

# SAMPLE OP-EDS



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## WISCONSIN'S VET HIRING CHALLENGE

By Peter Gudmundsson and Marc Burgess

We have heard a lot about a veteran hiring crisis but data from the last year shows that this crisis does not exist; unemployment rates for former service members are now lower than ever. But the lack of a crisis does not signify a lack of hurdles. Instead, we must change the way we view veteran hiring.

Veterans are some of the most highly competent and technically trained people in the world. Once they find jobs, they make great employees. What the 50,000 veterans residing in Milwaukee County — and the more than 400,000 veterans living in the state — need today are opportunities to compete for employers' attention on a level playing field.

American employers recognize that the military is perhaps the best institution for teaching individuals highly sought-after qualities such as leadership, teamwork, mission-orientation and integrity. Organizations that invest in veteran employees are thriving not because they are philanthropic but because they are making a good business decision.

The gap in connecting veterans to employers is not a lack of skill. It results from a disconnection in translating military experience and skills to civilian job equivalents. Last year, a study by the Center for a New American Security found that translating skills was the most commonly reported difficulty employers had as they tried to hire veterans.

Plenty of employers, while supportive of the military community, lack the experience to understand military culture, rank structure, the promotions process and the significance of even the most prestigious military awards. And on the flip side, plenty of veterans lack the knowledge to conduct an open-ended job search and explain their skills in civilian terms.

How do we build bridges between veterans and employers so that they can overcome these hurdles of knowledge and awareness? That's where partnerships between private sector companies and veteran service organizations can play a significant role.

Disabled American Veterans is a 1.2 million-member veteran service organization dedicated to empowering veterans to lead high-quality lives with respect and dignity. Closely related to that mission is helping veterans achieve gainful and meaningful employment after their service, working together with RecruitMilitary, the nation's top veteran hiring company.



On May 21, Milwaukee will play host to a DAV and RecruitMilitary job fair open to any area veteran, transitioning service member or military spouse. More than 45 major employers are coming together at the Milwaukee County War Memorial Center because they want to meet and hire Wisconsin veterans to fill their openings and because they believe in the value veterans bring to the workforce.

The dramatic life change and transition from service member to civilian isn't easy, and the road to recovery is not complete until a veteran is able to find meaning in his or her life. For those who are able, that means getting back to work to care for their families. Together, RecruitMilitary and DAV are working to achieve this mission through career fairs.

Since 2006, RecruitMilitary job fairs have maintained a track record of helping veterans find meaningful employment. Just last year, the likelihood of securing an interview at a RecruitMilitary job fair was 55%, and employers were expected to extend as many as 29,000 interviews and more than 9,000 job offers. DAV sponsored 34 career fairs in 2014, reaching more than 14,000 service members, veterans and military spouses, and is supporting more than 70 career fairs this year to empower veterans on the job hunt.

Through this partnership, we are widening the net of veterans who can be reached to help secure meaningful employment. We are ensuring that the men and women who stood up for America have the tools, resources and opportunities they need to competitively enter the job market and secure meaningful employment. We are addressing the unique individual challenges veterans face and are helping them gain wider access to a variety of employment opportunities. When nonprofits and companies serving our nation's veterans come together in their efforts, the possibilities are endless.

Wisconsin's veterans stepped up to serve and to maintain our way of life, and they deserve nothing less than fulfilling and rewarding employment opportunities when they finally hang up their uniforms.

Peter Gudmundsson, a former Marine Corps officer, is the president of RecruitMilitary, the nation's leading veteran hiring company. Navy veteran Marc Burgess is the National Adjutant and CEO of DAV, a 1.2 million-member veteran service organization dedicated to empowering veterans and their families to lead high-quality lives with respect and dignity.