



## THE ILLUSION OF VETERANS PREFERENCE.....

In today's job market, there's a coordinated effort among great companies to hire veterans and those transitioning from military service. As a veteran myself, I fully support this movement and have personally recruited many vets for their skills and experience. Over the last few years, however, I've noticed a disappointing trend related to the constant message veterans are hearing from companies that actively recruit from their ranks. The message these veterans are hearing is "we want you." Unfortunately, some veterans believe they'll be offered their dream position, location, and salary just because they're a veteran – this misperception simply isn't true. You're being recruited for the potential value you and your military experiences bring to the organization. Being a veteran is merely a bonus to the company. While attending career fairs, recruiting events, and networking sessions, I continue to observe unprepared veterans who act as if companies are hiring based upon nametags that say "hello, I'm a veteran."



If hiring was an academic test, these individuals believe that writing the word "veteran" beside their name guarantees a passing score and minimal effort is required to answer the actual test questions. Once again, this isn't how the hiring process really works. Your veteran status should be considered more like extra credit, however, you still need to pass the actual test. After achieving a passing score on the test, you might get 5, 10, or 20 extra credit points for your experience. Please don't be fooled into thinking that minimal effort or preparation is required because of your military service. It breaks my

heart to see honorable people who feel that minimal preparation combined with their veteran status will give them an overwhelming advantage over the competition. If you're a veteran, please don't be fooled by this illusion – prepare a strong resume and practice your interviewing skills to align your credentials (education, skills, and experience) with the opportunity. This is the best way to ensure your military experience gets you the credit you deserve.

## ....AND WHAT VETERANS SHOULD DO ABOUT IT



## Networking and Your Job Search – Part 3: The Informational Interview

Here's an important and overlooked technique that can accelerate your job search efforts – the informational interview. The concept is simple, however, there are some basic guidelines which should be followed to ensure you maximize the value of these opportunities and adhere to the protocol associated with informational interviews.

Let's start by addressing what an informational interview is. It's a meeting during which you get to know someone better and ask questions about their experiences (career, industry, and employers) and gather advice regarding your career path. In short, it's a chance for you to collect information that can help in your job search, however, it's not a job interview and candidates shouldn't actively seek an offer during an informational interview.

The key to success is preparation and we recommend two important steps while planning an informational interview. The first is to identify the correct individual(s) with whom you should consider meeting. Just because someone is accessible doesn't mean you should solicit their advice. Getting access to a successful individual might be a challenge, however, worth the effort. Patience, and persistence will be required, however, don't be offended if they can't fit you into their schedule.

The second step is to develop a plan for the interview. Before asking someone give up their valuable time, you should identify your purpose and share this as part of the invitation. Tell them up-front about your situation and why you'd like their career advice. I'm often asked to meet with people to provide career advice. Unfortunately, the conversation often begins with me asking them all the questions so that I understand where they're at in the process. Take a few minutes



before your meeting and provide this information so they arrive ready to discuss.

Your plan for the interview should include what you'd like to learn and a few questions which start the discussion on the correct path. Remember that you invited them to gather their insights and advice, so allow them to talk and don't monopolize the discussion. Ask open-ended questions which allow them to share their perspectives.

Following these basic guidelines will help ensure your informational interview is successful. Remember to thank the individual and conduct any follow-up actions discussed. They might suggest you contact someone else which can provide an additional career perspective and expand your network. Finally, keep an open-mind and learn from every interaction.

