo of you with your name on it and anyone who looks at the photo will see your name. This can be problematic if the photo reflects unprofessional (or illegal) activities or language, even if you were not directly involved.

Instead, show aspects about who you are that help you stand out in a positive way in a prospective employer's mind, such as membership in professional organizations and affiliations, social groups, alumni networks, and appropriate community interests.

Check your digital footprint! See what comes up when you Google yourself. Your prospective employer will Google you, and you should know what they're likely to see. If it's negative information, try to remove it or have it removed. If it can't be removed, be prepared to defend it. Alternatively, if nothing about you comes up, you know you have some work to do to increase your online presence.

Last, beware of negative images or posts from people with a similar name as yours. You don't want to be associated with their bad choices.

LINKEDIN

LinkedIn, the most popular business/professional networking site in the world, has facilitated millions of business introductions. Employers increasingly are looking solely to LinkedIn to find the talent they need. Because of the impact it has had on the job-search landscape, a robust LinkedIn profile is imperative.

LinkedIn is:

- your business network
- based on the concept of six degrees of separation (LinkedIn is three degrees)
- a job-search, people-search, and company-search resource.

LinkedIn is not

- a replacement for face-to-face interaction
- something you can ignore
- Facebook — be professional in the content of your profile
- a substitute contact-management system.

Ensure your LinkedIn profile is optimized for communicating your talents, abilities, and skill set. Ensure your profile is structured correctly and leave the reader with an accurate overall

impression of you and what you have to offer. This is your “personal brand,” and your LinkedIn content is a very effective way of conveying it to visitors who are perusing your profile. Make sure to include your customized LinkedIn Public Profile URL with the other contact information on your résumé.

Tips to enhance your LinkedIn profile

- Change your public profile URL to your name to optimize search engine visibility. For example: www.linkedin.com/in/jamesacarman.
- Ensure key words, achievements, core skills, and industry experience are detailed in the summary and specialties areas of your headline box.
- Ensure you have a professional picture with a neutral background in which you are wearing professional attire and smiling. Snapping a photo of yourself and uploading it is preferable to having no photo at all. Be in professional attire, have a warm smile, and a neutral background.
- Personalize connection requests by including a line or two about why you want to connect to them, such as shared background, schooling, or professional interests.
- Join groups to increase the reach of your network and to connect with current, former, and potential future colleagues. Even minimal participation in group discussion threads gets your name and face known in your professional areas of interest, and raises your profile in search results (the search algorithm is biased toward those who are active on the site).
- Hiring managers and recruiters see three indications of behavior on LinkedIn: “More likely to respond” if active within the past 30 days; “Open to opportunities” if that button is turned on; and “engaged with talent brand” if the individual is following the company on their profile.

Seek a wide array of connections in a variety of industries and management levels to maximize the usefulness of your LinkedIn profile. Think about your overall philosophy for accepting connection requests. Look at profiles before accepting requests, and learn more about the individual making the request; determine common professional interests that may facilitate mutual networking benefits. For example, one approach might be to accept connections from those who have served in the military or who went to the same schools as you.



Developing Contacts

Dealing With Networking Contacts

The 30-Second Commercial

Informational Interview

Chapter 3

Networking, Making Contact, and Presenting Yourself

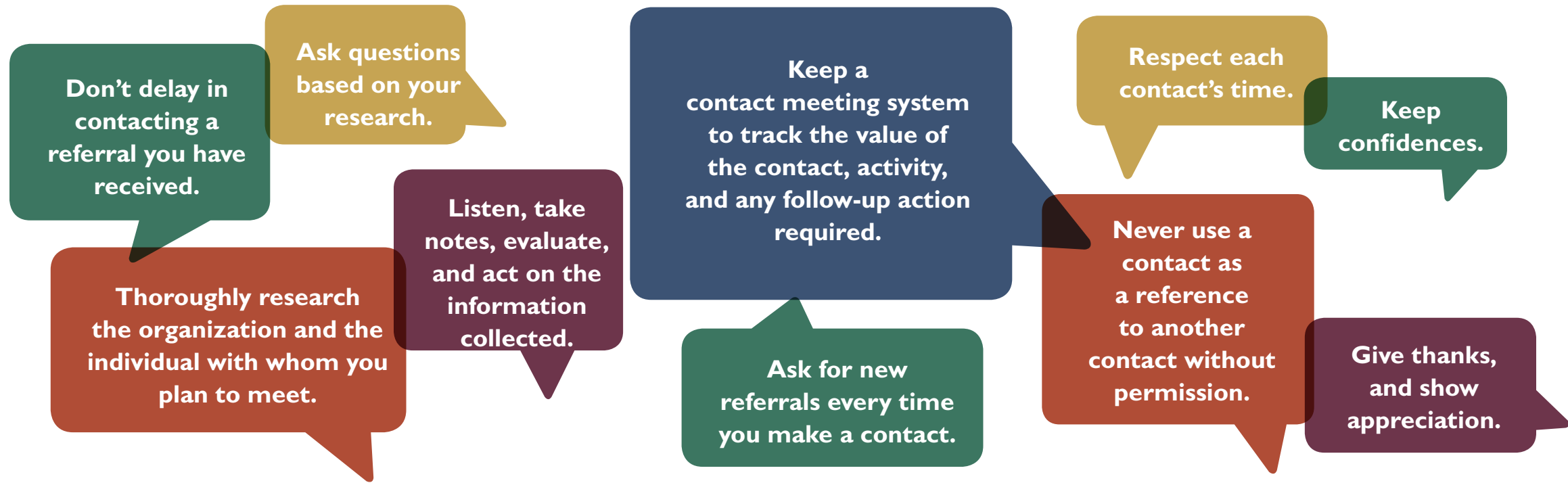
Networking is about casual, professional relationships and is the main source of information, job leads, and interviews. Think of networking as the system and your résumé as the tool. It is conservatively estimated that 80 to 85 percent of all jobs come from networking. You should ensure everyone you know — friends, family, professional colleagues, casual acquaintances — is aware you are transitioning and has an idea of what you might be interested in. To help, people in your network need to know you need assistance — they will be glad for the opportunity to support your transition.

DEVELOPING CONTACTS

Consider all of the following when developing your networking contacts:

- professional associations
- career fairs and networking events
- alumni events
- references
- friends and family
- religious organizations
- community and volunteer groups
- airports and traveling
- sports or other social gatherings

TIPS FOR DEALING WITH NETWORKING CONTACTS



Order personal business cards to hand out when you network. They will provide the recipient with a tangible reminder of your interaction with them. Include your name, your email address, a reliable phone number, and your LinkedIn URL. You also may include a target position type or industry if you know what you want to pursue, or simply be flexible and keep your options open. Refrain from using your official work business cards because they essentially have an expiration date; once you leave the military or your current employment, the contact information on them no longer will be accurate.

Make an effort and take every opportunity to meet new people and establish new relationships. Each person represents a potential job opportunity. Your best chance at a dream job won't necessarily be through relatives, close friends, or former colleagues.

One key to effective networking: Be sure to maintain an enthusiastic, confident, and optimistic attitude. Practice makes perfect, so give yourself plenty of opportunities to do so.

Networking groups and membership organizations

Various formal and informal groups exist to support job seekers — alumni associations and professional organizations are two excellent places to start.

While few colleges and universities provide placement services dedicated to alumni, many do offer career services that might lead to job opportunities, transition events, and networking contacts. Contact the director of alumni services at your undergraduate and graduate alma maters, as well as any colleges and universities in your local area, to see what services they provide.

Consider joining professional membership organizations, which often offer a number of services, not to mention excellent networking opportunities. Examples include the National Society of Professional Engineers, the Society for Human Resource Management, the International Society of Logistics, and the Project Management Institute.

Almost every industry has a business organization to advance its goals and objectives. These industries can range from travel, health care, social sciences, sales, and utilities.

Some organizations, like MOAA, provide assistance in seeking employment through career counseling, résumé postings, job postings, interview preparation, virtual job fairs, and networking contacts.

Organizations with local chapters are a great way to connect with people who have similar interests.

THE 30-SECOND COMMERCIAL

Also known as an “elevator pitch,” the 30-second commercial provides you with a practiced and polished response to the question, “What are you going to do when you transition?” But be sure to keep it short! No one wants to be trapped by a person talking endlessly about himself or herself.

Elements of the 30-second commercial:

- your name
- what you are looking for
- most recent assignment/position
- what you are most interested in
- two or three key skills or strengths
- what you like about the company.

Introduce yourself using your 30-second commercial whenever possible to gain practice and become comfortable relating your skills and talents to potential employers.

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

The informational interview provides the opportunity to get an “inside look” at career fields that interest you. Request an informational interview from people with whom you network who are in the type of job or industries you desire. People want to help you in your transition — you

just have to give them the opportunity to do so. Don't be shy — ask. Start with someone you already know if it is easier for you. Make it clear that you are not asking for a job, just doing research.

You might want to consider providing a brief biography (see Chapter 2) in advance of your meeting so details about your background, skills, education, and experience are readily available.

Don't forget to formally thank the person who grants you an informational interview. Before leaving, be sure to ask whether they can refer you to someone else in the field.

Typical questions to ask

- How can I get into this field?
- What skills, functions, or certifications are required for this type of work?
- What professional organizations are worth joining?
- What does a typical career path look like in this field?
- What is the general salary range for someone with my background and skills?
- What should I emphasize in my résumé?
- What best practices would you recommend I follow?
- What major problems or opportunities does the industry (or organization) face?

Tips for dealing with your networking contacts

- Don't delay in contacting a referral you have received.
- Thoroughly research the organization and the individual with whom you plan to meet.
- Ask questions based on your research.
- Listen, take notes, evaluate, and act on the information collected.
- Keep a contact meeting system to track the value of the contact, activity, and any follow-up action required.
- Respect each contact's time.
- Ask for new referrals every time you make a contact.
- Give thanks, and show appreciation.
- Keep confidences.
- Never use a contact as a reference to another contact without permission.

Chapter 4

Expanding Your Job Search

RECRUITERS

Recruiters are another tool in your networking toolkit. Companies pay recruiters to help them fill vacancies with available talent. They can be effective in connecting you with a company that would be a good fit for you. It is important to keep a couple of key points in mind when working with recruiters. In most cases there should not be a fee associated to use one. Recruiters and recruiting firms are paid by the companies who hire them, not by you, so their allegiance and best interests lie with who is paying them. You are viewed as a commodity passing through their system and are treated accordingly.

When recruiters need someone with your background, education, and experience to fill a vacancy at a company they represent, they will be able to accommodate you. If they do not have a requirement for the skills you possess, they will feel little need to devote much time to you and likely will not be overly responsive when you contact them.

However, if you feel like you are spinning your wheels in your job search, then seeking the services of a recruiting firm might be a way to jump-start your efforts.



Types of recruiters

Contingency

- receive fee upon placement
- typically handle salaries up to \$150,000
- job opportunities usually are not exclusive
- normally have a “bench” of many candidates they present for each position

Retained

- paid as “in-house” recruiters by the employer
- typically handle salaries above \$150,000
- usually market-exclusive job opportunities
- present a smaller, more targeted number of candidates for a given position (approximately three to seven)

Tips for working with recruiters

- Maintain control of your résumé. Your agreement should state that the contingency recruiter or firm cannot send your résumé anywhere without your permission.
- Determine the recruiter’s relationship with the client organization. If the relationship isn’t good, that might affect how the company looks at you as a desirable candidate.
- Get to know your recruiter. The better you know your recruiter in a personal relationship, the better he or she will present you as a candidate to a prospective company.

ELECTRONIC JOB BOARDS

Electronic job boards can play a significant role in a successful job search. You might choose to have a presence on job boards, though industry-specific boards often are the most effective.

Some industries provide a comprehensive list of industry-specific resources, including the following:



USAJOBS.gov	federal job portal
ClearedJobs.net	classified jobs
Medzilla.com	medical community
moaa.org/career	career-transition information
Dice.com	IT jobs
H2H.jobs	Reserve-component job seekers and employers
TheLadders.com	career professionals
SHRM.org	human resources jobs
CareerHQ.org	association and nonprofit jobs
Indeed.com	comprehensive job board
LinkedIn Jobs	comprehensive job board

Chapter 5
Career Fairs and
Networking Events

Career fairs and networking events are an important aspect of your transition process. They provide you opportunities to expand your network of contacts, as well as practice interacting with potential employers. They also allow you to collect additional information and research about your chosen career or industry. For more information about career fairs, go to www.moaa.org/career.

PREPARING TO NETWORK

Be sure to research your target employers before attending career fairs. Start with those that are your top choices, and develop a list of questions to ask, including:

- What types of positions are you looking to fill?
- Can you describe your ideal candidate?
- How would you describe your corporate culture?
- What do you like best about working here?
- What are the hiring manager’s expectations for the first six months?
- What competitors most concern you?

HOW TO WORK THE ROOM

- Wear professional business attire.
- Identify target employers. Before you attend a career fair, look online to see which ones will be there. Sort through the employers, and identify the ones of most interest to you.
- Research desired employers. Find out what each entity does, where it is located, and its mission and satellite businesses.
- Review posted career opportunities and apply for positions that are a potential match.
- Come prepared. Treat this like a formal interview and brush up on interview techniques.
- Use your 30-second commercial to start the conversation.
- Maintain eye contact; present your résumé without a cover letter; and ask for a business card. Use the business card to send a personalized LinkedIn connection after the event.
- Don’t ignore less well-known or privately held employers.
- Tailor your résumé with key words and phrases specific to the employer and the job sector.
- Strive for balanced conversation; don’t just push a stream of information at them.

Preparing for a Career Fair

How to Work a Career Fair

Virtual Career Fairs



General tips

- Talk to everyone, if time permits — especially companies you’re not familiar with.
- Be prepared to ask questions.
- Focus on the employer’s needs.
- Smile a lot.
- Remember to thank them.
- Give the job candidate ahead of you the courtesy of a private conversation with the recruiter.

VIRTUAL CAREER FAIRS

Virtual career fairs are becoming increasingly common, as employers look for ways to reduce travel and other overhead costs associated with finding talent. They are a great way to get started on a job search from anywhere in the world, even while deployed. Another advantage virtual career fairs provide is the chance to connect virtually with multiple and varied recruiters.



Prepare for an Interview

Sample Interview Questions

Phone Interviews

In-Person Interviews

Panel Interviews

Questions You Should Ask

After an Interview

Chapter 6

Acing Your Interviews

The interview is a critical step toward achieving your goal of employment. A job is won or lost at the interview. The best test of any job search is the number of interviews you are offered. If you consistently are being interviewed, you should expect job offers. If you are not earning interviews, you need to reevaluate your job-search strategy.

An important fact to remember is if you get the interview, you are qualified for the job. Interviews are too time consuming to use as a mechanism to determine if you are qualified for the job. They are used to gain a closer look at candidates who appear to be at least minimally qualified for the position. Employers have determined you made the cut — now they want to know if you are a good fit and match for the organization.

Federal interviews are much like private-sector interviews except they tend to be more formal and structured to help ensure impartiality in the selection process. Read about performance-based interviewing, a common federal interview technique, at www.va.gov/pbi/index.asp.

PREPARE FOR AN INTERVIEW

Preparation is key to a successful interview. Begin by doing your homework, including gathering all the information and documents you might need for the interview. Research the company using its website and LinkedIn and Facebook pages. Also review details of the job description and why you are a great fit for the job, and ensure you match your qualifications to the requirements of the job.

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview questions generally fall into two categories: behavioral and technical. Be prepared to answer both types. In response to behavioral questions, spend some time reflecting on your past experiences when you faced difficult work or personnel-related problems and how you were able to resolve them.

Sample interview questions you might be asked include:



- Tell me about yourself.
- What will you bring to this job?
- Why do you want this job? What about our company appeals to you?
- What is the toughest work-related or personnel problem you ever faced, and how did you resolve it? Describe a time you made a major mistake
- What are your top three achievements?
- Where do you see potential gaps between our requirements and your skills/experience?

Research the interviewers' background (via LinkedIn and Google) and make sure you review the route and check traffic and parking availability. Be in the general area well in advance. Arrive no more than 5-7 minutes before the scheduled interview. Early arrivals can be as annoying as late arrivals.

Most of all, keep a positive attitude!

PHONE INTERVIEWS

Phone interviews are often screening interviews and can be challenging. You don't have the luxury of face-to-face connections nor can you see the body language of the interviewer. However, phone interviews are becoming one of the most prevalent types of interview at all levels. Here are some tips to assist in the preparation and process of a phone interview.

Preparation

- Optimize voice quality. Posture affects voice clarity and quality. It might be a good idea to stand at your desk during a phone interview.
- Have a copy of your résumé, your application, and company information on hand. Also have a calendar for scheduling a follow-up in-person interview.
- Be in business mode — dress the part.
- Check the company via Google, LinkedIn, YouTube, and other social media sites for background information.
- Listen intently without interrupting. Be sure to answer the question that is asked.
- Prepare several questions to ask the interviewer that are not readily answerable in the public domain and that can help you better understand the employer's needs.

During the call

- Be in a quiet area and make sure you have a strong connection.
- Keep answers to less than two minutes.
- Don't rush your words.
- Be alert for multiple people on the call. Sometimes strangers jump in and join the conversation. It can be somewhat disorienting if you're not expecting it.

As the conversation closes

- Ensure you understand the next step in the process.
- Suggest a face-to-face meeting.
- Get contact information and send a thank-you email (and handwritten card, if timing allows) immediately after the interview.

IN-PERSON INTERVIEWS

First impressions are formed when the interviewer first sees and greets you, so you should look your best when you go to a job interview. You only get one chance to make a first impression, so you need to make it a good one. Look professional, confident, and competent.

Chemistry and rapport also are crucial factors in interviewing and are much easier to establish in person. Make a positive first impression by incorporating the following:

- Offer a firm, warm handshake. Note the difference between the weak, "limp fish" versus "bone crusher" handshakes.
- Make eye contact with the interviewer. Many interviewers use eye contact to look for enthusiasm and sincerity.
- Remember names and position titles.

- Watch your posture while sitting and standing. Good posture will help you listen and makes you look interested.
- Strive more for conversation and less for testimony. Ideally, the discussion should be a 50/50 mix between you and the interviewer. Be prepared to give examples of your past achievements that are applicable to the organization.

PANEL INTERVIEWS

A group or panel interview consists of a small number of employees firing questions in rapid succession, and can intimidate even the most seasoned interviewer.

In addition to the obvious challenges of remembering the names and positions of the interviewers, you must accommodate a range of personalities and agendas. However, group interviews also present an opportunity to build alliances and connections with several panel members who later could be decisive in overcoming resistance from other panel members regarding your candidacy.

During initial introductions, it might be helpful to diagram the names of interviewers around the table in the order in which they are seated. Maintain eye contact with panel members, and direct your answers to the entire group. Don't assume organizational roles and authority based on age, gender, or race. In most group interviews, no single panel member can get you hired. However, a no vote from any panel member can eliminate you from further consideration.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

You should have a few questions to ask at the close of the interview. This demonstrates a strong interest in the company and is an opportunity for you to evaluate them as well.

Example questions include:

- What do you like most about working here?
- What are the outcomes you are looking for from the successful candidate in the first six months?
- What are the opportunities for growth over the next two to three years?
- Where has this department or division been the most successful or the most challenged?
- What competitors most concern you?
- What is the next step in the process? How do I stay in touch?

AFTER AN INTERVIEW

After the interview, it is imperative to send a prompt thank-you letter. Even if you don't think the interview went well or you have doubts about the culture of the company, a well-written thank-you note will help preserve future options with the company. It is recommended you email a thank-you note the same day and then mail a handwritten card or letter if timing permits.

The thank-you letter serves several purposes:

- It expresses your appreciation for the opportunity to interview.
- It can reinforce any points or clarify important issues that surfaced during the interview.
- It reinforces your interest in the position.



Chapter 7

Rejection and Persistence

Unfortunately, rejection is part of the job-search process, but you can learn from it. Don't take it personally; keep persevering, and you will be successful.

An unsuccessful job interview can be a tremendous learning experience, but it might be difficult to obtain useful feedback. Many recruiters and companies feel it is not their job to tell candidates why they were not successful, and there might have been other factors influencing the selection process besides the strength of your résumé and the quality of your interview, such as an internal candidate or a strong networking connection.

Nevertheless, here are a few tactics to help you rebound from an interview setback.

- Write a thoughtful “turn-down” letter to the employer thanking them for the opportunity to interview. You can express disappointment about not being selected for the position, but reaffirm your interest in future opportunities and ask permission to stay in touch.
- Be advised that because of legal constraints, a company is unlikely to share details about the reasons you were not selected. Instead, focus on being as prepared as possible for your next interview and ask mentors, friends, and colleagues for their advice and feedback. MOAA's Transition Center offers free assistance and interview preparation for Premium and Life members. Email transition@moaa.org to learn more.
- Recognize many hiring managers are looking for an extremely close fit between the skills and experience on a résumé and what is called for in the job description.
- Continue to tailor your résumé so it closely matches job descriptions.

The bottom line is stay focused and remain positive. If for whatever reason you do not get the job, move on to the next interview with enthusiasm.





PHOTO: PEOPLEIMAGES/GETTY IMAGES

Salary

Evaluating an Offer

Benefits

Evaluating the Compensation Package

Chapter 8

Salary and Benefits Negotiation and Evaluating Offers

In the realm of negotiating salary and benefits, knowledge is power. Do your salary homework before going to the negotiation table. You should have a general idea of the salary range for a position before starting to negotiate. This will prevent you from asking for too much or too little, both of which might remove you from consideration.

SALARY

Where do you find salary information? Use resources from your installation's transition office where you can access and read the *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, available online at www.bls.gov/ooh; trade and professional journals; *The American Almanac of Jobs and Salaries*; and the *Jobs Rated Almanac*.

Talk to friends and colleagues, consult your network, and schedule informational interviews. An informational interview in particular is a great opportunity to ask, for example, how much a person with your particular skills and background could command in your desired industry.

Assume almost everything is negotiable, and, if possible, try to have a written job offer in hand before talking salary specifics. Go to www.moaa.org/transitionwebinars and select the archived Salary 101 webinar for more information.



A wealth of information is available on the Internet. The following sites provide a wide range of salary and other information about jobs in various industries:

- America's Career InfoNet
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics
- Salary.com
- Glassdoor.com
- LinkedIn
- Payscale.com

If the salary question is introduced early in your discussions with a company, but no job offer has been made, the best ways to respond include:

- **Defer:** "I'd be more comfortable discussing salary once I have a better understanding of the position."
- **Deflect:** "My range is probably more flexible than yours. What is the range you are considering for this position?"
- **Define:** "Based on my research, I understand salaries are between \$X and \$Y for similar positions. Is this consistent with your salary range?"

Another option is to negotiate for an early performance review and to be considered for a pay increase if your work performance justifies it. A six-month period is typical, but ask for longer if you have significant initial training up front. Use this option carefully, and make sure you fully understand your job responsibilities beforehand and can meet expectations prior to your initial performance review.

EVALUATING AN OFFER

When an offer is extended to you during the negotiation process, make sure you understand, evaluate, and negotiate (if necessary) the offer.

When you are operating at the executive level, things can get complicated quickly when discussing offers. The onus is on you to ensure you understand the details of any offer you receive. This should be part of your preparation for the job-search process.

Some questions you might want to consider:

- Where will this put you in terms of your overall career strategy?
- What is the position title?

- What are the principal responsibilities?
- What are the key things you will be expected to accomplish?
- What resources will you have to do the job (people, money, material, time)?
- Where is the job located?
- To whom will you report?
- What is that person's management style?
- How and when will your performance be evaluated?
- Where is this position within the organizational hierarchy?
- Who are your peers?
- How much travel is involved?
- With whom will you principally interact inside and outside of the organization?
- What skills are necessary to succeed in this position?

BENEFITS

Don't focus solely on salary when negotiating for a position. Benefits are an important component of the overall compensation package. There can be



Almost anything is negotiable. You should identify one or two areas most important for you and discuss them with the employer during the negotiation phase.

a considerable difference between the benefits and entitlements you have now and what a company will offer you. Educate yourself on the differences, and ensure you are prepared to negotiate in a manner that best meets the needs of you and your family.

Among what you want to be thinking about as you enter negotiations are medical benefits, retirement plans, 401(k) plan availability and employer match, life insurance, vacation and sick leave, and perks and incidentals.

Keep in mind, your offer letter normally won't contain any of the following negotiable items:

- moving expenses
- work schedule
- housing allowance
- telephone
- office parking
- start date
- education
- entertainment
- frequent flyer miles
- hiring bonuses
- transportation
- maternity/paternity leave

- computers
- office space
- commissions
- gym membership
- signing bonus
- wardrobe
- association fees
- reporting relationships
- job title

It is up to you to determine one or two areas most important for you, then effectively convey them to the employer during the negotiation phase. Be advised that smaller companies typically have more flexibility in what they can offer than larger companies. Also, successful negotiation most often results from an in-person discussion with the recruiter or hiring manager.

EVALUATING THE COMPENSATION PACKAGE

The salary negotiation process is not an adversarial one. Unlike other formal negotiating you might have done, such as with cars or homes, this relationship will continue over the course of your time with the company. Moreover, your conduct during the negotiation process will directly affect your relationship with your future employer. The employer wants you to be happy, but it is up to you to articulate effectively the things that will give you the greatest job (and personal) satisfaction.

Some pointers to consider:

- Take time to evaluate the offer. Never accept an offer the same day it is presented. You owe it to yourself to consider the offer in a calm, neutral environment.
- Discuss benefits with your family and spouse to ensure your needs will be met.
- The company's human resources representative should be available and willing to discuss details of the benefits they offer as well as answer any benefits-related questions you might have.
- Look for opportunities to convert taxable income and expenses to pre-tax or tax-deferred dollars, such as with a flexible spending account.
- Upon receiving the offer, your options will be to accept, decline, or negotiate. The initial offer normally won't specify benefits and perks. Employers expect you to renegotiate, so do so wisely, using information from your research and not from unverified sources.



Winning the First 90 Days

Closing Out the Search

Planning for the Future

Chapter 9

The New Job

WINNING THE FIRST 90 DAYS

Congratulations, you got the job! Now what? What's your plan for the first 90 days? Making a positive first impression is especially important in this situation. Here are a few things to consider when starting your new post-military position:

- Observe and listen. There might be similarities when comparing your new company with the military, but there will be some big differences, too. Try to keep in mind you are stepping into a new organization and culture, so it is important for you to figure out how to fit in. Don't expect them to change to fit with you.
- Keep an open mind, and observe how business is done in the company. Take notes, and ask questions.
- Manage expectations. It is very important to meet with your boss and understand his or her expectations. Identify one to two promising opportunities and focus on relentlessly translating them into wins. Ask questions, and be sure you have a firm handle on those expectations.
- Communication. Determine how your boss prefers to communicate (i.e., email, phone, or face-to-face). Seek more frequent and informal feedback. Practice active listening, and avoid jumping in with your opinion or giving unsolicited advice.
- Colleagues/coworkers. Begin building relationships with seniors, juniors, peers, and key external constituents at your new company to help facilitate your assimilation into the company and the team.
- Show enthusiasm for your new job and company. Pitch in where you can, even if it is not a part of your job description. Pay it forward — help someone today, and they will help you later.

CLOSING OUT THE SEARCH

- Send thank-you notes to those who assisted you in your job search.
- Organize records, and update contact information.
- Update your LinkedIn profile.
- Address personal transition decisions (e.g., life insurance, 401(k)/Thrift Savings Plan transfer, and health insurance).
- Inform and thank your references.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

- Work at fitting in by being true to yourself.
- Keep your résumé current.
- Periodically connect with members of your extended network.
- Maintain professional associations, certifications, and affiliations.
- Seek regular formal and informal feedback.

Notes

Make the Most of your MOAA Membership

For more information about MOAA membership benefits, please visit us at www.moaa.org/memberbenefits.

MOAA Publications

For more than 90 years, MOAA has been fighting for the interests of military members and their families. We understand the challenges you face because we're officers just like you, and we're ready to share our expertise and experience. The MOAA library of guides and reference tools is available to help you navigate the challenges that arise at each stage of life.

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