Veterans in the Workplace: Recruitment and Retention

FINAL REPORT

SURVEY OF 245 BUSINESSES NATIONWIDE

INTERVIEWS IN 6 FORTUNE 500 COMPANIES

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Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following a Gallup 2010 report indicating that Veterans' well-being in the workplace was lower than that for other Americans, the Department of Veterans Affairs requested that a national survey of at least 100 employers, consisting of small, mid-size, and large (Fortune 500 and Fortune 1000) businesses be conducted. The study gathered information regarding these businesses' "current policies, practices, and programs regarding Veterans, National Guard, and Reserve who were activated for service in OEF/OIF" (VA-777-11-RP-0168). The survey investigated businesses' experience with hiring and retaining Veterans, comparisons with prior Veteran populations, understanding of mental health and related needs of Veterans, and understanding of services that would support Veterans with these needs. Herein, we present findings from our survey including "promising practices" that emerge from the data.

The Department of Veterans Affairs also requested a study conducted with at least 5 Fortune 500 or 1000 companies to characterize the mental health and mental health care services of Veterans and their families. This project was designed as a large qualitative in-depth interview study of 6 corporations, representing the following business sectors: manufacturing, consulting, defense, food services, healthcare, and technology. This report contains this study's findings on Veterans' mental health issues and the corporate response to them; incorporates findings related to Veteran recruitment, transition, and retention; reports on current corporate needs for information and training; and describes the elements of successful Veterans programs and initiatives.

Veterans face numerous challenges when looking for employment as they separate (~80%) or retire (~20%) from military service. Some of the most difficult hurdles are the misconceptions held by potential employers. Today, many businesses with disability programs, absence management, and return-to work policies pride themselves on their innovative approaches that accommodate employees with disabilities. There is a vital need for employers to extend this culture of accommodation to military Veterans—to those who are readjusting personally and professionally to civilian life, and to those with disabilities.

Quantitative Study – Survey of 245 Companies Nationwide:

The survey sample includes a total of 245 respondents who represent management, human resources, and/or employee assistance personnel at their companies; the survey was fully completed by 86% (n=210) of the sample while the remaining 14% (n=35) partially responded to the survey. Fifteen percent of our sample indicated a Veteran workforce rate

that is greater than 50% of their total workforce, with a majority of the sample (60%) indicating that Veterans are less than a quarter of their total workforce (12% did not know). About 18% of the companies have more than 50% of their executive-level employees identifying as Veterans, while 60% have less than a quarter of their executive-level employees identifying as Veterans (17% did not know). The majority of businesses (66%) have under a quarter of their total workforce active in the Reserve and/or National Guard (24% did not know).

Almost all companies had experience hiring Veterans (93%), and a majority of them have hired a member of the Reserve (67%) and/or National Guard (59%). In fact, 57% of companies indicate having a formal set of policies and programs for recruiting Veterans and National Guard and Reserve members, 29% provide internships for them, and 31% have apprenticeships and on-the-job training programs that are eligible for GI-Bill funding.

Company representatives were also asked to reflect on the factors that influenced their decisions to retain and advance Veterans and members of the Reserve and National Guard in their companies. A strong majority of the respondents (65-73%) identified critical job related skills, competencies, and qualities as factors that influenced them to a great or complete extent. While a high number of respondents also stated that factors that may be connected with employees' physical or mental health conditions or associated with their military service mattered either not at all or to a small extent in their decisions to retain and advance Veterans and members of the Reserve and National Guard, some companies reflected being influenced by these factors from some to a complete extent.

Respondents were asked about their perceptions and beliefs about the mental health of members of the armed forces. Over half of the respondents (57%) reported perceiving people who have served in the armed forces to be at higher risk for posttraumatic Stress disorder (PTSD) than the general population. About one-third of the sample (34%) disagreed that Veterans and National Guard and Reserve members have higher percentages of anxiety than the civilian population, while a similar number were neutral (35%). When asked if they believed that depression occurred at higher rates within civilians than those in the armed forces, almost half the respondents expressed a neutral opinion (49%) with the remaining evenly split among those who disagree/strongly disagree (26%) and those who agree/strongly agree (25%). Most of the respondents did not agree (36%) or were neutral (42%) in response to a question about the belief people from the armed forces being at higher risk of alcohol and substance abuse problems as compared to the general population.

Many respondents stated that negative workplace behaviors and situations, such as angry outbursts, difficulties with coworkers, interpersonal conflicts, or attendance

problems, involving Veterans never or seldom bring Veterans to their attention. However some stated that such behaviors and situations occurred occasionally and in a few cases, often or almost always. The survey had similar findings when companies were asked about the occurrence of negative workplace behaviors and situations for Veterans who have disclosed mental health problems. Most companies reported that such occurrences were seldom or non-existent, but some cited more frequent occurrences of such behaviors or situations.

Approximately one-half (51%) of companies indicated that they have programs in place specifically to assist employees with mental health issues. A preliminary examination of open-ended responses indicates that the vast majority of companies described these programs as Employee Assistance Programs. Close to a quarter of these companies (23%) indicated that these programs are tailored specifically to assist Veteran employees with mental health needs.

Companies did not indicate having strong concerns about hiring members of the National Guard or Reserve. When asked if the potential for redeployment was a concern, 39% of the total sample were not concerned about this at all, close to a quarter of companies were concerned to a small extent (23%), 24% to some extent, and 14% to a great or complete extent. Many companies had practices to make an employee's leave and return to work process after active duty in the National Guard or Reserve easier.

Differences Between Samples

A unique feature of this study is the use of two distinct sampling strategies; approximately one-half of the sample was purposively recruited through channels that network with inclusive employers (Competitive Edge Services and the U.S. Business Leadership Network), referred to as the CG/BLN sample. The other half of the sample was recruited through a national sampling company that provides random samples for research (Survey Sampling International), referred to as the SSI sample.

Overall, companies in the CG/BLN sample demonstrated more positive attitudes towards the inclusion of Veterans and members of National Guard and Reserves, lower incidents of negative workplace behaviors involving Veterans, and were more likely to have policies or procedures to support military leave for a member of the National Guard or Reserve as well as their reintegration into the workplace. Specifically:

- There was a significant difference in CG/BLN and SSI responses on the factors that influenced their decisions to retain and advance Veterans and members of the Reserve and National Guard in their companies. CG/BLN companies offered stronger endorsement of positive factors as influencing their hiring and retention decisions (e.g., strong leadership qualities, ability to persevere in the face of obstacles), while endorsing

negative factors to a much lesser extent (e.g., needing time off for medical appointments, difficulties with anger or violence). SSI companies responded more ambivalently to both positive and negative factors.

- The CG/BLN sample disagreed more with the perceptions that Veterans and members of the National Guard and Reserve have higher percentages of anxiety than the civilian population, that depression occurred at higher rates within civilians than those in the armed forces, and that people from the armed forces are at higher risk of alcohol and substance abuse problems.

- The CG/BLN sample reported fewer incidents where a Veteran came to their attention for negative workplace behaviors than the SSI sample (e.g., attendance problems, conflict with coworkers, performance problems).

- The CG/BLN sample expressed less concern than the SSI sample about hiring members of the National Guard and Reserve and was more likely to have a military leave policy, create plans or procedures for what will occur when an employee deploys, and discuss how the employee would like information regarding their deployment shared within the company.

- Companies in the CG/BLN sample were also more likely than the SSI sample to take specific actions upon the employee's return, including having the employee meet with a manager or HR, discussing what the employee can expect, discussing what the employee would like or find helpful in returning to work, and determining what training, re-training, or accommodations need to be put into place.

On the other hand, a higher number of companies in the SSI sample offered training programs for their management and internships and apprenticeships on issues related to the inclusion of Veterans and members of the Reserve and National Guard in the workplace than those in the CG/BLN sample. They also demonstrated higher rates of offering mental health and EAP programs for their Veteran employees. Specifically:

- Companies from the SSI sample were more likely to offer internships to Veterans and members of the National Guard and Reserve, apprenticeships, and on-the-job training programs eligible for GI-Bill funding than those in the CG/BLN sample.

- Companies in the SSI sample were more likely to have a system for translating military background and experience into terms relevant to their company's needs and credential requirements than those in the CG/BLN sample.

- Companies in the SSI sample were more likely to use the federal tax credit programs.

- Companies within the SSI sample were more likely to tailor workplace health/mental health programs to assist Veterans with mental health needs than the CG/BLN sample.
- SSI companies have higher rates of offering training programs for their managers and supervisors through their EAPs and otherwise than those in the CG/BLN sample on topics such as Veterans' issues in general, reintegration factors, Veteran psychological health in the workplace, and issues specific to the different wars of the past decades.

Qualitative Study–In-depth Interviews From Six Fortune 500 Companies

The sample for the in-depth interview study consisted of 63 individuals from six Fortune 500 companies in the following industries: manufacturing, consulting, defense, food services, healthcare, and technology. Employees in the following categories participated, many filling more than one role: 38 Veterans, 13 developers of Veterans' initiatives, 7 HR directors, 5 EAP directors, 20 supervisors, 5 clinicians, 8 corporate executives, and 1 outside consultant who specializes in Veteran transition issues. Nine of the 38 Veterans (7 men and 2 women) or 24% reported personal experiences with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Two had participated in their company's recruitment and transition program for wounded warriors; the rest were hired through conventional means. Each of the Veterans who reported having a history of PTSD also indicated that they had learned, over time, to successfully manage their symptoms. All but two were in management positions. Within each of the companies studied, some of the Veterans who had learned to manage their Posttraumatic Stress (PTS) symptoms mentored or counseled— either formally or informally—other Veterans who were dealing with similar issues.

A number of the participants in this sample discussed the need to educate supervisors and managers about the nature of posttraumatic stress, including its signs and symptoms. Others discussed the need to make the workplace a safe place to ask for resources and accommodations when one is dealing with posttraumatic stress. In light of these findings, it is also important to note that approximately 70% of the Veterans interviewed reported having experienced an easy transition from the military into the civilian workplace.

Both Veterans and supervisors reported that offering Veterans the support they need during the transition period from military to civilian life is critical to both successful employment and retention. Each of the six corporations had developed innovative and promising practices to address this need. The key practice most often discussed and advocated by study participants was mentorship programs. Each of the companies' mentoring programs is conducted quite differently. Some are fully realized programs and

others are in the early stages of formation. One mentorship program focuses on Veterans who are networking and looking for employment. Another is initiated as part of the onboarding process. Some companies created formal mentorship programs where recent Veterans are paired with Veterans with years of experience in the civilian workplace. In other cases, managers and supervisors simply take it upon themselves to perform this function informally with the Veterans they supervise, or with those they have met through affinity groups or other networking within the company.

The second key practice most often advocated by study participants was the support and development of affinity or networking groups for Veterans. Each corporation had implemented (or were in the process of implementing) a networking or affinity group for their Veteran employees (sometimes referred to in the field as employee resource groups). One networking group offered educational components that focused on professional development; another included a recruitment component; and another focused on Veteran community initiatives. Other promising practices included:

1) A program addressing Veteran transition, networking, and posttraumatic stress needs;
2) The development of a network of corporations who come together bimonthly to share innovative practices regarding Veteran initiatives;
3) Mandatory employee training on military-related issues;
4) A course for Veterans on leadership and professional development in the civilian workplace;
5) A course for Veterans and civilians on the similarities and differences between military and civilian cultures;
6) A comprehensive approach to workplace accommodations that takes into account the changing needs of employees over time and addresses both physical and mental health needs;
7) Military skills translation training for supervisors and the development of a database to assist supervisors in this process;
8) Military leave strategies that include needs of the employee's family, the education of the employee regarding benefits prior to military leave, and the education of the employee's supervisor;
9) Veteran internship programs;
10) A social media communications strategy for affinity and networking groups;
11) A diversity supplier approach that includes Veteran-owned businesses. One of the six companies identifies Veteran-owned businesses that can be suppliers for their

company. As they do business with these small Veteran-owned businesses, they mentor them and help them grow to a much larger scale. This can include setting up special financing for them.

12) Educating employer groups, such as Chambers of Commerce and Rotary Club on Veteran recruitment.

Additional Resources

Survey respondents were also asked to identify which additional resources would be helpful to them. Sixty-one percent of respondents indicated that it would be valuable to receive information and training on recruiting and hiring Veterans. They also wanted information on retaining Veterans (49%). About one-third (35%) of respondents wanted to receive more information on effective strategies to develop EAP services for Veterans, Reserve, and National Guard members, and one-quarter (26%) wanted to receive more information on "what to look for" when selecting an EAP vendor to offer services for Veterans, Reserve, and National Guard members.

Conclusions

A survey of 245 businesses indicates that the vast majority of them are hiring Veterans and a large proportion of them are hiring members of the Reserve and/or National Guard as well. Over half of the companies surveyed have policies for recruitment of these groups. The sample comprised two distinct groups: those that were recruited through a Veteran-recruitment focused organization and a disability diversity-focused organization – the CG/BLN sample – and those that were randomly recruited from a company that provides national samples – the SSI sample. Overall, companies in the CG/BLN sample demonstrated more positive attitudes towards the inclusion of Veterans and members of National Guard and Reserve, lower incidents of negative workplace behaviors involving Veterans, and were more likely to have policies or procedures to support military leave for a member of the National Guard or Reserve as well as their reintegration into the workplace. On the other hand, a higher number of companies in the SSI sample offered training programs for their management and internships and apprenticeships on issues related to the inclusion of Veterans and members of the Reserve and National Guard in the workplace than those in the CG/BLN sample. They also demonstrated higher rates of offering mental health and EAP programs for their Veteran employees.

The Veterans interviewed at the six Fortune 500 companies described how the transition experience can be complicated by a number of factors: physical and psychological service-related injuries (including PTSD), the lack of an easy way to communicate one's

experience and skills, and the lack of a written rule book on the prevailing unspoken corporate rules. Some reported being misunderstood by co-workers due to differences in one's manner, expectations, and speech. Others were frustrated by the lack of a clear chain of command and a clear path for advancement. Others described missing the sense of mission and urgency within the military that resulted from knowing that the lives of others might depend on the speed and quality of one's own work. Some also spoke of missing the camaraderie and bonds fostered by working and living in close quarters and depending on each other in critical, life and death situations. And others described how losing such bonds can create feelings of painful loneliness.

Within each of the six companies, individuals in leadership positions, often Veterans themselves, have developed innovative initiatives aimed at helping transitioning Veterans navigate these issues. For example, initiatives with an emphasis on peer support, such as affinity and networking groups, are designed, in part, to diminish the sense of loneliness some transitioning Veterans feel upon losing the close relationships that can be the hallmark of their military experience. These groups are planned so that new bonds can easily be forged in a relaxed setting among Veterans interested in sharing their experiences and networking with others in the company.

Initiatives with an emphasis on mentorship address the confusion some Veterans feel when experiencing the culture shock of suddenly finding themselves in a world with corporate colleagues who have completely different expectations with regard to office interactions. Mentors can share their experiences navigating these office issues and dynamics. In addition, mentors with a personal experience of posttraumatic stress symptoms can help others with the same by describing their own experiences, exploring strategies to manage symptoms, and providing evidence and hope that current difficulties can improve over time.

Initiatives that focus on providing needed accommodations to Veterans with physical or psychological injuries contribute to the creation of a welcoming workplace for Veterans. Such accommodations can eliminate the barriers that would otherwise hold these Veterans back from working to their highest levels of excellence. In-house courses that examine the similarities and differences between military and civilian cultures serve to educate supervisors, co-workers, and Veterans. In addition, they initiate an important dialogue that can diffuse office tensions. In-house professional development courses for Veterans give them a much needed roadmap regarding corporate advancement.

Along the same vein, training supervisors to translate military skills into corporate language helps to bridge this gap on the corporate end. As program developers continue to

innovate, discarding what does not work while incorporating what does, much can be learned from the implementation of these initiatives as they continue to evolve. Further research is needed to document these and similar corporate practices more broadly, evaluate established program initiatives systematically, and begin to determine best practices through the use of empirical methods.

Based on the findings of both the survey and interview projects, there are clear avenues for future research and resource development. Companies are strongly interested in recruiting Veterans and ensuring they provide the right resources and supports to retain them. Outreach by the Department of Veterans Affairs, connecting them to recruiting channels and training opportunities, would be valuable. In addition, further information about available tax credits could make a significant difference in Veteran employment.

BACKGROUND

The Challenge of Veteran Employment

Veterans face numerous challenges when looking for employment as they separate (~80%) or retire (~20%) from military service. Concerns, misconceptions, and lack of knowledge about existing supports may translate into a lack of employment opportunities for Veterans. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2012), the unemployment rate for the overall civilian non-institutional population is 8.4%. The unemployment rate, in October 2012, for Veterans of all eras was 7.7%, and higher at 12.1% for Veterans from Gulf War II era.

One hurdle for Veterans to navigate is possible misconceptions held by potential employers. In a recent poll of human resource professionals conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM, 2011) on the recruitment of Veterans, 48% were concerned about the potential employee's transition from a military hierarchy to a civilian work subculture; 46% were concerned about PTSD and other mental illnesses; 60% felt it is hard to translate military skills/experience in terms a civilian employer can appreciate; 36% were concerned about the time it takes Veterans to adapt to the civilian workforce; 22% were concerned about disabilities; and18% were concerned that Veteran applicants are under qualified for jobs.

In addition, the SHRM (2011) poll showed that few human resource professionals were aware of the Department of Labor's Veterans' employment programs and, therefore, were not using them in their recruiting efforts. Only 13% used the Local Veteran's Employment Representative Program, which provides job development, training, placement, and support services. Only 8% used the Disabled Veteran's Outreach Program which promotes and develops on-the-job training, apprenticeships, and other on-the-job training opportunities.

Today, many businesses with disability programs, absence management, and return-to work policies pride themselves on their innovative approaches that accommodate employees with disabilities. There is a vital need, however, for employers to extend this culture of accommodation to military Veterans—to those who are readjusting both personally and professionally to civilian life, as well as to those with disabilities. Particularly for Veterans with significant injuries, the return to civilian life will not be an event, but a process. Repercussions and the delayed effects of the war experience will be felt in the workplace for decades to come (Carruthers & Harnett, 2008). Medical and disability issues for Veterans require a long-term, comprehensive response by employers in order to retain

these valuable employees and benefit from the knowledge, skills, abilities, training, and experience that they bring to the workplace.

Fortunately, many employers are choosing to actively recruit Veterans and are offering programs and implementing policies that support their successful entry into, and retention in, the workplace. In a 2010 poll of almost 400 employers, SHRM found that 53% of organizations reported hiring Veterans within the past three years, and of those, 50% had made a specific effort to do so (conversely, of the 47% that did not hire Veterans, only 11% had made a specific effort to do so – demonstrating the importance of making targeted efforts). They also asked respondents about what their organizations were doing or planning to do "beyond the law" in terms of helping employees who were returning to work after being mobilized as Reservists or members of the National Guard. They found that:

- 66% of organizations were providing "employee assistance programs" to help with the transition;
- 58% were providing "catch-up skills training";
- 48% were providing "flexible work arrangements during the transition period"; and
- 44% were providing "recognition of their service by management."

The Center for a New American Security (CNAS) conducted research that involved in-depth interviews with 87 individuals from 69 companies. Forty-three of those companies (62%) actively seek to hire Veterans and another 9 (13%) indicated that while they did not actively work to hire Veterans, they would likely prioritize them over other candidates for positions. Of those 43 companies that did have formal programs, almost half have specific programs for their Veteran employees, such as mentoring or affinity groups.

Indeed, in the same way that targeted hiring has clearly increased the ability of companies to recruit Veterans, targeted support programs can help the companies retain them. In a study polling nearly 2,500 Veterans or soon-to-be Veterans (Prudential Financial Inc., 2012), almost two-thirds of the sample indicated that targeted programs for supporting Veterans that were provided by the employer were critical or important to the success they had in the workplace. A significant proportion of respondents, 80%, indicated that flexible leave for dealing with health issues was important. It is also important for employers to provide training and resources to employees aimed at supporting inclusion of Veterans in the workplace. The Department of the Navy has put together a reference guide for supervisors and managers that details the Navy's commitment to supporting Veterans and individuals with disabilities and list programs, policies, and resources to ensure that they can

14

do so effectively. In collaboration with more than 30 large private sector employers and others, the Institute for Veterans and Military Families compiled a "Guide to Leading Policies, Practices, and Resources: Supporting the Employment of Veterans and Military Families" which listed training programs for managers as effective and cited the value of supporting affinity groups in the workplace as well (IVMF, 2012). Similarly, the Disability Management Employer Coalition convened a think tank that included leading insurance companies, disability management groups, small business group representatives, and Veterans and they also recommended the value of sensitivity training for managers and supervisors (Carruthers & Harnett, 2008).

In this report, we present findings from a survey of 245 employers and in-depth interviews from six companies that further illuminate issues impacting the recruitment and retention of Veterans in the workforce.

PROJECT ONE: A SURVEY OF 100 BUSINESSES

Survey Sample

The Department of Veterans Affairs requested that a national survey of 100 employers, consisting of small, mid-size, and large (Fortune 500 and Fortune 1000) businesses be conducted. The study gathered information regarding these businesses' "current policies, practices, and programs regarding Veterans, National Guard, and Reserve who were activated for service in OEF/OIF" (VA-777-11-RP-0168). The recruitment strategies implemented (detailed immediately below) were successful and resulted in a total of 245 company respondents. The survey was fully completed by 86% (n=210) of the sample while the remaining 14% (n=35) partially responded to the survey. The sampling strategy was driven by the nature of the research questions, which was to identify promising practices from companies with a focus on hiring Veterans. Though this sample is stratified so that insights are gained from a range of companies into variation that may exist across company size and geography, it is not representative of companies nationwide and findings must be interpreted with that in mind.

Recruitment

In order to identify a sample of 100 or more organizations nationally, the project team recruited through the following multiple channels:

1. Corporate Gray: A Veteran-owned small business, Corporate Gray has fifteen years of experience assisting businesses of all sizes nationwide to recruit Veteran employees. Corporate Gray is a nationally recognized leader in helping Veterans across all branches of the armed forces transition from active duty to employment in the private sector. Through the Department of Defense (DOD)'s military transition assistance offices, Corporate Gray has provided informational materials to over three million active duty military transitioning to the civilian sector. By designing and facilitating over 100 job fairs nationwide exclusively to connect employers with Veterans, Corporate Gray has extensive relationships with over 9,000 human resource professionals from diverse employers across numerous market sectors.

2. US Business Leadership Network: The US Business Leadership Network is a network of over 5,000 employers nationwide who share a common commitment to an inclusive workforce that values and supports the hiring, retention, and advancement of workers with disabilities, including Veterans.

16

3. <u>Survey Sampling International</u>: Survey Sampling International (SSI) provides sampling, data collection, and data analytic solutions for survey research. They reach respondents across 72 nations through the full range of modes, including online, landline phone, mobile/wireless, and mixed access methods. SSI has 30 offices spanning every time zone and staff fluent in 36 languages, allowing them to offer diverse access. SSI has worked with more than 2000 companies worldwide.

In the final sample, 122 companies came through Corporate Gray and USBLN efforts (CG/BLN), and Survey Sampling International (SSI) brought in the remaining 123 companies. The use of two distinct sampling strategies as detailed above, yielded two distinct samples for this study: a more "purposive" sample recruited through CG/BLN, and a more "generic" sample through SSI. The ability to compare the two different types of samples is a unique feature of this study.

Business-Level Demographics

<u>Geography and Size</u>: The sample was stratified according to organizational size (operationalized as number of employees) in eight categories (<50; 50-100; 101-500; 501-1,500; 1,501-2,500; 2,501-5,000; 5,001-10,000; >10,000) and four geographical regions (North, South, East, and Mid-West). Our sample breakdown by geographic sector and size or organization for the 210 companies that provided this information is as follows (geographic distribution and size data were not provided by 35 companies):

	EAST	MIDWEST	SOUTH	WEST	TOTAL
<50	6	3	18	6	33
50 100	4	8	10	3	25
101 500	12	9	18	12	51
501 1500	6	3	7	4	20
1501 2500	1	1	4	3	9
2501 5000	2	1	2	4	9
5001 10,000	6	3	11	2	22
>10,000	8	6	11	7	32
DON'T KNOW	3	2	3	1	9
TOTALS	48	36	84	42	210

A one-way ANOVA test resulted in a significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between the CG/BLN and SSI samples, with the CG/BLN sample having a higher number of small companies. However, overall, samples demonstrate similar patterns in the distribution

between small, medium, and large companies with both samples having fewer companies in the ranges of 501-1,500, 1,501-2,500, and 2,501-5,000. It is also important to note, that incomplete data could change these results, as 35 companies did not provide company demographic data. Thus, while we provide findings from between-groups analyses further below, we can not necessarily infer that these differences are due to company size.

| | NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES NATIONWIDE | | | | | | | | | |
	<50	50 100	101 500	501 1500	1501 2500	2501 5000	5000 10000	>10000	DON'T KNOW	TOTAL
CG/BLN	20	10	28	8	4	4	6	22	2	105
	19.0%	9.5%	26.7%	7.7%	3.8%	3.8%	5.7%	21.0%	1.9%	100.0%
SSI	13	15	22	12	5	5	16	11	7	106
	12.3%	14.2%	20.8%	11.3%	4.7%	4.7%	15.1%	10.4%	6.6%	100.0%
TtOTALS	33	25	50	21	9	9	22	33	9	210

Another way in which geographical distribution of the businesses was assessed involved inquiring about the location of the company's predominant office; the majority of businesses were located in urban settings (52%) or suburban settings (36%). Only 10% of the companies were located in rural settings.

Veterans in the Workforce: Fifteen percent of our sample indicated a Veteran workforce rate that is greater than 50% of their total workforce, with a majority of the sample (60%) indicating that Veterans are less than a quarter of their total workforce (12% did not know). About 18% of the companies have more than 50% of their executive-level employees identifying as Veterans, while 60% have less than a quarter of their executive-level employees identifying as Veterans (17% did not know). The majority of businesses (66%) have under a quarter of their total workforce active in the Reserve and/or National Guard (24% did not know).

Respondent-Level Demographics

A little less than one-quarter of our respondents (21%) were at a senior level in their company (executives or vice-presidents of human resources), 43% were mid-level management (directors or managers of human resources), six percent were internal employee assistance professionals, and two percent were external employee assistance professionals (28% categorized themselves as "other").

In terms of military experience, 30% of respondents had personal military experience and 63% of them had someone in their family with military experience.

The gender distribution of respondents was 55% male and 45% female. The average age of respondents was 43 years of age ($SD = 12.7$), with a minimum age of 18 and a

maximum age of 86. A majority of the respondents identified as White or Caucasian, not Hispanic (64%), 10% identified as Black, not Hispanic, 8% identified as Hispanic, 3% as Asian, 1% as Multi-racial, 0.4% as Native American, and 0.4% as Pacific Islander (some participants did not respond to the question).

Survey Instrument

The survey was developed by adapting questions from past surveys on diversity and inclusion conducted by BBI (e.g., DCSRC, 2009), as well as by consulting the literature for updated issues and working with an extensive network of experts and professionals in the area of corporate culture and inclusion of Veterans, people with disabilities, mental health, employee assistance programs, and accommodations. In collaboration with all project partners, the Advisory Board, and the Department of Veterans Affairs, several rounds of review were conducted to ensure thoroughness of topical coverage, smooth transitions between questions and survey sections, and efficiency in terms of length. Once the survey was in its final form, an application was submitted to Syracuse University's Institutional Review Board, who conducted an ethics review and provided approval for the project to move forward. The final survey included the following categories, sections, and questions:

Category 1: Identifying workplace policies, programs, and practices. This category of questions explored what policies, programs, and practices of the companies exist with respect to ensuring inclusion in the workplace during initial recruitment and hiring, the onboarding process, and long term career growth of an employee who is a Veteran or a member of the National Guard or Reserve. This category also covered topics focused on employer assistance with accommodation or "flex" requests. The following sections were included to cover this category of questions:

- Recruitment, Hiring, and Onboarding: This set of questions focused on a company's efforts to actively recruit Veterans and members of the National Guard and Reserve, as well as support these candidates through the application process. Efforts may include company policies as well as different programs to train and/or help translate military skills into those required within the civilian workforce. This section also enquired about practices to educate and inform new employees about company resources and policies structured to support and assist Veterans and members of the National Guard and Reserve in the workplace such as flexible work arrangements, employee assistance programs (EAPs), and affinity or employee resource groups.

- Retention and Advancement in the Workplace: This section focused on the use of resources, policies, and programs to actively support all Veterans and members of the National Guard and Reserve to achieve continued retention and advancement in their careers within the company. Employer policies, practices, and structures focused on supports for employees attempting to return to work are known to have a significant impact on retention and advancement (Blackwell et al., 2003; Mitchell, 2006; Pransky et al., 2004). The survey also assessed employer policies, practices, and programs to support return to work and reintegration for employees who have returned after serving in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF). This included questions about the provision of accommodations, workplace flexibility, and supports for Veterans who have a service-connected disability and who have mental health needs, the factors that impact retention and advancement, and employer initiatives to enhance or increase the retention and advancement of the target population.

- Members of the National Guard and Reserve: A separate section focused on employer concerns about hiring employees who remain actively engaged in military service and may be deployed at any time as well as supports and resources provided by an employer to active service members.

Questions assessed respondents' perceptions about: their employees' productivity; the skills, qualities, and characteristics their employees' military careers have brought to their jobs; and their employees' transitions from military service to civilian life. Questions also investigated their awareness and understanding of strategies and policies to promote workplace inclusion and the use of accommodations in the workplace.

Category 2: Employers' understanding of the mental health and related needs of Veterans and the services necessary to support their productivity. In this category, the focus was on awareness of mental health issues that employees may face, what programs their companies offer to provide assistance, and awareness of the most helpful and effective ways to make referrals to appropriate services. The sections covered by this category included:

- Health and Mental Health Needs: This section focused on respondents' general perceptions about the mental health of people who have served in the armed forces, common situations that result in reports on work related problems, and their company's practices in addressing the health and mental health needs of Veterans and members of the National Guard and Reserve.

- Employee Assistance Program Services: Respondents were asked about their awareness of the services offered by Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) and if those services are equipped to address a range of issues that affect Veterans and members of the National Guard and Reserve. Existing measures were adapted to examine additional workplace flexibility issues and training programs, particularly those related to the Veteran population (e.g., training on Veteran reintegration in the workplace, training on military cultural competence, training on Veteran psychological health in the workplace, and other issues).

- Affinity/Employee Resource Groups and Veteran-related Programs: Respondents were asked about different programs that are offered to assist Veterans and members of the National Guard and Reserve, such as affinity or employee resource groups where Veterans and members of the National Guard and Reserve provide support for each other and obtain management support for initiatives that benefit their constituency, as well as other programs such as mentoring programs to link returning Veterans with Veterans in the workforce or programs to provide referral to external supports and services.

- Management Training on Veterans' Issues: Additionally the survey included a section to inquire if sensitivity training had been offered to managers, supervisors, and co-workers on the issues and challenges faced by service members during deployment and post-deployment, especially in OEF/OIF.

The survey also included some basic demographic questions about the company as well as the respondent. Finally, to ensure that the study results can be successfully used to assist participating companies, the survey included a section on needs for additional resources, information, tools, and training programs. These responses will be used to tailor the findings of this study into the most appropriate dissemination methods and channels.

Findings

Category 1 - Recruitment, Hiring, and Onboarding

Almost all companies have experience hiring Veterans (93%), and a majority of them have hired a Reserve member (67%) and/or National Guard member (59%). Indeed, 57% of companies indicate having a formal set of policies and programs for recruiting Veterans and members of the National Guard and Reserve, 29% provide internships for them, and

31% have apprenticeships and on-the-job training programs that are eligible for GI-Bill funding. Logistic regression tests were used to compare differences between the sample obtained through Corporate Gray and USBLN (CG/BLN) and the sample obtained through SSI. These tests showed that companies from the SSI sample were more likely to offer internships to Veterans and members of the National Guard and Reserve (B = 1.7, p <.001, Exp(B) = 5.48) and apprenticeships and on-the-job training programs eligible for GI-Bill funding (B = 1.89, p <.001, Exp(B) = 6.62) than those in the CG/BLN sample.

A large majority of the companies (78%) have a mechanism for identifying Veteran and National Guard or Reserve member status at the application phase and 55% of companies have a system at the application phase that facilitates translating military background and experience into terms relevant to their company's needs and credential requirements. Companies in the SSI sample were more likely to have a system for translating military background and experience into terms relevant to their company's needs and credential requirements (B = .58, p <.05, Exp(B) = 1.78) than those in the CG/BLN sample.

A little less than half (45%) take advantage of federal tax credit programs that encourage the hiring of Veterans. Eighty percent indicate that if they knew they would be eligible to receive a $5,600 – $9,600 tax credit, it would definitely (53%) or probably (27%) influence their decision to hire a qualified Veteran. Companies in the SSI sample were more likely to use the federal tax credit programs (B = 2.12, p <.001, Exp(B) = 8.35).

New employees at most of the companies learn about the company's HR policies and staff support resources through formal orientation processes (65%) or new hire orientations (61%). Other sources of information include managers (52%), company handbooks (46%), and word-of-mouth (17%). Forty percent of companies stated that information was shared upon request. While 59% of the participating companies provide information on general support resources and 46% provide information about Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) during the orientation process for employees, only about a third or less offer information on specific resources during orientation such as general affinity or employee resource groups (30%), affinity or employee resource groups for Veterans and members of the National Guard or Reserve (23%), flexible work arrangements (35%), accessibility and accommodations (38%), and grievance resolution (35%).

The survey enquired about the types of supports that companies offered to new employees who are Veterans and members of the National Guard and Reserve. A third offer affinity or employee resource groups (30%) and focused orientations for Veterans and

National Guard and Reserve members (29%). About 34% assign them to mentors, including connecting employees with known physical (27%) and mental health disabilities (22%) with mentors who can help orient them within the company. About a fifth (22%) offer employee training for Veterans and Reserve and National Guard members, while a similar number provide written documentation about on-the-job supports (23%).

Retention and Advancement in the Workplace

Less than a third of the responding companies (27%) appointed full-time employees who work specifically on Veteran recruitment and retention for at least half of their time (12% said they did not know). These dedicated positions exist at all levels of management (respondents could pick all options that applied) including senior (80%), mid (78%), and low level management (67%) while 44% said these also represented non-management positions.

Respondents were asked to identify whether they used any of a variety of resources to support Veterans and members of the National Guard and Reserve in their workplace and to indicate the helpfulness of these resources. Many indicated central human resource personnel (54%) and department-level human resource personnel (48%) as very/extremely helpful resources. Over a third (36%) found Department of Veterans Affairs' resources very/extremely helpful, 32% found Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve very/extremely helpful, 31% found Veteran Service Organizations very/extremely helpful, and 29% found Department of Labor resources to be very/extremely helpful.

Significant differences exist between the two types of samples in terms of how helpful respondents found these resources ($p < 0.05$ for Department level human resources and $p < 0.001$ for all others). See Figure 1.
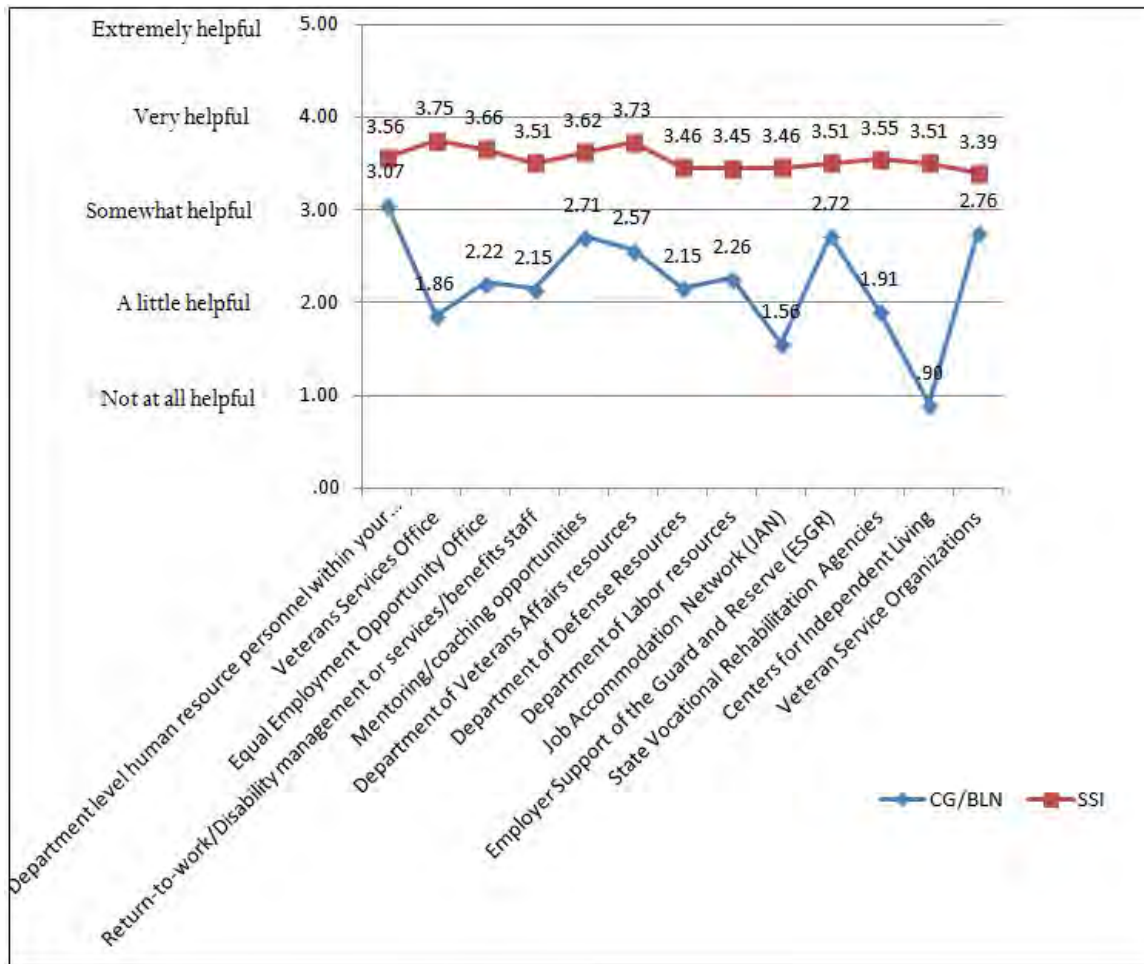
Figure 1: Differences between cg/bln and ssi companies on the helpfulness of resources to support veterans and members of the national guard and reserve in the workplace.

Company representatives were also asked to reflect on the factors that influenced their decisions to retain and advance Veterans and members of the Reserve and National Guard in their companies. A majority of the respondents identified critical job related skills, competencies, and qualities to be factors that influenced them to a great or complete extent including the ability to learn new skills and concepts related to the job (65%), strong leadership qualities (73%), flexibility to work well in teams or independently (67%), strong personal integrity (73%), ability to set and achieve goals (72%), ability to allocate and manage resources well (70%), recognition of problems and implementation of solutions (60%), and ability to persevere in the face of obstacles (68%). Many respondents said that factors that may be connected with employees' physical or mental health conditions or associated with their military service mattered either not at all or to a small extent. These factors included time taken to adapt to civilian workforce (34%), concerns about PTSD and other mental health issues (57%), need for time off for mental health appointments or

medical appointments (55%), concerns about physical, sensory, and/or cognitive disabilities related to military service (56%), difficulty in connecting and working with civilian co-workers (43%), and difficulties with anger or violence (44%). However, some did feel that these influenced their decisions to retain and advance Veterans and members of the Reserve and National Guard to some, a great, or a complete extent. Figure 2 depicts these responses.
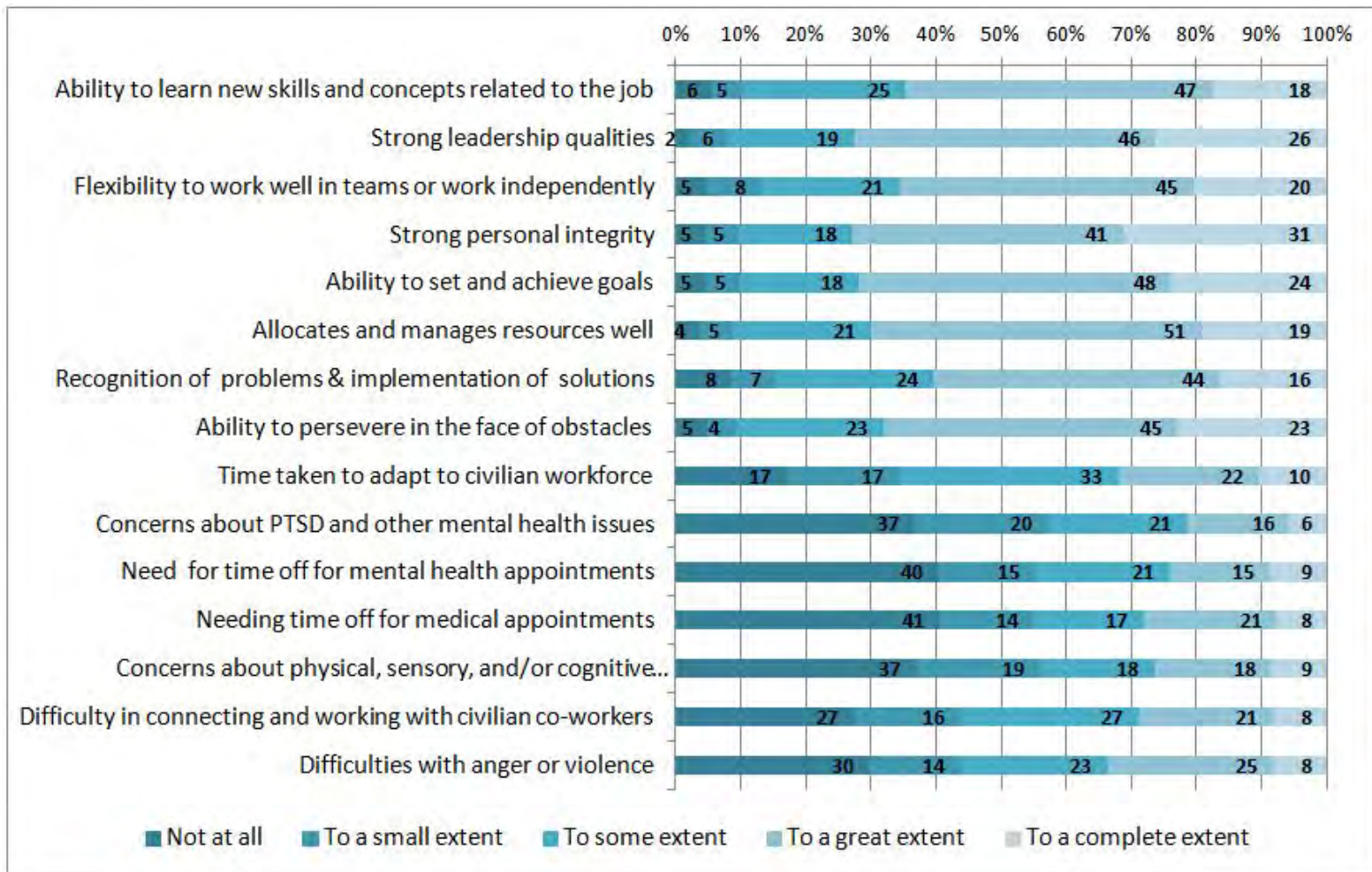
Figure 2: factors that influenced company decisions to retain and advance Veterans and members of the Reserve and National Guard in their companies.

One-way ANOVA tests revealed significant differences (p < .05) between the responses of the CG/BLN and SSI samples for all factors other than "flexibility to work well in teams or work independently (p >.05)" and "recognition of problems and implementation of solutions (p >.05.)."
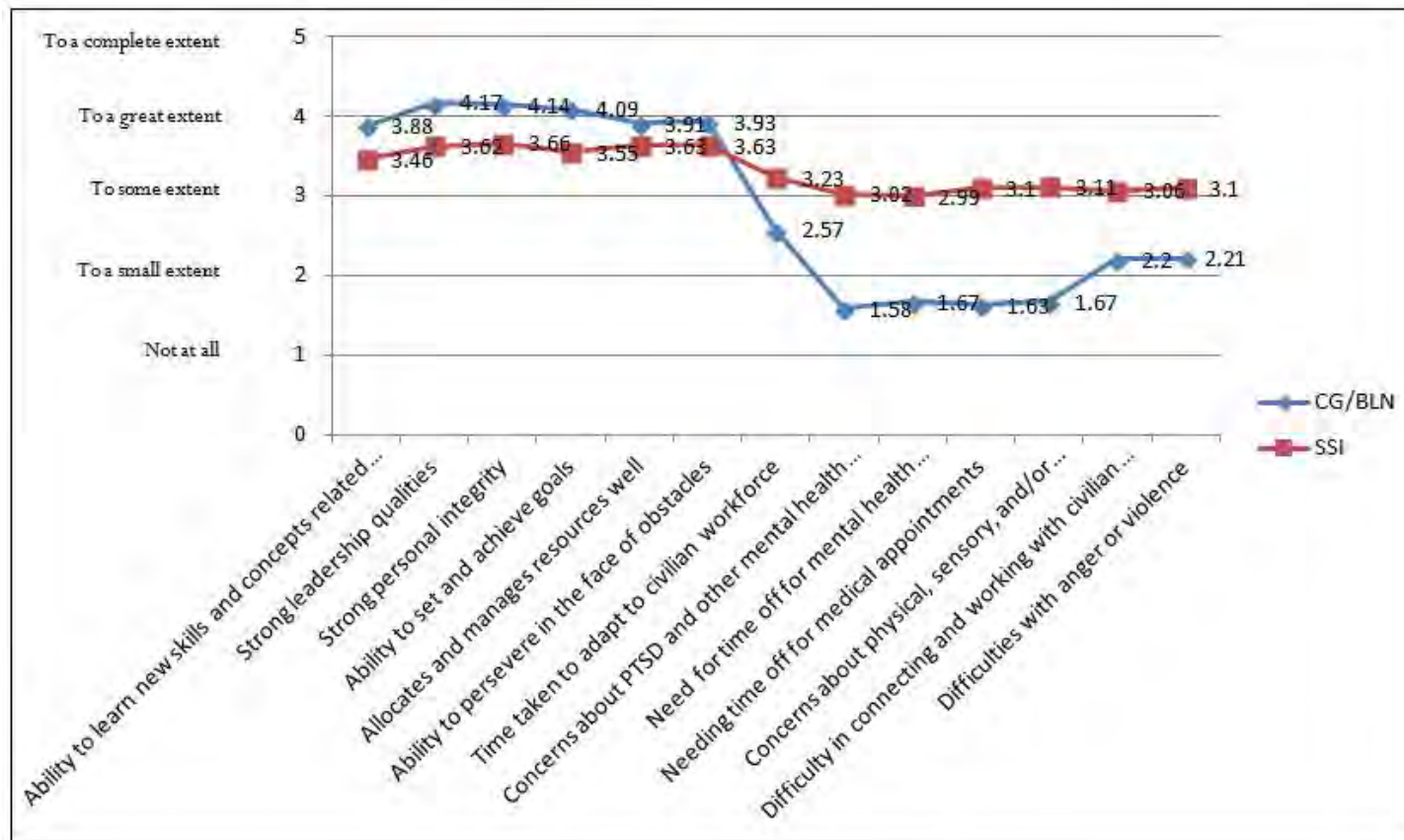

FIGURE 3: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CG/BLN AND SSI COMPANIES ON FACTORS THAT INFLUENCED THEIR DECISIONS TO RETAIN AND ADVANCE VETERANS AND MEMBERS OF THE RESERVE AND NATIONAL GUARD.

About two-thirds of the responding companies employ multiple strategies, resources, and programs to enhance or increase the retention and advancement of Veterans and members of the Reserve and National Guard and a majority said these were effective to some or a complete extent. Over one-third identified the following to be effective in retention and advancement to a large extent or completely:

- Providing training opportunities that are equitably available and accessible to employees (56%)
- Using clear policies and procedures for health related accommodations (43%)
- Providing return-to-work services available for employees returning from short- or long-term disability leave (42%)
- Providing training opportunities that are equitably available and accessible to Veterans with disabilities (42%)
- Keeping data (including retention, services accessed etc.) on Veteran, National Guard, and Reserve employees (40%)
- Using clear policies and procedures for health related accommodations (39%)
- Specific policies related to career planning (39%)
- Mentoring/coaching opportunities that are targeted at Veteran employees (37%)
- Availability of disability management services (36%)
- Targeting career advancement opportunities for Veteran employees (34%)
- Using a centralized source of funding for accommodations (33%)

Members of the National Guard and Reserve

A majority of companies did not indicate having strong concerns about hiring members of the National Guard or Reserve. When asked if the potential for redeployment was a concern, 39% were not concerned about this at all, close to a quarter of companies were concerned to a small extent (23%), 24% to some extent, and 14% to a great or complete extent. This pattern was similar for additional concerns related to:

- The uncertain length of absence during employment (not at all: 25%, to a small extent: 25%, to some extent: 22%, to a great or complete extent: 17%).
- The cost of training replacements during service members' absences (not at all: 39%, to a small extent: 16%, to some extent: 25%, to a great or complete extent: 20%).

- Weekend military training requirements and their interference with work scheduling (not at all: 53%, to a small extent: 11%, to some extent: 19%, to a great or complete extent: 16%). See Figure 4 for these numbers depicted graphically.
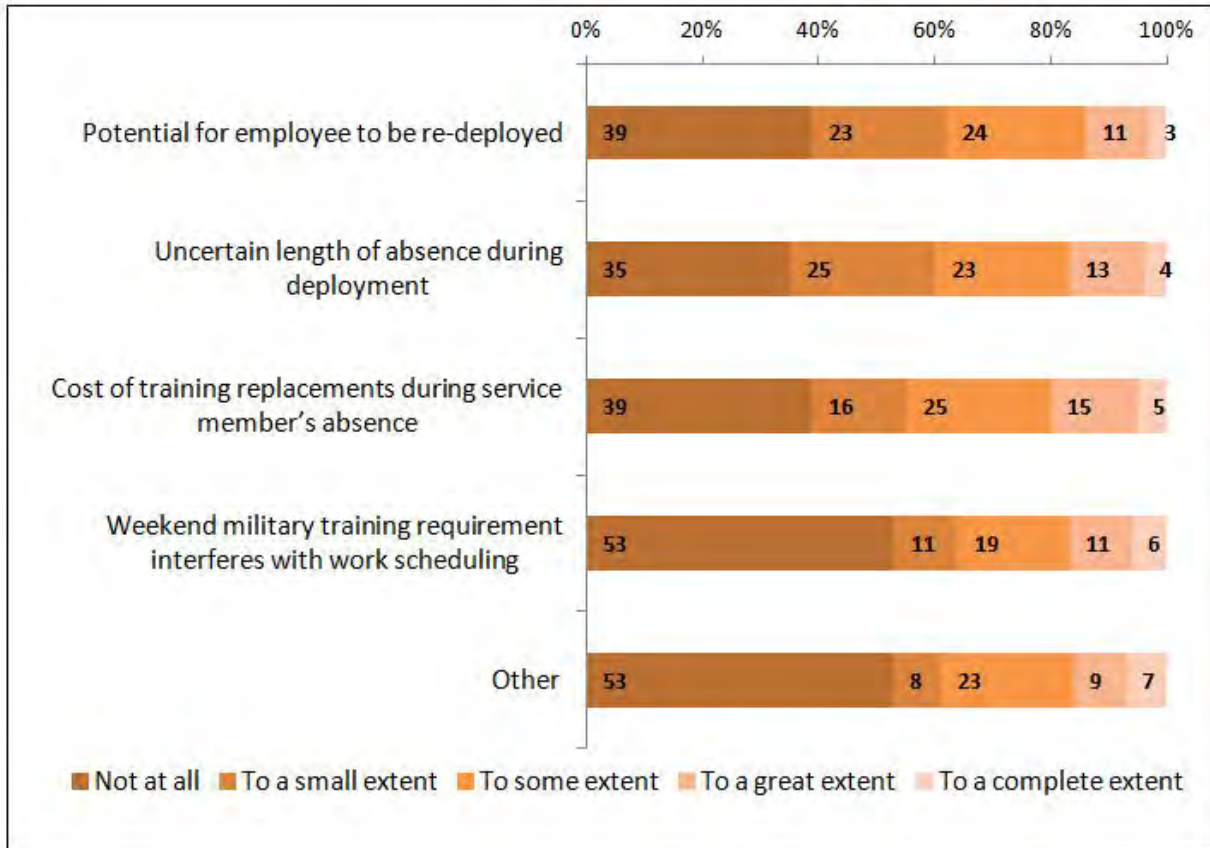
FIGURE 4: CONCERNS ABOUT HIRING MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE.

The CG/BLN sample expressed less concern about hiring members of the National Guard and Reserve as demonstrated in Figure 5, showing response means below (p < .001 for all):
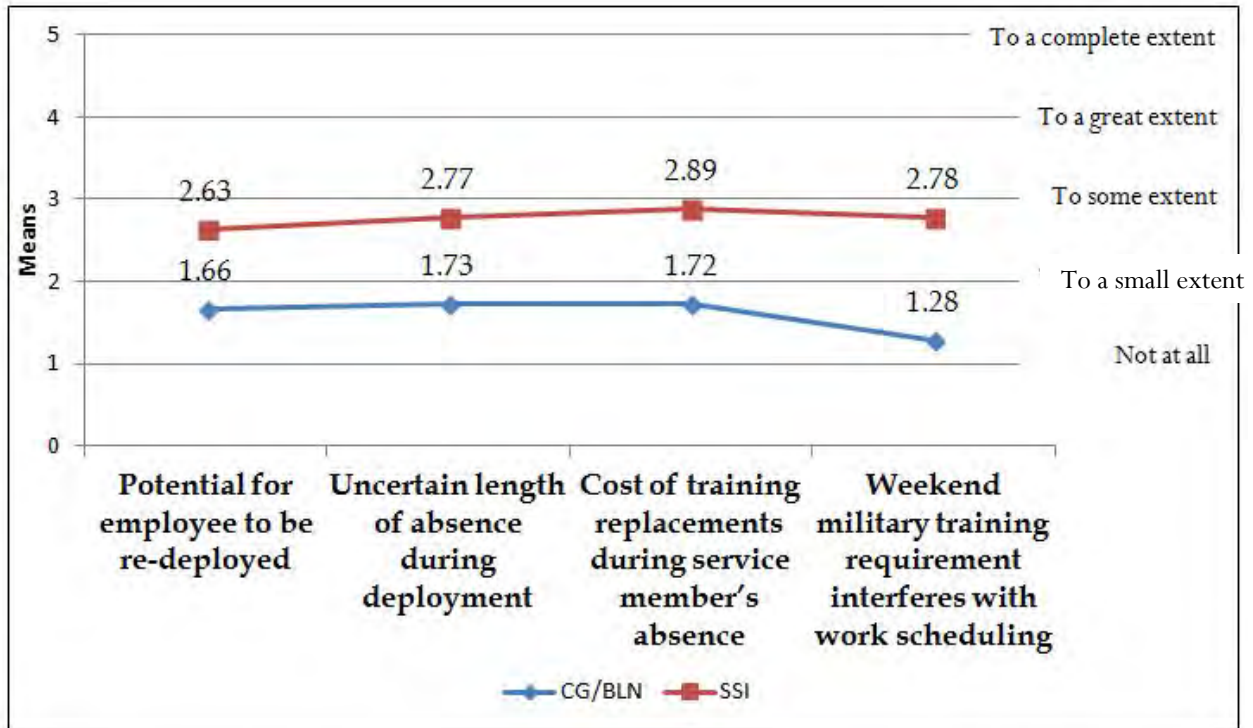
A minority (14%) of companies indicated that they had programs in place to assist the families and spouses of members of the National Guard and Reserve deployed overseas (58% indicated they had no such programs and 29% did not know). Many companies had practices to make an employee's leave and return to work after active duty in the National Guard or Reserve easier, as described in the following table:

Practices Available	%
Having a military leave policy.	54%
Creating plans or procedures for what will occur when an employee deploys (e.g., determining what tasks an employee is responsible for, train others to do those tasks, identify a point of contact for the employee to contact in case of deployment).	42%
Upon return, having employee meet with manager or HR.	42%

Upon return, discussing what the employee can expect (e.g., what tasks have been delegated to others, if he or she will be working in the same or a different role, if and how procedures have changed).	36%
Discussing how the employee would like information shared regarding deployment (e.g., would they prefer not to discuss it, would they like to share with coworkers that they are being deployed).	33%
Sending notes, emails, or newsletters to the employee while they're away.	33%
Upon return, determining what training, re-training, or accommodations need to be put into place.	31%
Acknowledging contribution of coworkers who take over responsibilities in the employee's absence.	29%
Upon return, discussing what the employee would like or find helpful in returning to work (e.g., written instructions for new procedures, additional meetings with management to get caught up on what he or she has missed).	29%
Keeping coworkers updated on deployed employee.	28%
Keeping in contact with spouse or family members of deployed employees.	25%
Having farewell and/or welcome home events.	24%
Supporting a gradual re-entry process or flexible work arrangements if needed.	20%
Developing individualized reintegration plans.	18%
Establishing a relationship with or working with the Employers Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR).	16%
Offering paid time off before or after deployment (in addition to regular vacation days).	13%
Offering financial assistance.	10%

The results of logistic regressions show that the companies in the CG/BLN sample are more likely to have a military leave policy (B=-.99, p < .001, Exp(B)=.371), create plans or procedures for what will occur when an employee deploys (B=-1.05, p < .001, Exp(B)=.351), and discuss how the employee would like information regarding their deployment shared within the company (B=1.57, p <.05, Exp(B)=.565). Companies in the CG/BLN sample are also more likely to take specific actions upon the employee's return including having employee meet with manager or HR (B=-.69, p <.05, Exp(B)=.5), discussing what the employee can expect (B=-1.08, p < .001, Exp(B)=.34), discussing what the employee would like or find helpful in returning to work (B=-.74, p <.01, Exp(B)=.475), and determining what training, re-training, or accommodations need to be put into place (B=-.59, p<.05, Exp(B)=.557).

Category 2 - Health and Mental Health Issues

Over half of the respondents (57%) reported perceiving people who have served in the armed forces to be at higher risk for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) than the general population. About one-third of the sample (34%) disagreed that Veterans and members of the National Guard and Reserve have higher percentages of anxiety than the civilian population, while a similar number were neutral (35%). When asked if they believed that depression occurred at higher rates within civilians than those in the armed forces, almost half the respondents expressed a neutral opinion (49%) with the remaining evenly split among those who disagree/strongly disagree (26%) and those who agree/strongly agree (25%). Most (78%) of the respondents did not agree (36%) or were neutral (42%) in response to a question about the belief people from the armed forces being at higher risk of alcohol and substance abuse problems as compared to the general population. See Figure 6.
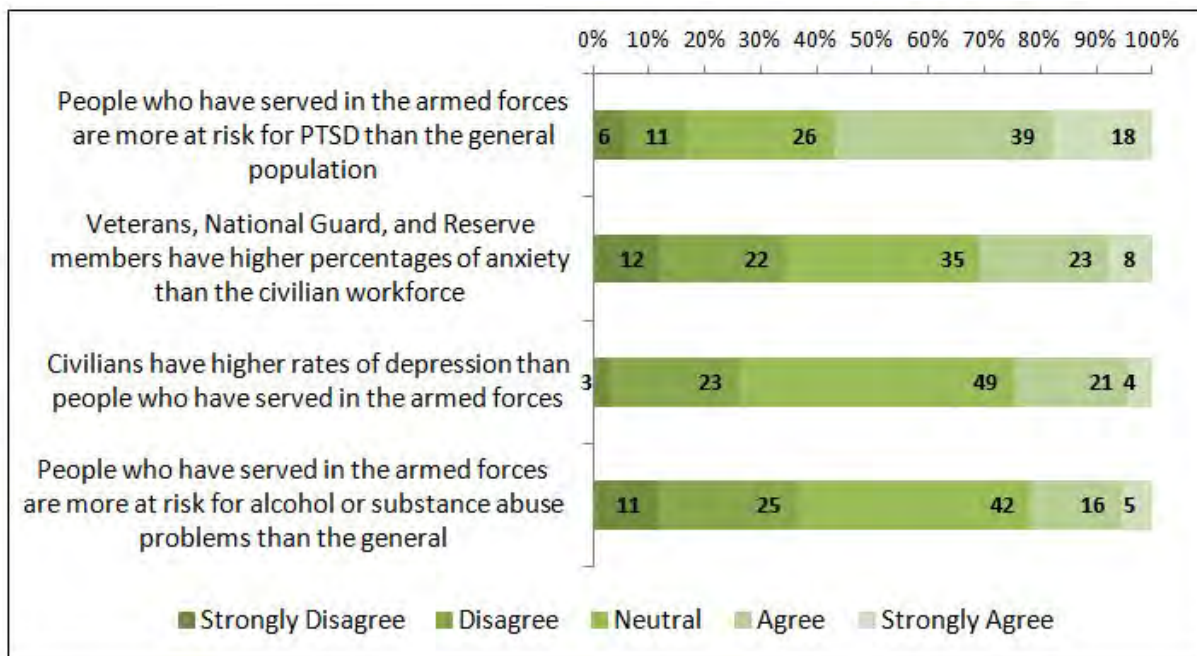
FIGURE 6: PERCEPTIONS ABOUT DIFFERENCES IN MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES BETWEEN THOSE WHO HAVE SERVED IN THE ARMED FORCES AND THE CIVILIAN POPULATION.

A one-way ANOVA test showed significant differences between most of the responses of the sample recruited by Corporate Gray and USBLN (CG/BLN) and the sample obtained through SSI. The CG/BLN sample demonstrated more disagreement with the perceptions that Veterans and National Guard and Reserve members have higher

percentages of anxiety than the civilian population (p<.001), depression occurred at higher rates within civilians than those in the armed forces (p<.05), and people from the armed forces are at higher risk of alcohol and substance abuse problems (p<.001). There was no difference in the perception of risk for experiencing PTSD (p>.05). See Figure 7.

Many respondents stated that negative workplace behaviors and situations involving Veterans either never or seldom brings Veterans to their attention. However some stated that such behaviors and situations did occur occasionally and in lesser cases, often or almost always. One-way ANOVA tests showed significant differences between the responses of the CG/BLN and SSI samples for each situation with the CG/BLN sample reporting lower frequencies of such occurrences (all $p < 0.01$). Figure 8 below depicts how frequently companies had reports of such situations.

	Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Often	Almost Always
Reports of work performance problems	24	41	29	6	1
Reports of difficulties with coworkers, interpersonal conflict	30	30	32	8	1
Reports of attendance problems	32	33	24	11	1
Reports of difficulties with supervisors	31	37	23	8	1
Reports of angry outbursts, irritability	33	34	22	9	3
Reports of substance use	39	31	21	7	2
Failure regarding successful workplace integration	37	36	19	7	1
Reports of interpersonal withdrawal, isolation	39	32	18	8	3
Reports of difficulties with concentration and memory	42	29	18	8	3
Reports of family stresses and concerns	30	26	31	9	4
Reports of frequent physical complaints (e.g., pain, fatigue)	31	37	26	5	2

FIGURE 8: KINDS OF SITUATIONS THAT HAVE BROUGHT VETERANS TO THE ATTENTION OF HR AND THE FREQUENCY WITH WHICH THEY OCCUR.

The survey had similar findings when companies were asked about the occurrence of negative workplace behaviors and situations for Veterans who have disclosed mental health problems. A high majority of companies reported that such occurrences were seldom or non-existent, but some cited more frequent occurrences of such behaviors or situations, as depicted in Figure 9 below. The results of one-way ANOVA tests showed companies in the

Veteran/disability focused CG/BLN sample cited significantly lower frequencies of such incidences than the generic SSI sample ($p < 0.001$).
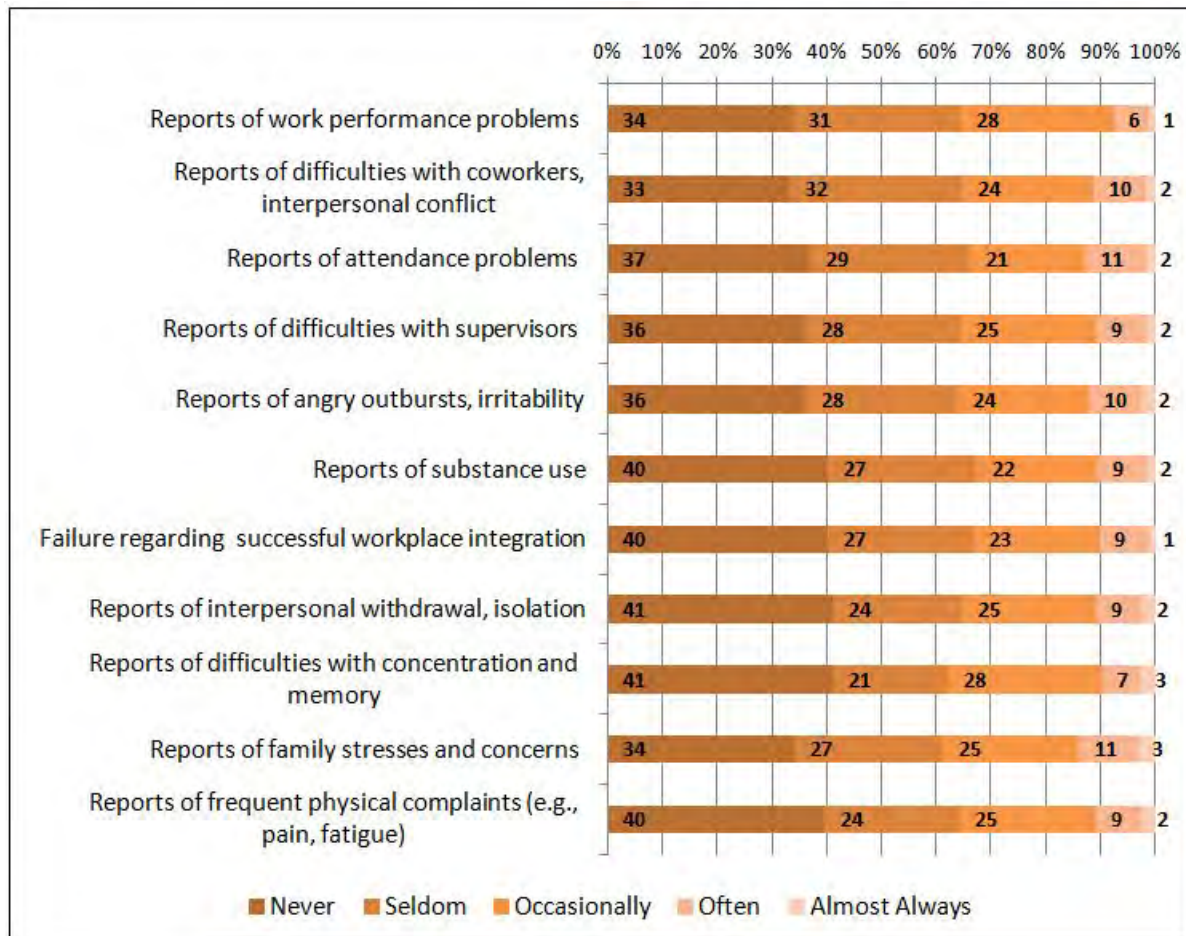
FIGURE 9: KINDS OF SITUATIONS THAT HAVE BROUGHT VETERANS WITH DISCLOSED MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES TO THE ATTENTION OF HR AND THE FREQUENCY WITH WHICH THEY OCCUR.

Approximately one-half (51%) of companies indicated that they specifically have programs in place to assist employees with mental health issues. The results of a logistic regression test showed that companies in the CG/BLN sample were more likely to have such programs than the SSI sample (B = -.87, $p < .05$, Exp(B) = .421). The vast majority of companies described these programs as Employee Assistance Programs. Close to a quarter of companies (23%) indicated that these programs are tailored specifically to assist Veteran employees with mental health needs. Among these, companies within the SSI sample were

more likely to tailor these programs to assist Veterans with mental health needs (B = 2.4, p <.001, Exp (B) = 11) than the CG/BLN sample.

Companies indicated use of the following workplace flexibility options/workplace accommodations as being available to Veterans with mental health needs:

- Time off for mental health appointments (85%)
- Task shifting (71%)
- Changes to work schedule (82%)
- Restructuring their job (64%)
- Moving to another job (70%)
- Allowing a service animal in the workplace (52%)
- Formal education of company and coworkers (63%)

Employee Assistance Program Services

As noted earlier, many companies indicated through open-ended responses that the programs they had available to Veterans with mental health needs were Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs). In this section of the survey, respondents were explicitly asked about the presence and nature of EAP programs.

A majority of companies (70%) offer some type of EAP program; 19% have an internal program managed within the company, 39% have an external program managed outside the company, and 12% have a blended program that has some internal and external management components (20% indicated no program and 10% did not know).

For those companies that indicated a program, 32% indicated the program was located at the workplace, 37% indicated the program was in a separate building away from the workplace, 65% indicated the program was available by phone, and 46% indicated the program was available virtually (online).

Below is a list of services available through companies' EAP programs and a breakdown of which percentage of companies offer these services to employees and covered dependents:

Services Available	Employee	Covered Dependents
Assessment & Referral	81%	39%
Short Term Counseling	73%	46%
Management & Supervisor Consultation	56%	25%
Training Programs, Seminars	52%	22%

Crisis Response Service	62%	31%
Work-Life Balance	67%	42%
Legal	53%	32%
Financial	57%	33%
Wellness	67%	40%
Alcohol misuse screening and education	66%	34%
Substance abuse/dependence assessment & referral	66%	36%
Department of Transportation Services	30%	15%
Specialized services for employees with positive drug test results	42%	19%
"Back to work" services following inpatient treatment or extended leave for health/mental health reasons	52%	16%

About a third of the responding companies (32%) indicated that their EAPs were effective in addressing the mental health needs of Veterans and members of the Reserve and National Guard completely or to a great extent, a fifth (20%) said they were addressing these needs to some extent, and less than a tenth (8.8%) said they were addressing these needs to a small extent (35% said they did not know).

Thirty nine percent of respondents indicated their EAPs offer training programs for managers or supervisors. Among them, the breakdown is as follows:

- Management referral training (including how to identify employees with performance issues which may be due to personal problems) (47%)
- Diversity training (48%)
- Leadership skills training (50%)
- Training regarding Veterans' issues in general (28%)
- Training regarding National Guard and Reserve (14%)
- Training on Veteran reintegration factors in the workplace (25%)
- Training on military cultural competencies (17%)
- Training on Veteran psychological health in the workplace (19%)
- Training on post-deployment stress (17%)
- Disability sensitivity training (32%)
- Sexual harassment prevention training (39%)

The CG/BLN and SSI samples were split as follows for training on issues related to Veterans and Reserve and National Guard members:

Training Type	CG/BLN	SSI
Training regarding Veterans' issues in general	26%	45%
Training regarding National Guard and Reserve	30%	70%
Training on Veteran reintegration factors in the workplace	24%	76%
Training on military cultural competencies	33%	67%
Training on Veteran psychological health in the workplace	19%	81%
Training on post-deployment stress	35%	65%

Affinity/Employee Resource Groups and Veteran-Related Programs

Companies identified having several different types of affinity/employee resource groups for employees as follows:

- For Veterans (34%)

- For members of the National Guard and Reserve (23%)

- For family members or spouses of Veterans or those in the military (including National Guard and Reserve) (19%)

- For Veterans and members of the National Guard and Reserve with mental health needs (16%)

- For Veterans and members of the National Guard and Reserve with physical disabilities (17%)

- For any employees with physical disabilities (21%)

- For any employees with mental health needs (18%)

The affinity groups for Veterans and members of the National Guard and Reserve engage in some activities similar to EAP programs, such as mentoring and coaching (50%) and providing referral to series and supports within (50%) or outside the company (43%). They also provide general assistance recruiting other employees (46%), providing advice to human resources or company management on improving policies and programs (41%), developing Listservs (20%), maintaining websites or intranet sites for communication and networking (27%), and holding social or networking activities (40%). In addition, these groups hold regular meetings to discuss concerns, needs, challenges, and successes of its

members (37%); lead support groups (20%); and offer an orientation for new employees who are Veterans or members of the National Guard and Reserve (20%).

Employees are informed about affinity groups that might match their needs or interests in a variety of ongoing ways beyond that which takes place at onboarding, including through posters in the workplace (38%), by company emails (59%), via hardcopy company newsletters or mailings (39%), through periodic announcements at meetings (44%), by word of mouth (41%), and via a formal mentoring program (22%).

Management Training on Veterans' Issues

Over one-half of companies (59%) indicate that they have management training programs. Among these companies, the types of programs break down as follows:

- Programs that address Veterans' issues in general (32%)
- Programs that cover specific issues related to Veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan (16%)
- Programs that cover specific issues related to Veterans who served in the previous Iraq war (i.e., Desert Storm) (14%)
- Programs that address specific issues related to Vietnam War Veterans (12%)
- Programs that cover specific issues related to Veterans and disabilities (20%)
- Education and sensitivity programs on military culture, structure, or career paths (30%)
- Programs that address the nature and purpose of affinity groups (28%)
- Programs that cover how to respond appropriately to requests for accommodations due to physical disability or service-related injury (48%)
- Programs that address how to respond appropriately to requests for accommodations due to mental health challenges (43%)
- Programs that address sufficient training on dispute resolution approaches if accommodation conflicts arise (40%)

Logistic regression analyses based on sample type demonstrated significant differences in the likelihood of offering some of the above programs. Companies in the SSI sample are more likely to offer:

- Programs that address Veterans' issues in general ($B = .86$, $p < .05$, $Exp(B) = 2.34$)
- Programs that cover specific issues related to Veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan ($B = 3.1$, $p < .05$, $Exp(B) = 22.11$)

- Programs that cover specific issues related to Veterans who served in the previous Iraq war (i.e., Desert Storm) (B = 2.9, p <.01, Exp(B) = 18.09)
- Programs that address specific issues related to Vietnam war Veterans (B = 2.74, p <.01, Exp(B) = 15.54)
- Programs that cover specific issues related to Veterans and disabilities (B = 1.51, p <.01, Exp(B) = 4.54)

Summary of Quantitative Study Findings

Overall, many of the findings were positive; 93% of the sample had experience hiring Veterans. Three-quarters (78%) of the companies had a mechanism to identify Veterans at the application phase, and slightly over one-half had formal recruitment policies and practices (57%) and mechanisms to translate military experience to relevant terms and credentials for their workplace (55%).

Although 80% of the sample indicated that knowing about tax credits would definitely or probably influence their hiring decisions, it was noted by this project's Advisory Board that company size could influence these decisions as large companies often do not find the savings to override the burden associated with accessing the credits. Indeed, analyses by size of company did support that contention; larger companies were less likely to be influenced by tax credits. Earlier studies have suggested that these credits do not impact employer hiring practices either (GAO 2001 and DOL 2001 as cited in Heaton, 2012), but new findings from a RAND study provide evidence that these credits do indeed increase employment among disabled Veterans (Heaton, 2012).

In terms of post-recruitment issues, such as those related to retention, respondents indicated that providing training opportunities that are equitably available and accessible to employees is highly effective (56%). Similarly, 43% indicated that clear policies for health related accommodations are highly effective and 42% indicated that providing return-to-work services were highly effective. In addition to providing training and policies directed at Veterans or all employees, companies also implement trainings for management and are looking for further information on training. Specifically, 59% of the sample indicated that they offered management training in the following areas of accommodations: responding appropriately to requests for accommodations due to disability or injury (48%), responding appropriately to requests for accommodations due to mental health challenges (43%), and handling dispute resolution if accommodation conflicts arise (40%). Though it is heartening to see such high numbers of respondents indicating the presence of constructive programs, it is clear that nearly half of the sample has yet to adopt such programs and could benefit from

outreach and support to do so. To wit, 76% of the sample indicated they would like more training and information on best practices, policies, and programs to promote recruitment and hiring, and almost three-quarters of the sample (68%) would like more information on Department of Veterans Affairs' resources and programs to support companies that hire Veterans.

Although nearly three-quarters of the respondents (70%) indicated offering some type of employee assistance program (EAP), only 32% of them indicated that the EAPs were effective in addressing the mental health needs of Veterans and members of the Reserve and National Guard completely or to a great extent.

A unique feature of this study is the use of two distinct sampling strategies; approximately one-half of the sample was purposively recruited through channels that network with inclusive employers (Competitive Edge Services and the U.S. Business Leadership Network). The other half of the sample was recruited through a national sampling company that provides random samples for research (Survey Sampling International). Overall, companies in the CG/BLN sample demonstrated more positive attitudes towards the inclusion of Veterans and members of National Guard and Reserves, lower incidents of negative workplace behaviors involving Veterans, and were more likely to have policies or procedures to support military leave for a member of the National Guard or Reserve as well as their reintegration into the workplace. For example, in a question examining factors that influence decisions to retain and advance Veterans and members of the Reserve and National Guard, we asked respondents to rate how strongly negative concerns or positive attributes of potential candidates influence them. The CG/BLN sample agreed more strongly to statements reflecting positive attributes of Veterans (e.g., their strong leadership abilities) and much less strongly to statements indicating concerns related to Veterans (e.g., their time taken to adapt to the civilian workforce). Similarly, the CG/BLN sample was far less likely to strongly endorse statements describing negative behaviors that may have brought Veterans in the workplace to the companies' attention. And this same pattern held true with respect to concerns about hiring members of the National Guard or Reserve – the SSI sample was more likely to have concerns to some extent about the potential for the employee to be re-deployed, about the uncertain length of that deployment, about the cost of training a replacement during the deployment, and about weekend training requirements interfering with scheduling.

When testing the differences in samples in providing different services and programs to improve a company's ability and performance in hiring, retaining, and advancing Veterans and members of the National Guard and Reserve, companies in the SSI sample showed greater likelihood of offering management training to address Veterans' issues in general and

also issues specific to different wars and conflicts such as the recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, previous Iraq war, the Vietnam war, and Veterans with disabilities. These companies were also more likely to offer internships and apprenticeships and on-the-job training programs that are eligible for GI-Bill funding.

Companies in the CG/BLN sample were more likely to have programs to assist all employees with mental health issues, while those in the SSI sample had a higher probability of tailoring these to assist Veteran employees with mental health needs.

A majority of companies did not indicate having strong concerns about hiring members of the National Guard or Reserve, and the CG/BLN sample expressed lower concerns than the random sample. Additionally, the CG/BLN sample was more likely to have specific policies and practices that support the retention and return to work of National Guard and Reserve members.

Differences in attitudes towards Veterans and members of the National Guard and Reserve, as well as supports to assist members of the National Guard and Reserve during and after deployment, may stem from the nature of companies included in the CG/BLN sample. The Corporate Gray network includes companies interested in military diversity, thus companies invited to participate in the survey through them were more likely to be committed to promoting the employment of Veterans and members of the National Guard and Reserve, and thus more likely to exhibit a positive attitudes towards them and have inclusive workplaces for them. Similarly, companies recruited by USBLN are committed to hiring and retaining persons with mental and physical disabilities, and are more inclusive of differences and supportive of accommodations. The SSI sample, while not being nationally generalizable, gives a greater insight into companies who may not have a concentrated focus on hiring Veterans and members of the National Guard and Reserve.

PROJECT TWO: QUALITATIVE IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW STUDY

In consultation with the VA, the BBI research team designed an in-depth qualitative interview study with the aim of answering the following four research questions:

- What are the systemic issues that complicate and or undermine the retention of Veterans (defined as anyone with prior military service) in the civilian workplace?
- What particular challenges are experienced by Veterans with mental health issues in the civilian workplace, and how do these impact their capacity for retention?
- With regard to Veteran retention, what needs do companies have in terms of supports, resources, and unanswered questions?
- What effective, replicable, and scalable interventions are presently used by corporate America to support Veterans with and without mental health issues, and how can these interventions best be disseminated and replicated?

Toward that end, the BBI research team drafted a series of seven semi-structured interview guides to be used in in-depth interviews with the following categories of employees within Fortune 500 corporations:

1. Employees who are Veterans
2. Supervisors
3. Developers of Veterans' initiatives
4. EAP directors
5. Human resource directors
6. Corporate executives
7. Associated consultants or directors of community-based organizations

The interview guides contain open-ended questions designed to elicit the candid thoughts and reflections of each of the participants involved. The guides were revised after review by the VA as well as the Advisory Board Members.

As the interview guides were being developed and then revised, the Corporate Gray team obtained the participation of six Fortune 500 companies in the following industries:

- Manufacturing
- Consulting

- Defense
- Food services
- Healthcare
- Technology

Participant Recruitment

Once the application for the study received approval from the Syracuse University Institutional Review Board, the BBI team scheduled a meeting with the point of contact at each corporation. We discussed with them (and, sometimes, other corporate staff members) the purpose of the study and the participant recruitment procedures. In addition, we sent each point of contact an email containing language that could be used for recruitment purposes and could be revised by them as needed. In order to ensure the confidentiality of their employees, we asked our points of contact to instruct potential participants to contact the BBI team directly if they were interested in taking part in an in-depth telephone interview. Each interested participant who contacted us received a consent form that described the nature of the study in greater depth. If they still wished to participate, we scheduled the interview for a time convenient for the participant. Our initial target sample size was 50 participants in 5 corporations; when we included a sixth corporation, we increased the sample to 63 participants.

Method

Members of the BBI research team conducted the interviews by phone; each interview lasted approximately one hour. The interviews were audio-recorded for transcription and data analysis. Our open-ended questions focused on the interviewee's experiences, knowledge, and areas of expertise. Once the audio-recordings were transcribed, we used QDA Miner qualitative data analysis software to code each interview transcript, using a modified grounded theory approach (Chamaz, 2000) to develop coding categories related to the underlying research questions listed above. Upon completing the coding process, we generated a report for each coding category. We then analyzed the content of each coding report, taking an in depth, contextual approach in our goal to answer each of the original research questions.

Description of the Sample

The study sample of 63 individuals consisted of 43 men and 20 women from the six corporations included in the study. They ranged in age from 30 to 68; sixty nine percent

were Caucasian, 25% percent were African American, and 1% were Hispanic. The list below shows the number of individuals in each of the roles targeted by this study (many fell into more than one category):

- Employees who were Veterans: 38
- Developers of Veterans' initiatives: 13
- Supervisors: 20
- HR directors: 7
- EAP directors: 5
- Clinicians: 5
- Corporate executives: 8
- Outside consultant: 1
  (on Veteran transition issues)

The 38 Veterans included 30 men and 8 women. They represented the following branches of the military: Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, National Guard, and Air Force Reserve. Their highest levels of education are as follows:

- Doctor of Medicine: 1
- Ph.D.:   1
- Multiple Master's degrees: 4
- Master's degree: 13
- Graduate level work: 2
- Bachelor's degree: 16
- Associate's degree: 3
- Some college: 5

It is important to note that the Veterans in this sample are not representative of the general population of Veterans with regard to education. Their high level of expertise is also reflected in the number of former military officers in the sample. The list below reflects the participants' military rankings at retirement or separation from the military.

Officers

- Major General: 1
- Colonel: 3
- Captain: 5

- Lieutenant Colonel: 4
- Commander: 3
- Major: 2
- Lieutenant: 4

Enlisted
- Chief Master Sergeant: 1
- Master Sergeant: 3
- Sergeant: 4
- Petty Officer: 5
- Corporal: 2
- Specialist: 1

Their roles in the military included the following:
- Medical service corps officer
- Law enforcement
- Public affairs officer
- Finance corps
- Field artilleryman
- Nuclear-biological-chemical warfare and disaster preparedness office
- Installation management
- Military clinician in neurology
- Food advisor
- Nurse
- Apache pilot
- Linguist
- Logistics officer
- Machinist mate
- Aviator
- Military intelligence
- Electronics
- Division officer
- Operations planning
- Healthcare administration

- Corpsman
- Recognizance platoon leader
- Space and nuclear weapons
- Counter rocket artillery mortar system install lead
- Food service noncommissioned officer
- Military police
- Battery commander
- Fireman
- Networking and computer server security
- Blackhawk pilot
- Information security officer
- Armament and avionics technician
- Fighter operations
- Executive staff
- Apache electrician
- Yeoman
- Administrative professional

Their job positions in their respective companies included the following:

- Corporate Medical Director
- Deputy Program Director
- Technical Services Director
- Customer Relations
- Director of Cyber Security Strategy
- Electronic Data Interchange Specialist
- General Manager
- Head Supervising Manager
- Parts Equipment Manager
- Planning Engineer Analyst
- Director of Organizational Development
- Clinical Operations Manager
- Global Integrative Supply Chain Strategy Manager
- Account Manager
- Systems Program Director for a Space Ground System

- Tax Consultant
- Paralegal
- Supply Management
- Facilities and Building Manager
- Intelligence Community Expert
- Multidiscipline Engineer
- Program Manager
- Cyber Security Expert
- Chief Operating Officer
- Senior Manager in Performance Improvement Analyst
- Project Manager
- Mission Assurance Manager
- Talent Acquisition
- Parts Equipment Manager
- District Manager
- Head Supervising Manager of Staff
- Market Manager
- Business Development Program Manager
- Information Assurance Engineer
- Executive in charge of Veteran Hiring Programs
- Business Development Director

Although the Veterans in the sample are not representative of those in the general population as described above, this sample provides us, as intended, with Veterans who have years of expertise in the development of Veterans' initiatives as well as experience in addressing military and Veteran mental health issues. It also provides us with Veterans who have experienced their own mental health issues and can describe how they addressed these issues in their own lives, including the resources that proved helpful and those that did not.

Findings

PTSD and Mental Health Issues in the Workplace

Veterans' Personal Experiences with Posttraumatic Stress

Each of the 38 Veterans in this sample were asked about their perspectives on posttraumatic stress and its impact on Veterans in the workplace. Nine of the 38 Veterans (7

men and 2 women) or 24% reported personal experiences with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Two had participated in their company's recruitment and transition program for wounded warriors; the rest were hired through conventional means. One Veteran recounted his experience with PTSD symptoms in a remarkably responsive office environment:

"As far as my current employees, I'm the only one with any recent true experience. My immediate staff here—my salaried managers—are aware. About a year ago I was diagnosed with PTSD and I informed my boss and let her know that I was entering a 12-week program. Once a week I would go for two hours to different sessions. She was fully supportive of that. I still remember her words—that she was proud of me for coming forward and asking for help when I needed it. Things were where they were—very super supportive from my boss and super supportive from my immediate staff. They knew that every Tuesday morning I was gone for two hours. I was at an appointment and that was it. My boss said, "That's great. Do what you need to do to take care of yourself. Let me know if you need anything." ….I went straight to the VA. I set an appointment with my VA provider and let them know what was going on in my life. The VA is my primary care manager and the issues that I was having, all the knowledge that I've gotten so far or anything I've ever heard about PTSD, I fit the symptoms and criteria almost to a T."

This Veteran's supervisor described how she understands her own and her company's approach to addressing PTSD:

"I would say that we deal with it head-on. We understand that it's OK. So often people will look at situations and think, "Oh, special needs people!" They're scared of them because they don't know what to do. They don't know how to react around special needs folks because they're different…We have had a manager who has been very honest with me and very honest with his team and said, "This is what you look for." I think it takes a very brave person to do that. I think we can learn from that. If someone has posttraumatic stress, this is what we look for and understand. I'm not saying this is a disability—I don't know how we phrase what this is, but just as we do with anything else that we find on a daily basis, it's that we aren't all made out of the same cloth. We don't all have the same experiences. If we see something, then we need to address it immediately. If it's something that you're uncomfortable with and you don't know how to handle, raise your hand. Come to us; talk to us. Let us help and figure out where we need to go next. We don't want anyone to be in fear, because we do hire folks with pretty severe disabilities and then we hire folks with

disabilities that we don't know that they have. I think it's just getting that broad understanding of if you see something you're uncomfortable with, then let's talk about it and talk about it immediately. Don't let it just fester."

Another Veteran described how his symptoms emerged while he was still in the military:

"My transition has been somewhat unique in that I wasn't planning on getting out of the military. Part of the problem was that I got picked up for driving under the influence. They don't look too kindly on that and the leadership where I was stationed wanted me gone. There was no support for me; nobody realized the issues I was going through. I wasn't sleeping right, I was doing too much, and that was also associated with the fact that I was having trouble dealing with things. Two months after I got back from Iraq, I transitioned my company command. So I left on a Friday and was working in a civilian job by Thursday. So it all happened in less than a week. I had no time off. It was very crazy. I just went right into it and never got significant time off. So I got out of the Army. I chose to get out; they didn't force me out. It is a little bit difficult for me—the other thing that goes into it is folks like me who are combat arms officers have a certain bravado, a certain, "Hey, I'm untouchable." And if anything is wrong, it's a sign of weakness. So I had a lot of that going on as well. But for me it's been a matter of time in seeing and understanding that the feelings I had and issues I had were normal and not unique."

A Veteran of the Vietnam War described an experience at a former job that caused him to recognize his posttraumatic stress for the first time:

"A coworker was just messing around with me. She came up and grabbed my necktie and started pulling me down. Without even realizing it, I reached my hand up and had a pressure point on her wrist and was literally bringing her to her knees in extreme pain. It was a reaction, an instinct, and as she was coming down I could see the pain and tears rolling in her eyes because it was hurting her so much. I realized, oh shit, I didn't mean to do that. I let go and then tried to explain. I had to sit there for five minutes trying to explain to her that that was just an instinctive reaction on my part. I did not mean that and please don't take it wrong. I told it to my manager and was very upfront about the whole thing. It was a situation where I reacted instinctively… I had to dig out books at the library to find out how to retrain myself—basically, de-train myself. It cost me my first marriage because I wasn't aware of it. It took two years after my divorce to realize that this is what I was doing.

That's what it took for me. I wish I had had that opportunity earlier."

One of the female Veterans shared:

"I am a PTSD sufferer and my company is pretty good with that. They don't ask you, of course, but if you do bring it up, they try and find you positions where you don't have to travel. Everyone here knows not to come up behind me or tap me on the back. Loud noises kind of freak me out. They tend to know (because you have a lot of military people here) that there are certain things you need to be careful of if you're going to have loud noises. You need to let everyone know before you do it because someone can get really hurt or it can affect someone in a negative way."

Another female Veteran explained:

"I do suffer from PTSD, so that is a topic that is near and dear to me. There are signs when you're having a PTSD episode. You may become more detached to things because that 'video,' so to speak, is being played over and over in your head. Even though you know it's not real and you're trying to function through it, there are elements where you just can't get comfortable in your own skin."

A male Veteran described how he managed his symptoms:

"I do have PTSD. I haven't had any really issues, but I've learned to cope with it. I recognize my warning signs. Particularly it's when I'm under a great amount of stress, I'll know the signs and I'll stop and I'll take a break. It's hard for me to explain, but I can feel it coming on physically, so I know how to just step away. I could be in a stressful situation—like I'm trying to meet a deadline or something like that. I take a couple minutes, break away, take a deep breath, have a soda, come back and I'm good to go. I don't have any severe outbursts or anything like that."

Another explained:

"I don't have full on PTSD and I've only met one guy in the company who I think does. There are so many different flavors of PTSD. I don't even remember what they said I have, but it's some variant that is not really a big issue—it is effectually claustrophobia. But it doesn't manifest itself in any sort of way that's negative in a business environment, so it's not a threat or a risk."

Each of the Veterans who reported having a history of PTSD also indicated that they had learned, over time, to successfully manage their symptoms. All but two were in management positions. Other Veterans in the sample spoke eloquently of the posttraumatic stress experienced by others. One Veteran, a developer of a large and highly regarded Veterans' initiative, stated:

> "You will never hear me say *posttraumatic stress disorder* because I'm adamant that posttraumatic stress is not a disorder. It is a normal reaction to the kind of horror and events that people go through in their life. In the case of warriors, we can go through it multiple times. When you realize that we are now in our eleventh year at war and we have warriors in the last eleven years who have been in constant combat five and six of those years, you know that they are impacted…I tell people, "You never complete the rehabilitation process—it's a lifelong thing." Your rehabilitation is an ongoing process."

Within each of the companies studied, Veterans who had learned to manage their own PTSD symptoms sometimes mentored or counseled—either formally or informally— other Veterans who were dealing with similar issues.

Differing Perceptions of PTSD and its Prevalence at Fortune 500 Companies

However, there were other Veterans we interviewed that did not see posttraumatic stress as an important issue for their companies or among the Veterans who were employed there. One Veteran who worked on an initiative to bring Veterans into the workforce stated:

> "I have not seen where posttraumatic stress has been an issue in any regard, and of course, we are almost 150,000 people, so I obviously don't know every Veteran in the company. But the military folks I've been around, I have not seen that as an issue. When I was on the military side, did I see people who had some of those issues? Yes, I did, so I have a very clear understanding and concern about that. In the workplace it has not shown up as much of an issue. You don't hear people talking about it, but in the workplace it's more, "Here's your work," and you are expected to perform and you do. Here you are not quite as close to individuals as you are in the military, so posttraumatic stress may not be as obvious and perceivable because people don't have

any reason to show that they may be having as issues on their personal side; whereas, in the military you tend to know. The bottom line for any sort of statistic on PTSD is not a concern, it's not brought up in discussion, and I've been in meetings where in hiring decisions on individuals it has never come up as a question on any Veteran."

"My general view would be, first of all, you are hiring person for a position to get a job done and you should have expectations they would perform, and a Veteran is no different from anyone else in that regard. Whether or not that individual may have PTSD or may not have PTSD, as a general statement I would say to HR people I think in the greater scheme of things the Veterans group doesn't have a significantly greater amount of that type of an issue than what the civilian populous does, as far as having stress related issues. Whether it's marital, financial or whatever it is, it can, in fact, influence their performance. And in every instance, the expectation is people will perform, and then we'll try to work with them around their issues. PTSD is no different than that and I view it as no more commonplace than that. We, really, in my view, should discount that, not because it doesn't exist, but because you need to handle it just like you handle every other issue that comes up. You expect your people to perform and you should expect the Veteran to perform and not bring issues to work. You don't make allowances for that just as you don't make allowances for marital and financial along the way. You may make some allowance for it in trying to help people along the way, but in the end they've got to perform. So to me they need to be neutral on the subject and not be looking at a Veteran as this person that may be damaged goods arriving. They need to be looking at him as a valued contributor, and if they've got PTSD related issues, they've got to work that out because they've got to perform for you."

His concern that too much of a focus on PTSD issues may cause hiring supervisors to look at Veteran job applicants as "damaged goods" was echoed by a number of the participants we interviewed. An EAP director stated, "I'm sure there is unease out there in the real world when someone says I am a returning Vet. That perception of the Veteran and PTSD is going to be hard to dissociate." A Veteran who led a Veteran recruitment initiative described his discomfort during a meeting for employers that focused on PTSD and traumatic brain injury (TBI) issues. He explained:

"They had a speaker that came and they talked real heavy about PTSD and TBI. Some of the employers you could see kind of looked around the table, like, "Wait a minute, what did we get ourselves into?" Our vice president who sponsored our affinity group was with us and he kind of winked back at me and said "They're going

a little hard on this—are they going to make people not want to hire Veterans?" I
said, "Yeah, I question why they are even bringing this up before they send all these
people out there to go hire Veterans." It was really like, "Hey, these are great people
to look at, but they are damaged." The person that was there from HR with us, she
approached me afterwards and said "is it really that bad?" And I said, "The people I
know and have run into through the outside military organizations I'm doing stuff
with—no, I've not seen it that bad." Granted there's an issue out there–I know some
folks that are really struggling with it–but not to the extent that they presented
there. And inside my company, I've never heard anybody express that they've had
issues with anybody working for them, or anybody that they were looking at hiring,
or anything like that."

An outside consultant for one of the companies and an expert on Veterans' transition
issues discussed the tension in corporations created by the decision to either highlight the
scope of posttraumatic stress or minimize it:

"There's a lot of fear about posttraumatic stress, a lot of misinformation, and I think
there are competing agendas that result in mixed messaging. For example, some
organizations communicate broadly about it. Their goals are noble and are furthered
by highlighting the scope of the problem, so it makes PTS seem scary. Other
organizations are more incented to minimize the problem, and so, it is hard for
anyone to get a handle on just how big it is. What I fear is ultimately minimizing it
too much so that people aren't afraid. So when I talk to employers, they don't want
to go down the road of understanding and addressing the issue. I don't want to paint a
rosier picture than it is, but I don't want to scare them, either, and I want them to
have the facts and have a chance to express what they are worried about. Mostly, the
concern is there's a chance for violent outbursts and propensity towards violence. A
large part of what I would do is just educate them on PTS, that it occurs on a
spectrum, and it is a normal response to abnormal conditions or situations. Probably,
if you have an organization of any size, it's already there and people struggle with it,
whether you know it or not, and whether they know it or not."

The importance of understanding that posttraumatic stress occurs on a continuum
was echoed by others. An EAP director stated:

"PTS can be as minor as a problem sleeping at night, all the way to, "I can't go into
the movie with my 11 year old daughter." By the way, the guy who couldn't go into
the movie with his 11 year old, by the end of our program he was going to the

movies. There are ways of dealing with PTS that are empowering for a Veteran once he understands that this is what I need to do to get to where I'm going. They can fix themselves if given the opportunity, the guidance, and the coaching to get there. It's important that people understand that PTS can be as mild as not being able to sleep at night upon occasion, and that there is a difference. These guys have to fight a perception that everybody who's labeled with PTSD is going to go off and kill people or is masochistic or sadistic."

Perceptions regarding the prevalence and impact of PTSD in Veteran employees varied widely among interview participants. Those who were involved in Veteran recruitment initiatives tended to downplay issues related to PTSD in order to counteract negative stereotypes and misinformation. Alternatively, those who were involved in Veteran transition initiatives, mentoring programs, and clinical programs, including EAP services, focused on the value of ongoing open dialogues about PTSD issues, the importance of educating supervisors, co-workers, and executive decision makers regarding the nature of PTSD, and the benefits of creating a supportive environment in the workplace for addressing the needs of transitioning Veterans, including PTSD issues.

The Need for Educating Supervisors about Posttraumatic Stress

The majority of participants we interviewed stressed the need for educating supervisors about the experience of posttraumatic stress, its signs, and how to help those employees struggling PTS symptoms get the resources they need.

A corporate executive explained:

"Something that we're now starting to explore is what type of additional training can we provide to hiring managers or employees on the whole to educate them on what's true and what's false when it comes to PTSD. A lot of what we hear is from the news or the media, so a lot of managers are walking around feeling like, "Oh my God, is this person going to have an episode and go off while they're in here, while they're in the office. I don't want to set them off and I don't want them to explode or whatever the case may be." What I've learned is that anyone can suffer from PTSD, so I think just creating awareness about what it is and what it is not is going to be really helpful. Once I realized that anyone can have PTSD if they've been through a traumatic experience, it opened up my mind. And then talking to them more about the fact that often any variety of triggers could bring on some type of episode, but not every

episode is going to be the same. Not every person is going to go off, so to speak. Also, trying to educate supervisors about how to recognize red flags, changes in behavior or performance, so that you can potentially head off situations before they occur."

A Veteran suggested:

"I think it would help just to train mid-tier managers like me on identifying or noticing these types of behaviors and understanding what people may be going through. It goes back to having that genuine concern for your employee. The employees aren't just workers and replaceable. We need to work with them as human beings. They may have problems right now and we need to learn what we can do to help them."

Another Veteran said:

"An education program will have to be developed, whether it's through companies inviting spokesmen from Veteran employment groups or through Veterans from One Stop Centers helping to coach and counsel companies. The companies, however, have to be willing to ask their questions without being afraid of sounding like they are anti-military."

The expert on Veteran's transition issues mentioned above also discussed the importance of creating a safe environment during training sessions so that difficult issues can be addressed. She explained, "I think it's important to create a forum for people to air their less politically correct opinions, views, fears about it, but we should know how to do that." And a Veteran who is chairperson of a Veterans' initiative at her company recommended a YouTube-based public service campaign designed to educate managers on a broad scale:

"It's extremely important to come up with ways of getting companies to know—and I put "know" in quotes–that Veteran, that wounded warrior, that individual suffering PTSD. You will not be able to do it with each and every company, but if you can find enough representative candidates, you could come up with an education campaign with a public service perspective. This is vital for managers who have had no experience in hiring a Veteran and do not know anyone who is wounded and has challenges—especially in the TBI arena. They may be in that 'that's too hard for me' stage because they don't know what it means. If managers can meet those people, even virtually through YouTube—there are some amazing people out there that are

just wonderful spokesmen. Then I think you will have managers saying, "How do I get someone like that in my organization? I need them because of the positives they bring and the creative ways they face their physical or mental challenges." Somehow you have to figure out how to create a way for managers to get to know them. If you ever do that—boom!—you guys are home free. They will be knocking your doors down."

Interview participants stated that some of the best spokespersons for understanding PTS issues were Veteran employees who had learned how to manage their own PTSD symptoms as well as other service-related injuries. Interview participants explained that for employers who are interested in hiring Veterans for the first time, but still hesitant, such speakers can dismantle employers' stereotypes and misconceptions with their competence, practical recommendations, and professionalism in addressing these issues.

Employee Assistance Programs

Perception and Use of EAP Services

Of the 63 corporate employees interviewed, only 4 reported using EAP services. This number is in keeping with the EAP industry's utilization statistics. The national average utilization rate across all business and industry hovers around 4.5%. Of the 4 employees who had used EAP services, 3 were Veterans. The 1 non-Veteran sought services related to her role as a caregiver. Each of the employees was self-referred. At each of the six companies, employees can access EAP services either by phone or through the EAP's Web site. One Veteran described his experience:

"The company has an EAP where you can speak to a counselor and they will work on your case. They offered me three office visits to the psychiatrist that was paid for on behalf of the company. After that I was able to get a discount moving forward. I think they have the tools to help a Veteran dealing with PTSD. Even though PTSD is a very sore subject and a lot of people don't want to talk about it. It's a matter of you knowing that the resource is there for you and it's up to you to act on that. I would say that PTSD is something that you have to diagnose yourself. It may not be diagnosed by the DVA, but if you have an alcohol problem or a stress problem, if you have a gambling problem, or if you have any kind of problem, you need to diagnose it

yourself first to take care of your needs. Once I did that, I found the EAP program to be effective."

He accessed the EAP services through their Web site:

"Basically, the EAP site looked like Web MD. You look under the treatment you are looking for, whether it is counseling or referral, or seeking legal advice, whether you are going through a divorce or you need a financial advisor. Then you set up an appointment with a professional. In my case it was speaking to a doctor about something I was going through. It wasn't any different than if you were to reach out independently to a psychiatrist. The first day is really a meet and greet: 'What's on your mind? What's bothering you? What do you do?' Then you come in for subsequent counseling sessions, until you feel that whatever you are going through is diagnosed. Whether you decide to set up monthly meetings is all on you. I chose the counseling and after a number visits I thought I was in a better state."

A Veteran who was also a supervisor accessed EAP services for his personal issues as well as for advice and supervision in his work with Veterans in transition. He told us:

"I use the EAP myself quite often when I'm coaching, counseling, trying to guide a subordinate or an employee. I've experienced all kinds of trauma and stress and strife in my life challenges and I don't mind using myself as an example. I don't worry about whether it's going to affect my job or retention because I've been able to sell myself to my bosses through my performance, but there are a lot of people who are afraid to admit that they have ever used any of that kind of help, unless that supervisor already knows they've done it."

A third Veteran had not used EAP services at his present company, but at previous ones:

"I've tried using EAPs a couple of times in other companies--I was going through a divorce and dealing with PTS symptoms. What I have found is that EAPs have absolutely no clue, as far as what to do. You have to talk to them on the phone—you are talking to another voice—and you don't know who the heck they are. You hear: 'This is Florence, Employee Assistance, how can I help you? What is your employee number?' And you feel like, what do they really care? I got more help from my

minister than going to see a psychiatrist. I have used EAPs two or three times and each time it was like I'm not going to use them again. They have no clue."

Some of the Veterans who had not used EAP services stated that a counselor would not be of use to them if they did not have a personal understanding of military experience. One of these Veterans recounted stories he had heard from other Veterans who had used his company's EAP:

"I have known a couple of people who've used it and thought it was beneficial. And I've known a couple of them who found it not to be beneficial. They said their counselors could never answer their questions. They kept referring them to this Web site or that Web site. The counselors are great listeners, but most of them can't really answer questions. One person told me that he spilled his guts out and, basically, when the conversation ended, he felt like he was a burden. The counselor said, 'Yeah, I understand, but this is the Web site you need to go to.' So it was of a waste of his time. When the word gets out that, yeah, they've got an EAP, but it's not really what it is set up to be, that kind of thinking becomes contagious."

Many who viewed EAP services positively linked the low utilization rates to the stigma attached to seeking help for personal issues:

"Unfortunately, too many people still today, both military and former military, are hesitant about identifying a shortcoming that they need help with. That is one of those stigmas that we still have to overcome. Just like stigma worries about PTSD, we've got to deal with the stigma of asking for help and how it can negatively impact you in your employment. It's only the most desperate that I have seen that will actually come forward and allow you to try to help them by referring them into any of the help programs."

However, one EAP director reported that he is seeing a change:

"What I've noticed over 15 years is the stigma surrounding utilizing these services has really gone way down. I don't know that I have a good explanation for it, but I know that as time has progressed, as life has gotten more complicated in general for people, there is a lot less reluctance to utilize these services. There's no magic bullet for it other than just making sure that the message continues to get publicized and people go and use it and they talk to their coworkers and say 'I went and saw this

person and it was a good experience. They gave me a lot of help and my information was kept confidential.' Over time you just build momentum."

All of the interview participants who had used EAP services at the companies in the study reported having positive experiences. Those who described negative experiences either described EAP experiences from prior jobs or recounted information that other employees had shared with them. One Veteran reported that he felt uncomfortable sharing with a stranger by phone the personal information required to schedule an appointment. Another reported that he had heard from Veterans who had difficulties obtaining answers from EAP counselors who referred them, instead, to Web sites.

Marketing of EAP Services

One supervisor was impressed with how her company had promoted the EAP as a resource:

"When I got hired three years ago, I could not believe the amount of information that I received before my start date. They do the best job of communicating everything that is available. It came in a big UPS box, believe it or not. It was extremely well done. The information is also on our company Web site; it's advertised pretty heavily for the employees. I used EAP services myself, but only for the caregiver portion of the employee assistance program. I found it to be a great experience. They were very helpful."

Supervisor Training Needs

However, a number of interviewees felt that their companies did not do enough to train supervisors about EAP services. One supervisor (a Veteran) told us:

"Employees are exposed to EAP services routinely through their orientation programs. Afterwards, it is not focused on or offered except when people are in their desperate throws of, for example, habitually being late for work or getting called out because of something going on in their life and they need some help. But unless there's a competently educated supervisor to know there's something causing it, then it's just treated as a dereliction of an employee's duties. So supervisory chains need to

be better educated about both the programs that are available and that it is not detrimental to an individual's job or career if they ask for the help."

EAP Counselor Training Needs

A director of a counseling program for active duty military discussed the importance of training EAP counselors to work with Veteran populations:

"You've got to make sure that your people that are delivering the service know what they are doing and doing a good job of it. When the EAP understands what their clients' needs are and knows what they are doing, it works well. But I'm not going to refer somebody to someone just because they are an EAP. I'm going to refer somebody to someone that I have either trained or have validated that they know what they are doing in working with Veterans."

An EAP director described their approach to fielding calls for assistance:

"You need advocates and you need to have people well trained enough that they don't say 'Let me transfer you here or let me transfer you there.' We train staff so they don't just give someone a phone number. They are there for a warm transfer to get callers to the right locations. Sometimes people call and they actually need their eye benefits or their medical benefits. We've said for years, 'You're lucky you got me because I'm going to help you.' And even if they have the wrong number we help people who don't even have coverage with us. I don't want to mislead and say everything is always flawless, but that is the overall philosophy and I'm very strict about it. I don't want to hear that we just sent someone somewhere else. We've all been a victim of calling call centers and getting stuck in a loop. We do not want to be a part of that problem."

This EAP director suggested a demonstration project:

"I would recommend a pilot where you have counselors that are trained, not just trained by us, but trained by the required military culture training, making sure that they understand thoroughly the resources that are out there. Especially with the VA, there are resources the VA really wants to steer people towards. If we were involved, we would take our lead from the VA. They are the experts. I would build a

program that was very access friendly and flexible. I would have an entry point that was easy for all ages. I would have a dedicated counseling team, who were trained to specialize in this type of an account, so that we would be picking the crème de la crème. They would have certain requirements with their background, resumes, and experience."

She explained further:

"Our company currently has ways to specify the providers who have experience working with military culture in general. We would want to make sure that they have gone through a certain number of hours on military culture. We would want them to have gone through HIPAA, through privacy, through certain security levels that they have through the VA, and that the military population is one of their specialties. And this could be done as a network search. I think that is a very doable type thing."

All of the interview participants who were either directors of counseling programs or providers in those programs—whether medical, clinical, or supportive—discussed the importance of EAP counselors either having a military background or being trained to fully understand military perspectives and culture. They stressed that many Veterans simply do not feel comfortable sharing their experiences with individuals who lack a comprehensive military frame of reference.

Veterans' Needs and Concerns

Transitioning from a Military to a Corporate Culture

The issues of concern that Veterans discussed most frequently and at greatest length were the difficulties they faced transitioning from a military culture to a corporate culture. One Veteran described it this way:

"The military and civilian worlds are both structured, even though one would think in the civilian world it's less structured. With the military you know what you are going to wear every day. You know what time you need to be at work. You know how much time you are going to take to be on the job, and if there is a mission critical thing, you do as many hours as you have to in getting the job done. You

understand what everybody's position is in the military because their rank is on their sleeve or their collar, so there's no question as to what level a sergeant is versus a lieutenant versus a general. Everybody knows who's who. That makes things easy as far as how do I deal this person and how do I deal with that person. Obviously, leadership is earned, respect is earned, but within the military, I don't care if you like the general or you don't like him, you respect the rank. You are not going to go up to a general and say 'Sir, I really think your policies are stupid and I'm not doing them,' unless you want to end up in jail. It's very clear cut. And then, within the civilian world, there are all sorts of unwritten rules. You may have flexible time, but we *expect* you to be here at a certain time and we *expect* you to stay here until that time, and we might *expect* you to stay an extra hour in the course of regular business, whether it's mission critical or not. There are all sorts of unwritten rules that come to be very real in the civilian world, but they are not written down. I can't go read them on a sign or a posting; whereas, on a military base, if there's a rule, it's written down somewhere and you can go read it."

Another Veteran explained:

"At first you have to learn a whole new vocabulary. You have to learn that, depending on where you go and what you do, there may not be the same command and control structure that you are accustomed to having when you were wearing a uniform. When you wear a uniform, you have the person you work for, that is your boss, but there are others that you have a responsibility to support, collaborate and team with, just like when we fight a war. I think what I was finding in the civilian sector is that it's not as tightly woven as maybe what I would prefer. It's not as clear cut as to roles and responsibilities. There is what I consider a duplication of effort. There are a few situations where I've seen immediately that you should have pulled someone aside and said I know you can do better than this and you did not deliver your A-game on this particular task. The other piece is that military people have a tendency to say, "Okay, let's just do it until the job's done." I can tell that there's a difference in the work ethic. I think it comes down to, sometimes, differences in core values."

Another Veteran discussed some of the differences between military and corporate cultures and described how he changed the manner in which he spoke to co-workers in order to become a more effective leader:

"In civilian industry, military people can be intimidating if their manner is interpreted

as talking down to people. Military people have to learn how to communicate better so that the information they are trying to get across is received in a friendlier manner. There is an assumption that military guys coming into the commercial world are not very flexible, are narrow-minded, and that they bark a lot at people, issue orders, and don't know how to take orders. In the military world you learn, as you first walk through the door, that you are talked down to by senior people. And in some cases you are verbally abused, although that is not generally accepted anymore. Whereas, when I came in it was normal. You can't do that in the corporate world. You really have to watch how you talk to people. If you are used to talking objectively in an active voice, you need to learn how to soften your approach. Otherwise you will be automatically stereotyped. People will say, "He's a typical military guy—it's his way or the highway." It's been a tough lesson for me. As you learn these things, you grow to appreciate them, and I can assure you I would have been a much better leader in the military if I had the skills that I've learned in the commercial world, believe it or not, because you learn when to be hard and you learn when to be softer."

A female Veteran with PTSD described the differences she experienced between military and corporate cultures and the feelings of loss such a transition can entail:

"The military needs to do a better job preparing Veterans to exit the military world back into civilian life. Employers that hire Veterans also need to do a better job about having resources for Veterans because not all wounds are physical and so many Veterans come home with emotional scars as well as those that come home with PTSD. When I first came home and after securing a job, I had a hard time adjusting from the military way of doing things to the civilian way of doing things and understanding the dynamics of how that works. In the military, A leads to B leads to C leads to D, and there aren't exceptions necessarily, but in the civilian world it doesn't operate like that. A could lead to B, but sometimes it can loop all the way back around to K, and then double back, touch A, and then go back to C. It's hard for Veterans to make that adjustment. If you have issues with connectivity due to physical or emotional wounds, sometimes when you are at work, you have those moments. Sometimes what happens is there really is no alternative other than calling the EAP or going to the VA if you just want to talk to somebody.

Those things, which some people see as trivial or minor are extremely important to someone who wore a uniform all their life. It's extremely hard to make the change from wearing a uniform and a 'Yes, sir—no, sir' kind of environment to a 'you

gonna call me Bob—you gonna call me Michelle' environment. Honestly, when you first come out of the military, you really don't know what your first name is anymore. That's an adjustment, too, just being called by your first and not your last name and how the dynamics of the office work. And to a degree you are disassociated because you come from a different world than what your co-workers are used to. They don't know how to deal with you and you don't know how to relate to them. So that Veteran is kind of alone, and there's no worse feeling than feeling alone, when you are used to camaraderie and brotherhood-sisterhood in the military. You get somewhere and you feel utterly alone and no one understands what you are going through and no one is concerned enough to worry about what you are going through."

A counselor who works with service members who are transitioning to civilian life described his role in the process:

"Part of my job is to help them understand that their role in the corporate world is no longer what it was before. I help service members understand that when they are working in a corporate environment—maybe for the first time in their lives—its structure doesn't operate by a military chain of command. And the people that work there don't have a set of laws like the military has with its manuals. And they don't have to operate within that set of laws or else face prison time. In the Army, if a married soldier has an affair and it becomes evident and in the open, he can go to jail. Some Veterans have a framework that they've lived in since they were 18 years old and now they are 46 and retired. They go into a corporate environment and have tremendous skills to offer, but they can't deal with the chaos of the corporate life. So we've got to kind of reprogram people. They need to understand that that was their life before, this is their life now, and they need to learn a new way. You have to deprogram a lifetime of learning that this is the way the world should work, and now you are out of the military and it doesn't work that way anymore."

Translating Military Experience to the Corporate World

The second most widely discussed topic of concern among the Veterans was the difficulty they face in translating their military skills and experience into language corporations can understand.

One Veteran summed up the problem:

"Our government and our military are filled with terminology and acronyms that have no place on the street because nobody understands it. That is part of the communication you have within the military. But taking that information and transforming it into something that's usable in a street version resume is not easy. Sure, we get classes on how to write a resume when we get out, but how do we break that terminology down so that person looking at that resume truly understands what it means? In my industry alone, managers are hired based on their resumes and based on their ability to verbally communicate the skills and talents they have. If you want to get manager's job, you have to be able to verbalize what you've done in the past. You've got to have a resume that hits the key points of the position they want to full. They are two different languages."

A number of Veterans discussed the frustration they felt at leaving the military with the necessary skills to perform a job, but not the certification necessary to obtain the job in the civilian world. One Veteran explained:

"When a military unit moves out, its support services include everything that a small city might have. There are people who do everything, from cooks to mortuary affairs. Now a lot of times they really don't have the certifications that allow them to achieve licensure or certification. As I understand it, our medical technicians in the military may not be able to come out and be Emergency Medical Technicians in their communities. And yet they've done everything from soup to nuts."

Some were frustrated by the lack of a clear path for advancement. Others discussed their disappointment in not achieving the levels of leadership and responsibility they had enjoyed while in the military. One Veteran described his experience:

"I think you are given a lot more responsibility and a lot more authority a lot earlier in your career in the military than you are on the civilian side. I was 22 years old and I was already, as a buck sergeant, a squad leader with 12-15 people under me, and later, a flight leader with 40 or 50. On the other hand, when you come to the civilian world, if you supervise a couple of people that's a big deal. That is a hard transition to make. I've been in the corporate world now for 23 years, so it's a big change. I think the most I've ever supervised is seven, and even now today, I don't have any direct reports, but I've had as many as seven, while in the service, even at a young age at

one time I had 40. That's a skill I think does not translate well from military to civilian life. That skill never gets drawn over as much as it could."

A number of Veterans served as informal mentors to others who are dealing with these hurtles. One Veteran explained:

"I try to be a bit of a mentor for some people and attempt to get their names around to places within the company. I think that is very valuable and you need to have a few people who have an ability to be that mentor within the company to create opportunity. Companies can have systematic ways of trying to bring on Veterans. But you also need mentors who understand the military experience. I think your standard HR professional often is boggled by what they think they may hear or see in a resume versus what's really in there. They have a hard time translating, even if you have taken all the acronyms out of the equation."

The Veterans we interviewed described how the transition experience can be complicated by a number of factors: physical and psychological service-related injuries, the lack of an easy way to communicate one's experience and skills, and the lack of the certification necessary for a job appropriate to one's skills. Some reported being misunderstood by co-workers due to differences in their manner and speech. Others were frustrated by the lack of written rules, a clear chain of command, and a clear path for advancement. Others described missing the sense of mission and urgency within the military that resulted from knowing that the lives of others might depend on the speed and quality of one's own work. They also spoke of missing the camaraderie and bonds fostered by working and living in close quarters and depending on each other in critical, life and death situations. Some described how losing such bonds can create feelings of painful loneliness.

Difficulties in Accessing Available Resources

Both Veterans and their supervisors reported that getting the support Veterans need during the transition period from military to civilian life is critical to both successful employment and career building. One problem faced by both Veterans and employers was the confusion and information overload caused by the deluge of available resources. Both the Veterans and management at the companies we spoke to discussed how many resources there currently are in the field and how varied their effectiveness. Veterans have a variety of

benefits available to them, as well as access to multiple job fairs, and often multiple not-for-profit organizations in their community. Companies also have access to variety of agencies, job fairs, referral sources, and consultants. Frequently, the frustration involved in navigating the various resources, and trying to determine which might be useful, caused many Veterans and some companies to simply give up. An EAP director described how her company developed some strategies in a pilot program to address this problem:

> "We developed a database of every kind of outside resource, every kind of VA resource, and every kind of government resource that could help returning Veterans. We trained our EAP staff, so that in the course of conversation when they were talking with a Veteran, they could access the best resources and the ones that were approved by the VA."

Accommodations for Physical and Psychological Injuries

Some participants discussed the need for employers to become better educated on the benefits of providing appropriate accommodations. One Veteran explained:

> "Companies have to be more flexible and understand that our contemporary world has a lot of capabilities to assist people with disabilities to be able to adapt. With regard to the ADA, too often companies will follow the regulation without understanding the purpose behind it. They don't realize how by simply adjusting some of their practices—their table heights or by providing accessible modern tools, from computers to whatever—it will enable someone like a Veteran who has lost a limb to still perform all of their duties—whether that's driving a forklift or managing accounting inventory control. Our modern world has gotten very good at being able to provide electronic or other supplementary tools to help the Veteran. A lot of businesses just don't know what's available to help them tap into the disabled Veteran pool."

A program developer described his approach to addressing the awkwardness that often arises around disability:

> "Most people don't know how to deal with a wounded soldier who came back and is missing two legs. They don't know what to say. Neither did I, so I just got the guy in my office and said I'm no expert at this, but I'd love to know how you got injured and

how you're doing. Then I talk to him about it. I say, "Is it okay that people ask you about that?" And he's like, "Yeah, I don't care if you ask. I'll tell you about it." I say, "Can I tell them it's okay to ask you because they won't know and I don't want you to feel awkward. And they sure as hell don't want to feel awkward." That reticence—it's like trying to talk to someone whose wife or husband just died—that first time. You haven't seen them yet. You know their spouse died. What are you going to say to them? It's the same feeling when you are going to talk to a wounded Veteran. Their co-workers don't know how to do it. If they can get over that first encounter, the rest of it is like a floodgate."

Another program developer described his companies approach to providing accommodations to Veterans with PTS symptoms and training to their supervisors:

"One of the main things we do to support folks who do enter the organization with PTSD is make sure that they have the accommodations they need to perform their job as soon as possible. We find that sometimes individuals with PTSD prefer to use sound-canceling headphones, or mirrors in their cubicles, so that people do not surprise them when they walk up behind them, because that's manifested to be an issue or concern from those individuals with PTSD. Those are the most frequent accommodations we make."

Numerous interviewees—counselors, human resource directors, supervisors, Veterans, and developers of Veteran initiatives—emphasized the importance of asking Veterans if there are any accommodations they might need to be comfortable in the workplace and increase their productivity. Supervisors stressed that it was important to remind Veterans that accommodations are made available for many employees in very differing situations. In addition, accommodations are not considered special treatment, but are a practical way to insure that everyone can work at his or her highest level.

Most Veterans Reported an Easy Transition

In light of the findings above, it is important to also note that approximately 70% of the Veterans interviewed reported experiencing an easy transition. With regard to each of the factors discussed that can complicate the transition experience (e.g., the differences between military and corporate cultures, translating military experience, accessing resources, and accessing appropriate accommodations for physical and psychological

injuries) most of the Veterans we interviewed reported either that they did not experience these as significant problems or that they did not experience them at all. As one seasoned Veteran put it, "Some people just walk away from the military, take off their uniform and that's it. Seriously, they had no issue with that. They go, 'OK, I'm out of here—see you later.' And they haven't had any problems." One Veteran explained:

"I would say it was rather easy for me. I had a very successful military career and because of that, I had a resume and recommendations that made it easy for me to transition and get hired. Where I didn't have the experience that my company was looking for, they were willing to train me."

Another Veteran stated:

"It was easy. My dad was also in the military for 24 years and he transitioned to civilian life fairly easily after going through World War II and Korea. I spent 32 years in the Army and got out. I was ready to get out and transitioned to this company with no issues or problems. I think most Veterans, the lion's share, would transition well into a company like mine that really applauds their experience, their maturity, their obvious leadership capabilities, their administrative capabilities. It's not an issue."

One Veteran described his transition as "great":

"At the end of my career, the last eight or nine years, I was in the intelligence field and the small computer field and all around that type of environment, so for me it was a great transition. It set me up for a good career to follow from the military. I also worked in the infrastructure field and in a lot of different areas in IT. As you know, it is one of the guiding industries these days, so it set me up very well; it helped me move into this career without missing a beat."

A Veteran who had worked as a nurse in the military said:

"The job transition was simple: a hospital is a hospital, a clinic is a clinic. And nurses are in very high demand. I found my first job post-Gulf though a head-hunter and I'd never dealt with a head-hunter before. The reason I got the job was because I was prior military. Frankly, supervision and leadership is the same regardless of where and in what environment you do it. I found that a lot of the skills that I picked up, like learning to write evaluations or learning the right words to use to make somebody's performance appraisal shine—those skills have really stood me in good

stead in the civilian world because they are not things that are taught here. Some things have been easier for me because of things that I learned, but as medical it's very easily translatable."

A number of participants spoke of the advantages in preparing for transition months or even years ahead of time. One Veteran stated:

"My personal experience of transitioning from military to commercial was very easy because I did a lot of pre-work and research prior to getting out. During my last three years in the military, I informally started to make the transition by working with the necessary military support organizations—TAP—and even started to work part time in commercial organizations just to assimilate to an environment outside of the military. So it was fairly easy for me. There were no culture shocks."

A number of participants focused their job search on companies with large defense contracts. Others learned of positions from the contractors they were working with while still in the military. One Veteran explained:

"My transition went very well. When I got ready to retire, I talked to this company and another defense contractor just to see what potential opportunities there were. Talking with my current company, they said we have an opportunity right now if you want to apply. They knew me. They knew my type of work ethic and my background, and I was able to apply and was accepted for a position. I was working with them while I was on terminal leave, so for me it went very smoothly. The people I talked with knew my background for the type of work that I did and it fit into what they were looking for."

Most of the study participants who reported having smooth transition experiences fell into one or more of the following categories:

- Often, their skills in the military translated directly to jobs in the civilian world (e.g., some were doctors, nurses, clinician, chefs, food service managers, software programmers, computer technicians, administrators, etc.).
- Some had prior careers in the civilian world or had received training or degrees before entering the military and had little difficulty transitioning back to that same career or field.

- Others were high ranking officers who transitioned to high level positions at prestigious corporations.
- Some did not necessarily miss being in the military and welcomed the change to the civilian workplace.
- Some targeted their job search to include companies that had large defense contracts with a focus on Veteran recruitment. They often found themselves working for or with other Veterans in the civilian workplace.
- Some learned of position openings with the defense contractors they were working with while still in the military. They then made a transition to a position appropriate to their experience and expertise.

Supporting the Veteran's Transition

In the following sections we will describe some of the key features and promising practices developed within these six companies to support the transition and retention of their employees who are Veterans. In compiling the descriptions of these initiatives, we noticed how directly they addressed the needs and concerns voiced by the Veterans we interviewed (and described in the sections above). The high degree of responsiveness evinced by these programs is not surprising given that they were often developed and implemented by Veterans themselves.

A Key Practice: the Mentorship Program

The key practice most often advocated by study participants for the support of Veteran employees was mentorship programs. The importance of mentoring transitioning Veterans was advocated by Veterans, supervisors, developers of Veteran initiatives, HR and EAP directors, and corporate executives. Some mentorship relationships are initiated as part of the onboarding process. Some companies created formal mentorship programs where recent Veterans are paired with Veteran staff with more experience in the civilian workplace. In other cases, managers and leaders simply take it upon themselves to perform this function informally with the Veterans they supervise, or who they have met through affinity groups or other networking within the company. Some senior Veterans even took

the time to mentor transitioning Veterans who are in the process of networking and looking for work. One human resources director described her program:

"We have formal programs where people are assigned mentors. It's part of our onboarding process for a new person. You get together with two or three people that you need to become acclimated within the company and kind of use that as a springboard to network. I probably average threefold if not fourfold what most leaders in my program do in active mentoring because I want to recharge my own batteries because that's who I am. And two, it adds great business value to what we're trying to accomplish."

A Veteran described the mentoring program within his company:

"It's hit and miss, frankly. Some people do it better than others. We've got a Marine Colonel who's a program manager and he's got eight or ten wounded warriors on his program. He has an open door with them and his senior managers know this. He sat down with his senior managers and said they've all got an open door to me because I'm one of them and we feel comfortable talking to each other."

A program developer described the mentorship program in his company:

"A formal mentorship is supervised. The mentor and mentee literally enter into a written contract. It is usually for six months and they have a third party who is like an arbitrator or guide. The mentor and mentee work closely together, yet they still report to this third party to make sure everything is going along smoothly. Are there any issues? Is there anything the company can help either one of you with? Say the Veteran has something that he needs, and the mentor has no clue where to go. That is where that third party may come in. The mentor can say, 'My mentee has this or that need or their family does, so how can we help him? What can we do? Where can I go? Who can I call?' So it's a learning process for everybody. And it is the job of the arbitrator to keep the frontline supervisor advised on the status."

Another described his own approach to mentoring others:

"A mentor is a person who's there to help them along the way, to help them see what their full potential is, and then to be a guide help them do that. It could be a person who can say 'I've been there too.' I tell these warriors I've been in this company

twelve years and I'm still confused about things. Help them as they walk through this whole process of trying to achieve and be on a career path. And then make sure you are looking to help expand opportunities for them. If they don't have their schooling, make sure they get in an educational program."

Each of the companies' mentorship programs were conducted very differently and were in various stages of development. Some were fully realized programs and others were in the early stages of development. But each mentorship program was seen as an essential element in the support and retention of employees who were Veterans.

A Key Practice: The Peer Support Program

The support and development of affinity or networking groups for Veterans was the second critical element most often advocated by Veterans, supervisors, developers of Veteran initiatives, HR and EAP directors, and corporate executives. Participants reported that creating opportunities for peer support among Veterans in the workplace was one of the most highly effective steps for a company to take in creating a corporate culture that is conducive to Veteran success. Each of the six corporations had implemented (or were in the process of implementing) a networking or affinity group for their Veteran employees, some with educational components focused on the transition experience or on professional development, some with Veteran recruitment components, and some which promoted Veteran community initiatives. A program developer and Veteran described the Veterans' group and the other network groups at his company:

"There are nine different network groups within the company and each one has a different focus, but it's to champion diversity. It's to foster an inclusive environment to get everybody's input into how best for that particular group to help the company, as well as how to develop your own career, and every group has a different strategy. For us, it's about our Veterans. We are interested in networking with our other Veterans within the group or even family members of Veterans or current military people, whether they are Guard or Reserves. Even if somebody says, 'My dad was in the military but I'm not' that's fine, too. Our goal is to provide support and guidance to both our internal people as well as the external community and we want to improve the quality of life, in other words, raise their visibility within the organization and talk about the issues that concern Veterans and their families. 'How

can one make a transition within the company? How can we help you do that? How can we develop you from a professional standpoint?' We do some training on career development and on leadership and things like that, and then we do some charity work. We're partnering with Wounded Warrior and Stories of Valor and some other organizations to do charity work. Each network group has a business plan, a strategy, so we have one. We have bylaws and we have different chairmen that head up things like membership or community outreach. We have a secretary and we have a treasurer and all those usual things. One of the goals we have is going to the military and trying to recruit military folks that are leaving the service or retiring from the service because we recognize those skills and those leadership abilities. We want to have those skill sets at our company, so one of our goals is to recruit people to come to work here. Once they are here, how can we develop them, how can we develop their career, their professionalism, and how can we develop their ability to move within the organization and grow and have a long, good career. We also do some remembrances on military holidays; we do a Veterans celebration, where we recognize our Veterans and the sacrifices they've made. We do some things around that, as well as going to diversity summits and diversity events to talk about, from a Veteran's perspective what some of the things we see in the business world and what are some of the areas of opportunity."

Another Veteran explained his perspective on networking groups:

"The important thing for companies to do in dealing with Veterans is to create groups of like-minded people. For me, I'm fortunate enough that I work around a lot of people who deal with the military, so they have an appreciation for it. But there are not many people who have served, and you always like being around your like kind. I have that: my boss and I are both combat Veterans. We've jumped out of a lot of airplanes and stuff like that. But other than us, there are not too many people in the program like that. So that's where I think companies can do a lot. When they hire Veterans, they should create, for lack of a better term, a support group or peer group and make sure Veterans know that those are available."

Another Veteran described the importance of simply being with other Veterans:

"The network group had a few functions where they are getting involved with Veteran organizations, clothing drives and stuff like that. There's a meeting coming up. I'm looking forward to meeting more people that speak the same language. I just ran into a gentleman who was stationed up at Ft. Bragg, and all of a sudden, we

talked for the next hour and a half and had a great time. We'd known each other now for six months and never had a conversation like we had today. That's because the military is where we grew up. We were kids, most of us, when we joined. That's where we became adults, men, call it what you will. That was our college—we became men, women, functional adults. It's something that is etched so deeply in somebody that's done it that people don't realize. They say, oh yeah, you were in the military. It carries a whole lot more weight to somebody that's done it, a little bit more than 'oh, you were in the military,' or 'oh, you got a degree–that's nice.'"

A program developer described how her networking group initially defined its identity:

"We did a survey to find out what people wanted to embrace, and for the most part, they joined because of a desire to be part of something bigger than themselves and to simply give back. They were inspired to act and serve. What we've tried to do is embrace at least a few things that allow us an opportunity to do that without trying to take on too much. With only about 200 members, if you take on too much—and it's all a volunteer thing—you almost drive people out of the organization. Between work and family and other commitments, they say 'This is just too much; I can't do the balancing act.'"

Many of the Veterans we spoke to mentioned missing the camaraderie and close bonds they experienced during their military careers. Others discussed the challenges they sometimes faced by not being understood by their non-Veteran colleagues. Many reported that they found camaraderie, guidance, and support in the peer programs and Veterans' initiatives within their own companies.

Other Promising Practices

Each of the six corporations has developed and continues to develop and refine innovative and promising practices to address the needs of their Veteran employees. The following is a summary of each of the promising practices we identified through the interviews.

A Program Addressing Transition, Job Hunt, and PTSD Needs

A number of interview participants from one of the companies discussed the unique

transition/networking/recruitment program their company has implemented for injured service members, including those with posttraumatic stress. It is a recruitment program that provides personalized assistance in helping injured Veterans identify potential career opportunities, not just within their own company, but at other companies as well. It also provides peer networking as well as career transition support to new hires, including accommodations for posttraumatic stress. A Veteran involved with the program explained:

"The way our program works is we that have nurses inside the corporation. Their mission is to work with anybody in the company with a disability, and we've got a lot of people in here with disabilities as well as this special group of warriors. Once one of these warriors is hired, the HR talent acquisition system is triggered to alert the nurse in the sector where he has accepted the position. That nurse then calls him, and she is the only person in the whole network that has any kind of detailed conversation with him about the nature of his disability. She makes sure that the hiring manager has his accommodations in place when he gets there. What we've done is turn upside down the normal recruiting process. Normally, you would wait for somebody with a disability to come to HR and ask for something. We've done it this way, because we find that wounded warriors are reluctant to ask for anything. If I'm a wounded warrior and I'm fortunate enough to get an interview and you say, "I'm going to bring you onboard," I am so excited—I didn't think this would ever be possible in my lifetime to work for a company like this with my injuries. So I'm going to be very reluctant to mention to anybody that I need anything. These warriors don't want anything—they just want a chance. When we talk to them, we explain accommodations to them in great detail and why they should consider them. We tell them, 'You're not alone. There are all kinds of people in this company that are disabled. But you, because of the nature of your injury, in order to function properly and do what it is we want you to do and be successful, you may need a little extra help.'"

"For example, a couple of things we've done right off the bat. You know how big office spaces are now. If I put you in kind of a big office space and you are working where there are cubicles, you don't have your own office where you can close the door and it can be quiet and you can focus. You are in a cubicle environment with a lot of people talking on the phone and a lot of noise in the background. But you've been blown up by an IED, so you are having a hard time focusing. The background noise is very distracting, but you need to focus. So we went out and got them Bose headsets. We have a little package we give to everybody. And there is another thing is that wounded warriors experience, and I still, by the way, do this myself (and I

haven't been in combat since 1969). I do not sit in a restaurant with my back to the door and think of how long ago that was for me. Let's say I put you in a cubicle where people could walk up behind you, and you didn't see them and didn't know who they were. So now what we do is rearrange the space so they can see. Or, if we can do it, we give them their own office space. Or if we put them in a room, we face them to the door. These are the little kinds of things that most people would never even think about."

The program includes a further element in its approach to transition support for wounded Veterans that may prove to be key. A Veteran involved with the program explained:

"When we link them up with the nurse, one of the questions she asks them is 'Who is your care manager in the VA?' Because every single disabled warrior signed up with the VA has a care manager assigned to them. Then our nurse calls that VA care manager and explains who she is and that the new hire is part of this Veterans' initiative and is coming into our company. Then she'll ask, 'How is he doing?' And they will have a conversation as professional care managers. Let's say I get hired by the company and I'm going through this transition process, which I wasn't aware of, and I'm going through this culture shock and I start having issues, I think, I have two professionals that can talk to each other."

A director of outreach involved in this initiative described his role in the process:

"I've received phone calls from psychiatrists and the VA has called me directly and said, 'Sir, Sgt. So-and-so told me to call you.' I said, 'Yes, he works for us in this sector. What's going on?' 'Well, I'm seeing things that I haven't seen before, since he went to work for you. Is there somebody I can talk to?' And there sure is—the nurse. So I connect them. I connect the professionals together and then get out of the way. In my role as Director of Outreach, I roam all over the place. Like, if I'm in San Diego, I know where all of our people are working, so I will take a day sometimes and just roam around the facilities and find them. We go to lunch or have a coffee together, or they know they can get me 24/7."

One Veteran described his experience in the program:

"They offered help with rewriting my resume. They offered help with suggesting different classes with college to continue with. They also served as kind of a mediator between me and hiring managers and HR throughout the hiring process."

Another Veteran described the type of mentorship relationship that the program fosters:

"They will sit with you and talk to you about the issues you're dealing with. I've never been through AA, but my guess it would be like having an AA counselor or something like that. They may not be a qualified psychologist, but you just have someone there you can talk to, kind of like a sponsor. Or like buddies that you can call and talk to and work out problems in the workplace. They also have qualified, certified counselors that if I have a serious problem, I can call them and talk to them about it, too. Those people also are employed by the program and by the company. It's is a big enough company they can actually do that. They will still be like a mediator. If I had a serious problem, and it's never come up with my direct chain of command or my direct bosses here at work, but if I did have a serious problem, I could go to one of those counselors and they would talk to my boss. They can relay a message with more tact than what I probably can. That is something they will do for me."

Another Veteran in the program explained:

"The program was very helpful when I got hired because there were a lot of people here who understood what I was going through because of what they went through when they first got hired on. It was easier to work here because there are a lot of prior military people and civilians here who understand what Veterans go through when they first start out in the civilian world."

One of the program developers shared that if a service member is too injured to work, the primary wage earner in the family can also receive assistance through the program. To date, 100 service members or their primary wage earners have been hired by the company and the company's retention rate since the program's inception is about 66%.

Companies Sharing Innovative Practices

The program discussed above became so successful that other corporations contacted this company to learn how it had been implemented. One of the programs developers describes how a spin off network of companies came together to share knowledge about

recruitment, transition, and retention of wounded warriors and receive mentoring on the programs they were developing:

"Our network of companies came about after other corporations started expressing an interest in starting a program similar to our transition/networking/recruitment program [discussed above]. We said, 'We will absolutely help you create your own program.' That one inquiry turned into nearly 100 companies stepping up and joining our network to say, 'We're also dedicated to hiring wounded warriors.' We meet on a bimonthly basis to share best practices, share resources, what's working, what's not working, even share talent. If we've got resumes from job fairs that we want to talk about and see who has opportunities, we do that as well. We also have an annual symposium to bring this group together and figure out how we can further our mission, which is to find employment for these severely injured service members."

"Companies hear about our transition/networking/recruitment program through a variety of ways. There are some companies that heard about the program after participating in a similar job fair with us. Others have heard about it at a conference when we've given a briefing about the program and they decided, 'I want to get onboard with that; you guys are doing great work.' Our membership is comprised of a mixture of companies in our industry and other Fortune 500 companies that are not in our industry. Then there are also companies that are members that provide resources but are not employers of wounded warriors, such as colleges and universities that have programs that can help us with education of these individuals. We have two groups, employers and resources. Together more than 100 companies comprise the network."

Employee Training on Military-Related Issues

One of the companies offers all of its employees a training program focused on military-related issues. One program developer offered a brief description of her company's approach:

"There is a three-day mandatory session that we offer. Everybody has to go through that. When you first come on into the company, no matter what your level, there is a military sensitization training that happens. A little bit about what military structure is like, what rank means, how to talk about rank, what military life is like. Make sure

that they know what an employee may experience when their spouse has been deployed--just various topics that cover that realm of things."

Military Transitioning/Onboarding

One company has hired an outside consultant, expert, and author on military transitioning to develop a curriculum for all employees based on transition issues with a strong component on posttraumatic stress. A program developer from that company explained, "We had partnered with her before. I had met her a year ago at a diversity business leadership summit and sat in on one of her training sessions for those wanting to learn more about military transitioning and the military experience. We later asked for her partnership to develop curriculum."

Course on Professional Development for Veterans

One company offers a leadership program in the civilian workplace to their Veterans' networking group. The program developer explained:

"The curriculum for the development program has a piece on military vs. civilian leadership and a piece on interviewing skills, resume writing, dealing with the various different generations in the workplace, and on the transition from the military workplace into the civilian workplace. There is a piece called 'Defining Your Career.' There is one course on military programs and benefits dealing with our members, what some of those benefits are that they may not necessarily be aware of. There is a piece on strategic networking, what exactly does leadership look like in the civilian workplace, and also, there is a piece on project management."

"One of the subheadings in the curriculum is retention. One thing that falls under retention is making sure these individuals have mentors with military experience. I think having mentors is incredibly important, from the time that they are starting as well as throughout their career. We also consistently give them opportunities related to professional development, whether that's learning about the company, whether that's providing them with the skills in terms of preparing for promotions or preparing for that next step in their career. You come out of the military, but what is it exactly that you envision for yourself and what would you like to see yourself doing? One piece is addressing the challenges individuals face once they enter into the

civilian workplace and sharing with our members what some of those resources are and some of those benefits, if you are experiencing PTS, or if you have challenges in your transition or making networking connections, or in terms of the whole team type of environment. In the curriculum there are courses that are specifically designed to support that process. We also assist them with providing that track for what is that next step in your journey, within your career? What are some of those core competencies for that next opportunity that you would like to see yourself in? In terms of those core competencies, if there's a particular area where you need to strengthen your skills, here are the resources in how you can gain more experience, how you can gain more education, training and tools in that particular area."

Military and Civilian Cultural Workplace Diversity Course

The program developer that designed the course described above also developed a second course for their Veterans' networking group; participants included both Veteran and non-Veteran group members. She explained:

"This course is designed to look at diversity from the aspect of military versus civilian and identify what exactly are the cultural similarities as well as the cultural differences. By focusing on their similarities we create an opportunity for those in the military to be able to articulate their experiences. We have both Veteran and non-Veteran members in our networking group, so we create an inclusive space. One of the questions I had posed in the first webinar was 'What does trust look like for you in military versus the civilian workplace? How exactly is that different, if it's different at all?' It was a huge eye opener to hear the responses from individuals on the call who were Veterans. In the second webinar, one of the questions that I also threw out was 'How exactly do you view teamwork and teambuilding? How are those concepts different in the civilian workplace versus the military?'"

"We had those kinds of conversations and there were several individuals on the call who would speak up and share their experiences, from being in the military, being in those life or death type situations, knowing that someone is going to be covering your back and that you are solely relying upon them. It is through those dialogues that we can bridge the military and non-military experiences and explore how they play out in the civilian workplace. These dialogues can significantly benefit the workplace and create a lot of teachable moments and valuable insights."

A Comprehensive Approach to Accommodations

A Veteran with a service-related injury described his company's exemplary approach to workplace accommodations:

"Every company may do some kind of ergonomic evaluation, but mine went above and beyond, right down to daily making sure that I wasn't doing something that was going to be detrimental to any kind of disabilities that I had. They offered any kind of modifications I need to make—physically or even mentally. They put different measures in place to make sure that I had additional outlets. I like to ask for help above and beyond what a normal employee even would. The biggest thing with any Veteran in the workplace is to not just to get their foot in the door. Once they are hired, a disabled Veteran is not going to stop being disabled. They are not going to stop having additional needs above and beyond what a normal employee has. My affinity group just makes sure that I realize that that is not forgotten and they are here to help and I do need help. Even if it's just a simple phone call, just letting me know, once a month, that 'we're just checking in, making sure everything is okay. Do you need anyone to talk to; everything good?' That is one of the biggest helps."

A Military Skills Translation Initiative

A Veteran and program developer discussed a new initiative to educate supervisors on military skills translation. He explained:

"One of the things we're working on is we have a Skills and Awareness committee and that chairman is responsible for doing exactly that, where we educate supervisors on what it means if a person's code in the military was 2484G. What does that mean? What is their skill set? What did they do? They were this rank, so they have this amount of background and training. They have these schools that they've been to. They may have some civilian education. How does that all relate to the position that you are trying to fill and how do I translate the skills of the military into the skills of the private sector? We are working on an actual database that will do that."

Military Leave Strategies

Within the six corporations, we discovered both formal and informal strategies directed to issues surrounding active duty. With regard to formal strategies, HR representatives at two of the companies described their progressive military leave policies in detail. As an example of an informal strategy, one company's affinity group developed a project that focused on supporting employees' families when an employee is deployed. They also focus on educating that employee's supervisor on military leave issues. One of the developers of the affinity group described its history and focus surrounding military leave:

> "It's been five years since the nine of us got together. There had been some other affinity groups that had been started and we got talking and said, 'We don't really have one that focuses on supporting service members, supporting employees' families when the employee is called away. There's a family member stuck with doing all the household duties now and trying to meet the bills and everything else.' We put together a package and went over and pitched the idea and they said, 'Yeah that sounds like a great idea.' Right, wrong, or different, I don't know, but I got tagged with 'Hey, why don't you run that?' and I've had it ever since. It's grown significantly and we've gotten involved in a lot of other things, but we started with the focus of 'Let's take care of the families of the employees that are called up.' We've also gotten into working with HR real heavy on making sure the benefits information is known by the employee and how that could affect them if they are called up. But we also focus on the supervisor for that employee—what they need to know, since they now have a member of the Guard or Reserve working for them, and how that might impact their workplace."

A director of human resources described the progressive policies at her company surrounding military leave:

> "We have a very well defined policy about military leave and military leave is used when someone is called up to active duty. With this state of affairs we have now, many times or most times that's for a deployment and for an extended period of time. We have a policy around that and it spells out that the employee is entitled to job protected time away from work. In addition to that, if they make more at our company than they do in the military then we pay differential pay for the duration of that deployment or that period of active duty service. It is to pay for the duration. Most of the companies we are aware of, pay for a set period of time. It could be

anywhere from a couple of months to a year. We've been doing that since the Gulf War started, since 9/11. The decision was made by our executive office. Especially at that point in time we had a lot of employees that were being called up to active duty and we, as a corporation, thought we needed to do whatever was needed to support them. We also continue benefits for the employee, if they choose to. Normally, they don't choose to because they are provided medical insurance while they are on active duty, but we provide medical insurance for any covered dependents while they are deployed."

"We also conduct military leave training before an employee's last day, so that they understand what's going to happen with their pay and with their benefits. We give them contact information for our benefit vendors, so that if they have any questions particular to benefits while they are gone that they have someone to contact directly at the vendor if they need that information. When they return from deployment, our practice is to place the employee back into the position that they held at the time they went on military leave or one of like status that is considered to be same salary grade, same salary, same benefits, within two business days of them contacting us. Sometimes they will contact us and say 'I'm going to be ready to come back next month,' and because they are entitled to take some unpaid time off before they return, determined by how long they have been on active duty. Before they leave, we ask them to contact us as soon as they are released from active duty so that we can begin planning for their return to work."

A human resources director at another company described their approach to military leave:

"I have about 400 associates in my client group and we probably have had, in the years I've been here, five or six deployments. We helped them through our leave process because of the administrative paperwork they need to go through to actually go through their leave, and their job is there for them when they return. Probably the most interaction we have with the employees is upon their return and reorienting them to their job. If you are gone for any period of time from a job, it's almost like starting over again. Processes change, systems may change, so we really need to take people back to square one and reintroduce them to their job because the job itself may have changed, too, depending on how long they were gone. Managers are really good and we work with the managers, too, to assure that they are sensitive and that they also work with the employees. Honestly, our managers are so upfront with their employees and just say we recognize that you can't go from zero to a hundred in a day. We are going to do some training and bring you back up to speed on this and

really work with you. The expectation isn't there that they are doing their job the way they did when they left, but it is more one-on-one."

One of the Veterans who experienced a deployment described his experience with military leave:

"One of the primary concerns was will my pay be affected. At the time I was renting an apartment and took on a number of expenses, with a car and so forth. It was assuring to know that my compensation wouldn't be affected. One of the issues is when Veterans do deploy the whole financial aspect changes. You may not have that luxury of being able to check your online bills, pay your bills on time, and cut a check to pay your mortgage. You want to make sure you have a steady stream of income coming in and that you can designate somebody with the power of attorney to handle that for you. You want to make sure you are financially covered so that when you come home your house isn't taken over by the bank or your car isn't in repo for missing payments."

"Being able to know that you are going to come back to a team that is going to welcome you with open arms and keep you at the same level you would have been in if you had never deployed. I don't know so much about the USERRA Act, but I know the issue is that if you were going to be promoted to be a manager or senior manager the year that you deployed that you would be guaranteed that upon return. I certainly did not have that issue because it was not my promotion year, but from what I hear from the office, that was not compromised at all, so that was also good to know. Just to know that I was able to come back in time and be encouraged me to work on, taking into account that I had been out of action for about a year—to be sure, that transaction was definitely something that made it very comforting."

Veteran Internship Programs

A program developer described two internship programs designed to train and transition interested Veterans:

"We're looking at developing two programs that would be like internship programs. It would be an opportunity to bring Veterans in and to help train them, help them transition from being military to being prepared for meaningful employment in the private sector. With some of the call centers that we operate we use temps on a

regular basis. We'll bring in temps as a way to see whether or not the individuals are good candidates for long-term hiring in that area. We've talked about, rather than bringing in temps from Kelly Services, can we establish a program where we bring in Veterans. That's for an internship program, but we also do a fellowship currently with the Navy, where the Navy sends some of its medical service corps officers to us and we will have them for three months. We help educate them on all aspects of our business. We're looking at taking that fellowship program making it more of an internship or fellowship program for Veterans. And then, because we may not have the jobs for the people that we bring through, we would help place them with other healthcare companies."

A Social Media Communications Strategy

A human resource director discussed taking his company's affinity group to the next level:

"Building the communication and social media within the network [affinity] group is critical. It's a key area to call out, social media. It opens up the network group to a much larger stratosphere. We are not only working with our internal and external partners, but we are working with a whole sea of Veterans and their family members globally around the world. Then we can provide those opportunities and have those types of discussions in a social media form, around PTSD, around the support that a military spouse can add to or interface with an affinity group. And even around the days that complement Veterans Day, like Memorial Day, when we do a big blogging session. It just keeps everyone connected globally, with our affinity group membership and its partners."

"From the support standpoint, we have a blog area where we putting topics out for discussion, so military Veterans, not only within the company but outside the company can come together in a support forum to talk about whatever issues, and PTSD could be just one of those many issues. We don't really delve in it from a counseling standpoint but more of a social, education, awareness standpoint."

Veteran-Owned Business Development

One company has begun a program to help Veteran-owned businesses, including working with their internal finance system to set up special financing for them. A program developer who is a Veteran explained:

"I now have a dedicated team, whose job it is to figure out how to serve both military consumers and their families. Veteran-owned businesses are a growing and thriving aspect of our economy. We have an entrepreneur and resident program that we started internally to start up businesses. This is not only for Veterans; it's also for women-, African American-, and Hispanic-owned businesses. We are also creating a specialized selling platform and a selling group to help figure out and meet their particular needs. In any of these spaces, with our focus on women, Hispanics, African American, and Veterans, you have to approach these with authenticity and a level of credibility."

"What we try to do is identify businesses that can be suppliers for our company. Our diversity program actually spends about three billion dollars a year with diversity suppliers—women-, minorities-, and Veteran-owned types of businesses. We also look at ways to help these businesses scale. What I mean by that is many of the Veteran-owned businesses are small in scale. For example, let's take an IT consultant firm that is a Veteran-owned business. They are very small. They may only have a one or two person shop. Our company may need something much broader in scale than what that business can provide. They've got a great model and they look like they are on the right path with some of the things they are doing, but are they just not there yet. They simply need mentoring. We tell them, 'Here's what you need to know about how to work with a corporation. Here are some things we think you should consider.' We tie an executive and an area of expertise to their operation to give them input once a month, or once every three months. We tell them, 'Here's where we are going that might align with you over time.' That Veteran-owned business is developed, molded, and shaped to go from a business of half a million dollars to a billion dollars."

"I have examples where I have worked with Veteran-owned businesses in the past where we had started with them small, with the idea that this business is okay, so let's give maybe a million dollars as part of a contract. It may be a \$50M contract, but let's give this Veteran an opportunity to get a cut of that and we may give them the first million. They may do great, come in at lower cost, they may be more efficient, and

then over time, they really come through, so let's give them five million on that contract now. So they scaled up, they came back to us and said 'We can really scale. We would like more.' We love it, so let's give them a chance. Let's give them $20M. Next thing you know, they are our provider of choice and they end up getting the whole $50M contract."

Educating Employer Groups on Veteran Recruitment

One program developer stressed the importance of educating employer groups:

"I think you can have real impact by going out and educating employer groups through chambers of commerce and the like. Ask them, 'Do you have Vets working for you? Are you committed to supporting your Vets? Do you understand what they go through or are going through and understand how to be helpful?' Appealing to people's need to help is a powerful thing because we all want to help. We just don't know how sometimes, or we lose track of the opportunity in our busy lives. But given the opportunity to do it, a lot of people will say yeah, I'd like to know more about that."

He went on to describe his approach:

"I get asked all the time to do presentations—classes at universities or wherever. Anybody who hears about what I do, they want me to come talk to them, and I love doing it. I take a Vet with me, someone who's retired or gainfully employed and has been successful at overcoming some of the challenges he faced. He'll talk about what it feels like to leave this military family that he's lived within incredible closeness for a year. And to then go back to work in a muffler shop. And have a boss that has no idea what he is going through—trying to stuff all this stuff down and not be able to. If someone lost four jobs in a row for anger outbursts and he finally gets some help and gets over it and is stably employed, he can talk about what could have been done differently by the employer. And if the employer had known what was going on, what they could have done differently. And now, how they can all do it differently."

Summary of Findings from the In-depth Interview Study

Sample Description

The study sample consisted of 43 men and 20 women from the six corporations included in the study. They ranged in age from 30 to 68; sixty nine percent were Caucasian, 25% percent were African American, and 1% were Hispanic. The sample included employees who were Veterans, developers of Veterans' initiatives, supervisors of Veterans, human resource (HR) directors, employee assistance program (EAP) directors, clinicians who worked with transitioning Veterans, corporate executives, and one outside consultant on transition issues who had been hired by one of the companies. The 38 Veterans interviewed included 30 men and 8 women. They represented the following branches of the military: Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, National Guard, and Air Force Reserve.

Veterans' Personal Experiences with Posttraumatic Stress

Each of the 38 Veterans in this sample were asked about their perspectives on posttraumatic stress and its impact on Veterans in the workplace. Nine of the 38 Veterans (7 men and 2 women) or 24% reported personal experiences with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Two had participated in their company's recruitment and transition program for wounded warriors; the rest were hired through conventional means. Each of the Veterans who reported having a history of PTSD also indicated that they had learned, over time, to successfully manage their symptoms. All but two were in management positions. Within each of the companies studied, Veterans who had learned to manage their own posttraumatic stress symptoms sometimes mentored or counseled—either formally or informally—other Veterans who were dealing with similar issues.

Differing Perceptions of PTSD and its Prevalence at Fortune 500 Companies

Perceptions regarding the prevalence and impact of Veteran employee PTSD varied widely among interview participants. Those who were involved in Veteran recruitment initiatives tended to downplay issues related to PTSD in order to counteract negative stereotypes and misinformation. Alternatively, those who were involved in Veteran transition initiatives, mentoring programs, and clinical programs, including EAP services,

focused on the value of ongoing open dialogues about PTSD issues, the importance of educating supervisors, co-workers, and executive decision makers regarding the nature of PTSD, and the benefits of creating a supportive environment in the workplace for addressing the needs of transitioning Veterans, including PTSD issues.

The Need for Educating Supervisors about Posttraumatic Stress

The majority of participants we interviewed—executives, supervisors, clinicians, EAP directors, HR directors, and Veterans—stressed the need for educating supervisors about the experience of posttraumatic stress, its signs, and how to help those employees struggling with symptoms get the resources they need. Some discussed the importance of creating a safe environment during training sessions so that participants can air their true thoughts and difficult issues can be addressed. Interview participants stated that some of the best spokespersons for understanding posttraumatic stress issues were Veteran employees who had learned how to manage their own PTSD symptoms as well as other service-related injuries. Interview participants explained that for employers who are interested in hiring Veterans for the first time, but still hesitant, such speakers can dismantle employers' stereotypes and misconceptions with their competence, practical recommendations, and professionalism in addressing these issues.

Perception and Use of EAP Services

Of the 63 corporate employees interviewed, only 4 reported using EAP services. This number is in keeping with the EAP industry's utilization statistics. The national average utilization rate across all business and industry hovers around 4.5%. Of the 4 employees who had used EAP services, 3 were Veterans. Each of the employees was self-referred. At each of the six companies, employees can access EAP services either by phone or through the EAP's Web site. Some of the Veterans who had not used EAP services stated that a counselor would not be of use to them if the counselor did not have a personal understanding of military experience. Many who viewed EAP services positively linked the low utilization rates to the stigma attached to seeking help for personal issues. Others pointed to a need to train supervisors about the available EAP services and to make sure employees know that it will not be detrimental to their careers if they seek help with personal issues.

All of the interview participants who had used EAP services at the companies in the study reported having positive experiences. Those who described negative experiences either described EAP experiences from prior jobs or recounted information that other employees had shared with them. One Veteran reported that he felt uncomfortable sharing with a stranger by phone the personal information required to schedule an appointment. Another reported that he had heard from Veterans who had difficulties obtaining answers from EAP counselors who referred them, instead, to Web sites.

EAP Counselor Training Needs

All of the interview participants who were either directors of counseling programs or providers in those programs—whether medical, clinical, or supportive—discussed the importance of EAP counselors either having a military background or being trained to fully understand military perspectives and culture. They stressed that many Veterans simply do not feel comfortable sharing their experiences with individuals who lack a comprehensive military frame of reference.

Veterans' Needs and Concerns

The issue of concern that Veterans discussed most frequently and at greatest length was the difficulty they face transitioning from a military culture to a corporate culture. The second most widely discussed issue of concern was the difficulty they face in translating their military skills and experience into language corporations can understand. The Veterans we interviewed described how the transition experience can be complicated by a number of factors: physical and psychological service-related injuries, the lack of an easy way to communicate one's experience and skills, and the lack of the certification necessary for a job appropriate to the level of one's skills. Some reported being misunderstood by co-workers due to differences in their manner, expectations, and speech. Others were frustrated by the lack of written rules, a clear chain of command, and a clear path for advancement. Others described missing the sense of mission and urgency within the military that resulted from knowing that the lives of others might depend on the speed and quality of one's own work. They also spoke of missing the camaraderie and bonds fostered by working and living in close quarters and depending on each other in critical, life and death situations. Some

described how losing such bonds can create feelings of painful loneliness.

Most Veterans Reported an Easy Transition

In light of the findings directly above, it is important to note that approximately 70% of the Veterans interviewed reported experiencing an easy transition. With regard to each of the factors discussed that can complicate the transition experience (e.g., the differences between military and corporate cultures, translating military experience, physical and psychological injuries, etc.), the majority of Veterans we interviewed reported either that they did not experience these as significant problems or that they did not experience them at all. Most of the study participants who reported having smooth transition experiences fell into one or more of the following categories:

- Often, their skills in the military translated directly to jobs in the civilian world (e.g., some were doctors, nurses, clinician, chefs, food service managers, software programmers, computer technicians, administrators, etc.).
- Some had prior careers in the civilian world or had received training or degrees before entering the military and had little difficulty transitioning back to that same career or field.
- Others were high ranking officers who transitioned to high level positions at prestigious corporations.
- Some did not necessarily miss being in the military and welcomed the change to the civilian workplace.
- Some targeted their job search to include companies that had large defense contracts with a focus on Veteran recruitment. They often found themselves working for or with other Veterans in the civilian workplace.
- Some learned of position openings with the defense contractors they were working with while still in the military. They then made a transition to a position appropriate to their experience and expertise.

Difficulties Accessing Available Resources

Both Veterans and their supervisors reported that getting the support Veterans need during the transition period from military to civilian life is critical to both successful employment and career building. One problem faced by both Veterans and employers was the confusion and information overload caused by the deluge of available resources. Both the Veterans and management at the companies we spoke to discussed how many resources there currently are in the field and how varied their effectiveness. Veterans have a variety of benefits available to them, as well as access to multiple job fairs, and often multiple not-for-profit organizations in their community. Companies also have access to variety of agencies, job fairs, referral sources, and consultants. Frequently, the frustration involved in navigating the various resources, and trying to determine which might be useful, caused many Veterans and some companies to simply give up.

Accommodations for Physical and Psychological Injuries

Some participants discussed the need for employers to become better educated on the benefits of providing appropriate accommodations. Numerous interviewees—counselors, human resource directors, supervisors, Veterans, and developers of Veteran initiatives—emphasized the importance of asking Veterans if there are any accommodations they might need to be comfortable in the workplace and increase their productivity. Supervisors stressed that it was important to remind Veterans that accommodations are made available for many employees in very differing situations. In addition, accommodations are not considered special treatment, but are a practical way to insure that everyone can work at his or her highest level.

A Key Practice: The Mentorship Program

The key practice most often discussed and advocated by study participants for the support of transitioning Veterans were mentorship programs. The importance of mentoring transitioning Veterans was advocated by Veterans, supervisors, developers of Veteran initiatives, HR and EAP directors, and corporate executives. Each of the companies' mentorship programs were conducted very differently and were in various stages of

development. Some were fully realized programs and others were in the early stages of formation. Some mentorship programs work with Veterans who are networking and looking for employment. Other mentorship relationships are initiated as part of the onboarding process. Some companies created formal mentorship programs where recent Veterans are paired with Veteran staff with more experience in the civilian workplace. In other cases, managers and supervisors simply take it upon themselves to perform this function informally with the Veterans they supervise, or with those they have met through affinity groups or other networking within the company. Some senior Veterans even take the time to mentor transitioning Veterans who are in the process of networking and looking for work. But each mentorship program was described as an essential element in the support and retention of employees who are Veterans.

A Key Practice: The Peer Support Program

The support and development of affinity or networking groups for Veterans was the second critical element most often advocated by Veterans, supervisors, developers of Veteran initiatives, HR and EAP directors and corporate executives. Participants reported that creating opportunities for peer support among Veterans in the workplace was one of the most highly effective steps for a company to take in creating a corporate culture that is conducive to Veteran success. Each of the six corporations had implemented (or were in the process of implementing) a networking or affinity group for their Veteran employees, some with educational components focused on the transition experience or on professional development, some with Veteran recruitment components, and some which promoted Veteran community initiatives. Many of the Veterans we spoke to mentioned missing the camaraderie and close bonds they experienced during their military careers. Others discussed the challenges they sometimes faced by not being understood by their non-Veteran colleagues. Many reported that they found camaraderie, guidance, and support in the peer programs and Veterans' initiatives within their own companies.

Other Promising Practices

Each of the six corporations has developed and continues to develop and refine innovative and promising practices to address the needs of their Veteran employees. The

following is a summary of each of the promising practices we identified through the interviews.

- **A program addressing transition, job hunt, and PTSD needs:** A number of interview participants from one of the companies discussed the unique transition/networking/recruitment program their company has implemented for injured service members, including those with posttraumatic stress. It is a recruitment program that provides personalized assistance in helping injured Veterans to identify potential career opportunities across numerous participating companies. It also provides peer networking as well as career transition support to new hires, including accommodations for posttraumatic stress. If a service member is too injured to work, the primary wage earner in the family can also receive assistance through the program. To date, 100 service members or their primary wage earners have been hired by the company and the company's retention rate since the program's inception is about 66%.

- **Companies sharing innovative practices:** The program discussed above became so successful that other corporations contacted this company to learn how it had been implemented. A spin-off network of companies gradually came together to share knowledge about recruitment, transition, and retention of wounded warriors. Newer members receive mentoring on the programs they are developing.

- **Employee training on military-related issues:** One of the companies offers all of its employees a three-day mandatory training program focused on military-related issues. It covers military structure, what rank means, how to talk about rank, and what military life is like. It also covers what an employee may experience when their spouse has been deployed.

- **A course for Veterans on leadership in the civilian workplace:** One of the companies offers a professional development program to their Veterans' networking group.

- **A course on military and civilian culture for both Veterans and non-Veterans:** This course looks at the similarities and differences between military and civilian cultures

- **A comprehensive approach to accommodations:** Employees in one of the companies described a comprehensive approach for all employees that includes an ergonomic evaluation and as well as ongoing offers of workplace modifications for both physical and psychiatric disabilities.

- **A military skills translation initiative:** One of the companies is developing a training program for supervisors where they will be taught to understand military ranks and codes and their related skill sets. Supervisors will learn to translate military skills and experience to the needs of the private sector. They will learn how all of this relates to the specific positions they are trying to fill. In addition, this company is developing a database that will assist in this process.

- **Military leave strategies:** Within the six corporations, we discovered both formal and informal strategies directed at issues surrounding active duty. With regard to formal strategies, HR representatives at two of the companies described their progressive military leave policies in detail. As an example of an informal strategy, one company's affinity group developed a project that focused on supporting employees' families when an employee is deployed. They also focus on educating that employee's supervisor on military leave issues.

- **Veteran internship programs:** One of the companies currently has a fellowship program with the Navy. Navy officers spend three months with the company and are educated on all aspects of their business. This company is looking at taking transforming the program into an internship for Veterans. And because they may not have enough jobs for all the Veterans who complete it, the company plans on placing them with other companies. Another internship program would be connected to their call centers. Currently they hire temps as a way to see whether or not they are good candidates for long-term hire. They are establishing a program where they, instead, bring in Veterans for these positions.

- **A social media strategy:** One of the companies is in the process of taking developing a virtual affinity group that will include not only the corporation's internal and external partners, but also all of their Veterans and their family members around the world.

- **Veteran-owned business development:** One company has begun a program to help Veteran-owned businesses, including working with their internal finance system to set up special financing for them. The company identifies Veteran-owned businesses that can be suppliers for their company. Their supplier diversity program spends about three billion dollars a year with these suppliers. This includes women- and minority-owned businesses as well as Veteran-owned businesses. They mentor these originally small businesses over time and help them grow to a much larger scale.

- **Educating employer groups on Veteran recruitment:** One program developer stressed the importance of educating employer groups through chambers of commerce and similar groups, such as Rotary Club. When making presentations he recommends bringing a Veteran who is now gainfully employed and can speak to the obstacles he faced when transitioning to civilian life.

FUTURE RESOURCES

The quantitative survey respondents were asked to identify what additional resources would be helpful to them. Forty-four percent of respondents indicated that it would be valuable to receive information and training on recruiting and hiring Veterans. The table below shows the type of information these respondents would like to receive:

Type of Information	%
Training and information on best practices, policies, and programs to promote recruitment and hiring	76%
Organizations and events that facilitate interaction with and recruitment of Veterans	69%
Department of Veteran Affairs resources and programs to support companies that recruit and hire Veterans	68%
Information on accommodating Veterans with health needs in the hiring process	53%
Information on accommodating Veterans with mental health needs in the hiring	51%

Respondents would also like information on retaining Veterans (38%):

Type of Information	%
Effective retention and career support strategies	63%
Company level policies and practices to support and promote retention	58%
Sensitivity and awareness trainings and workshops for *management* to support Veterans' transitions from military to civilian life	56%
Sensitivity and awareness trainings and workshops for *co-workers* to support Veterans' transitions from military to civilian life	47%
Best practices in developing workplaces inclusive of individual differences	47%
Best practices in dealing with deployment of employees who are members of the National Guard or Reserve, including supporting family members during deployment	47%

A little over one-quarter (27%) of respondents would like to receive more information on effective strategies to develop EAP services for Veterans and members of the Reserve and National Guard and close to one-quarter (23%) would like to receive more information on what to look for when selecting an EAP vendor to offer services for Veterans and members of the Reserve and National Guard.

Type of Information	%
Veterans issues in general	22%
Specific issues related to Veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan	13%
Education and sensitivity training on mental health difficulties	12%
Specific issues related to Veterans who served in the prior Iraq war (Desert Storm)	11%
Education and sensitivity training on disabilities	11%
Specific issues related to Veterans of the war in Vietnam	9%
The nature and purpose of affinity groups	9%
How to respond appropriately to requests for accommodations due to disability or service-related injury	9%
Getting sufficient training on dispute resolution approaches if accommodation conflict arises	7%
Other	0.8%

Finally, respondents were asked to indicate what types of trainings their EAPs would appreciate and in what mode they would most want those trainings:

Issue	%	Mode					
		In Person	Session at conference	Webinar	Phone	In Print	Online
Veterans issues in general	22%	14%	11%	21%	4%	9%	15%
Specific issues related to Veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan	13%	10%	8%	15%	7%	9%	11%
Specific issues related to Veterans who served in the previous Iraq war (i.e. Desert Storm)	11%	9%	7%	16%	6%	9%	11%
Specific issues related to Veterans of the war in Vietnam	9%	8%	5%	14%	8%	9%	9%
Education and sensitivity training on disabilities	11%	9%	7%	18%	4%	11%	11%
Education and sensitivity training on mental health difficulties	12%	8%	9	16%	5%	9%	12%
The nature and purpose of affinity groups	9%	9%	8%	14%	5%	10%	10%
How to respond appropriately to requests for	9%	9%	7%	16%	7%	8%	12%

accommodations due to disability or service-related injury							
Getting sufficient training on dispute resolution approaches if accommodation conflict arises	7%	10%	8%	14%	6%	9%	9%

CONCLUSIONS

A survey of 245 businesses indicates that the vast majority of them are hiring Veterans and a large proportion of them are hiring members of the Reserve and/or National Guard as well. Over half of the companies surveyed have policies for recruitment of these groups in fact. The sample comprised two distinct groups: those that were recruited through a Veteran-recruitment focused organization and a disability diversity-focused organization – the CG/BLN sample – and those that were randomly recruited from a company that provides national samples – the SSI sample. Overall, companies in the CG/BLN sample demonstrated more positive attitudes towards the inclusion of Veterans and members of National Guard and Reserves, lower incidents of negative workplace behaviors involving Veterans, and were more likely to have policies or procedures to support military leave for a member of the National Guard or Reserve as well as their reintegration into the workplace. On the other hand, a higher number of companies in the SSI sample offered training programs for their management and internships and apprenticeships on issues related to the inclusion of Veterans and members of the Reserve and National Guard in the workplace than those in the CG/BLN sample. They also demonstrated higher rates of offering mental health and EAP programs for their Veteran employees.

The Veterans interviewed at the six Fortune 500 companies described how the transition experience can be complicated by a number of factors: physical and psychological service-related injuries (including PTSD), the lack of an easy way to communicate one's experience and skills, and the lack of a written rule book on the prevailing unspoken corporate rules. Some reported being misunderstood by co-workers due to differences in one's manner, expectations, and speech. Others were frustrated by the lack of a clear chain of command and a clear path for advancement. Others described missing the sense of mission and urgency within the military that resulted from knowing that the lives of others might depend on the speed and quality of one's own work. Some also spoke of missing the camaraderie and bonds fostered by working and living in close quarters and depending on each other in critical, life and death situations. And others described how losing such bonds can create feelings of painful loneliness.

It is important to also note that approximately 70% of the Veterans interviewed reported experiencing an easy transition. With regard to each of the factors mentioned above that can complicate the transition experience (e.g., the differences between military

103

and corporate cultures, translating military experience, physical and psychological injuries, etc.), the majority of Veterans we interviewed reported either that they did not experience these as significant problems or that they did not experience them at all.

Within each of the six companies, individuals in leadership positions, often Veterans themselves, have developed innovative initiatives aimed at helping transitioning Veterans navigate these issues, if they arise. For example, initiatives with an emphasis on peer support, such as affinity and networking groups, are designed, in part, to diminish the sense of loneliness some transitioning Veterans feel upon losing the close relationships that can be the hallmark of their military experience. These groups are planned so that new bonds can easily be forged in a relaxed setting among Veterans interested in sharing their experiences and networking with others in the company.

Initiatives with an emphasis on mentorship address the confusion some Veterans feel when experiencing the culture shock of suddenly finding themselves in a world with corporate colleagues who have completely different expectations with regard to office interactions. Mentors can share their experiences navigating these office issues and dynamics. In addition, mentors with a personal experience of PTSD symptoms can help others with the same by describing their own experiences, exploring strategies to manage symptoms, and providing evidence and hope that current difficulties can improve over time.

Initiatives that focus on providing needed accommodations to Veterans with physical or psychological injuries contribute to the creation of a welcoming workplace for Veterans. Such accommodations can eliminate the barriers that would otherwise hold these Veterans back from working to their highest levels of excellence. In-house courses that examine the similarities and differences between military and civilian cultures serve to educate supervisors, co-workers, and Veterans. In addition, they initiate an important dialogue that can diffuse office tensions. In-house professional development courses for Veterans give them a much needed roadmap regarding corporate advancement. Along the same vein, training supervisors to translate military skills into corporate language helps to bridge this gap on the corporate end. As program developers continue to innovate, discarding what does not work while incorporating what does, much can be learned from the implementation of these initiatives as they continue to evolve. Further research is needed to document these and similar corporate practices more broadly, evaluate established program initiatives systematically, and begin to determine best practices through the use of empirical methods.

Based on the findings of both the survey and interview projects, there are clear avenues for future research and resource development. Companies are strongly interested in recruiting Veterans and ensuring they provide the right resources and supports to retain them. Outreach by the Department of Veterans Affairs connecting them to recruiting channels and training opportunities would be valuable. In addition, further information about available tax credits could make a significant difference in Veteran employment, although it may be important to reduce the burden of application.

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