

Recruiting and Retaining Military Veterans in the Construction Industry

Written by: Shane McKenzie, Director-Veterans Program, and Sean Perseo, Ambassador-Outreach Programs, Sunbelt Rentals

Reentering civilian life after serving in the military can be extremely difficult for veterans, especially when it comes to finding meaningful, long-term employment. The goal is to align the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) developed during military service to work in the most significant way.

Companies that can provide veterans the opportunity to work and communicate in a similar fashion as they did in the military tend to have the greatest employee retention. But making that alignment can be challenging. Veterans often struggle with understanding where they fit within the organization and what their new chain of command looks like.

Yet data shows that if companies do the hard work up front to develop a program that helps the veteran maintain their position past the first year, there's a greater chance they will become a long-term team member.

Approximately 200,000 individuals exit the military every year – and a significant number of these veterans have acquired skills that directly align to what the construction industry needs. Tailored veteran recruiting is a rewarding way to provide needed jobs for those that served. There is plenty of opportunity for recruitment and, with the right support, just as much opportunity for retention that can help military veterans enjoy a fulfilling career.



THE VALUE OF VETERANS

So, what is it that makes military veterans such valuable employees?

In short, military veterans bring leadership, work ethic, teamwork, and technical skills to an organization. They are highly trained, talented individuals who are equipped to handle intense situations where prompt decisions are often required. Additionally, military veterans tend to align quickly with shared safety protocols in the construction industry due to their training.

HIRING BEST PRACTICES AND VETERANS' PROGRAMS

If a company is serious about hiring and retaining military veterans, it should look for ways to coach, mentor, train and develop this dynamic demographic. A great way to do this collectively is to establish a corporate veterans program. The goal of a veterans program is to provide an inclusive space where current and former military veterans and their families can thrive. Sunbelt Rentals, for example, has established a Veterans Program comprising four pillars: Resources, Recruitment, Recognition, and Retention.

Resources quickly and efficiently provide new team members with the assistance they need for various challenges they may be facing. These could include a hotline, veterans' administration support, accommodation support, and interagency coordination.

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Recruitment focuses on hiring veterans and aligning skills gained during military service to match them with the most suitable role and support their success. Recruiters should use terms that align roles in the company with a military occupation specialty (MOS) – a code used in the military to identify specific jobs – while also communicating the company's culture and fit.

Recognition at Sunbelt Rentals involves a newly launched uniform program. This provides veterans the opportunity to showcase their branch of service with a patch on select apparel. In addition, the Sunbelt Salute, which is embodied in

a coin, is awarded as a token of appreciation to veteran team members, thanking them for their service and sacrifice to our country.

Retention at a company comes down to support – during onboarding, the first 90 days of employment, and throughout their career. Veteran ambassadors can help newly hired military veterans acclimate to their new position acting as liaisons to the entire program and its offerings.

MAKING IT WORK

For companies looking to grow their military veteran recruitment and retention efforts, it's vital to start by defining the requirements for each role and then recruiting toward them. Also, keeping KSAs in mind and understanding how they can translate to a job in the construction industry is key. Consider the scope of responsibilities the military veteran has previously held and provide guidance through mentorship programs. 



About the Authors

Shane McKenzie is the Director-Veterans Program for Sunbelt Rentals.

Sean Perseo is the Ambassador-Outreach Programs for Sunbelt Rentals.

[Sunbelt Rentals](#) the premiere rental equipment company in North America, Sunbelt Rentals offers a highly diversified product mix including general construction equipment, industrial tools, pumps, power generation, climate control and HVAC, shoring solutions, scaffolding, remediation and restoration equipment, and more.

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