

Key Messages

Resume and Interview Tips for Transitioning Military Personnel

Resume:

Your resume is the first impression a company has of you. It provides an example of your writing and organizational skills, and gives the recruiter a brief summary of your background, accomplishments, and skill sets. Its purpose is to get you an interview, so take time to get it right.

General tips

- Keep it one to two pages in length. Recruiters receive hundreds of resumes a day - make it easy for them to get a quick, but informative overview of you
- Be concise and use bullets where possible. Recruiters will be more likely to read your resume if it's organized and easy for them to consume. You want to be sure that you are still getting your experiences and accomplishments through, but there is no need to go into thorough detail
- Ensure that your resume is free from spelling, grammar and punctuation errors
- Keep it organized. Start with a summary of your skills and qualifications, followed by your professional experience in a themed or chronological order, education, achievements, and volunteer work
- Use the summary to communicate what you bring to the table and why you would be a good fit for the particular position you are applying to
- If you have a LinkedIn profile, include the URL
- Once you think your resume is ready to distribute, give it the 20 second test. Hand it to a friend, give them 20 seconds to scan and then take it back and ask what stood out to them about you and what they remember. If it's not what you want a recruiter to remember, restructure your resume
- When naming your resume, keep it easy for a recruiter. Use your name – First.Last.doc or First initial.Last.doc
- And finally – do not forget about your voicemail. Recruiters will criticize everything, so keep your voicemail professional

Military-specific tips

- Assume that hiring managers know nothing about the military. The person reviewing your resume may not have experience in the military so certain titles, accomplishments and jargon may need a bit more explanation. For example, when listing titles try to provide an a brief description of what that means and touch on key attributes that translate to civilian careers, like leadership, financial management, teamwork, and problem solving
 - If you were a Platoon Sergeant, don't just list your title, follow it with what you did in the position: Platoon Sergeant, team lead for platoon of about 30. This shows the recruiter that you have held leadership positions, which they may not have realized from the title alone
- Include numbers, such as the personnel you supervised or dollars you managed. Numbers are universal, it makes it easy for a recruiter to translate to the positions they are hiring for
- Highlight your accomplishments, but include a description of what they mean – keep in mind that a recruiter may not understand military jargon so keep the description very general and avoid military language

Interview:

The resume may have been your first impression, but the interview is where you can bring personality to that.

Before the interview

- Know the company. Be sure you research the company that you are interviewing with - visit their website and the career section of their website to learn key facts about the company. Search the company online and learn about important events they host or current news they're featured in. Do the same for the industry that the company fits in – know how they stack up next to competitors
- Prepare a list of questions. Use the findings from your research to come up with a few key questions to ask during the interview about company or industry trends, competitors, company news, etc.
- Have three to five strengths written out and be sure to cover them in the interview

The interview

- Dress appropriately. This is your chance to dress your best and impress the people interviewing you
- Limit the amount of perfume or cologne you apply
- Arrive about 15 minutes early – if it's an in-person interview
- Treat everyone like they are the CO
- Be sure to smile, keep eye contact and always reach for a hand shake
- Sit comfortably and avoid letting your nerves show. Try not to fidget, swivel in your chair, bite your nails, etc.
- De-militarize your skills and experiences, offer explanations of military terms

Interview phases

Ice breaker:

- Greetings, first impressions
- Develop a short elevator speech as a quick overview about yourself
 - I grew up in _____. I decided to join the <military branch> because _____. I had a great experience including____, and learned ____, ____ and _____. That brings me here today to learn more about <company> and your opportunity for <position>.

Question and Answer:

- Behavior based questions will likely come up and will be open-ended questioned based on your previous experiences. Use specific examples to answer, not hypothetical
- Use the STAR technique to answer questions:
 - S – Situation/ T – Task/ A – Action/ R – Result
- Listen closely to the questions and ask if your answer was detailed enough – be sure to pay attention to non-verbal clues
- Ask questions and comment on current industry events
 - I understand your major competitors are ____ and ____, is that correct? What worries you about them?
 - Can you describe what success looks like in six to 12 months for someone taking this position?

Wrap up:

- Ask about next steps
- Thank them for their time and ask for a business card
- Develop a quick elevator speech to wrap up your key points
 - Based on my visit and discussions today, I am very interested in joining <company>. I believe my ____, ____, and ____ skills position me well to both learn from and contribute to the success of the organization. Is there anything you want to hear more about related to my experience, or areas where you feel I am lacking?