

# THE BUSINESS CASE FOR HIRING VETERANS

BY SUSAN H. BURNELL

**Veterans bring unique talents and qualities to the workforce. Disciplined, resourceful, adaptable and skilled in leadership, the nation's service members have what it takes to transition from a military mission to a corporate mission.**

**T**here are now 2 million post-9/11 veterans, and 230,000 more service members separated last year. Yet unemployment rates for veterans are higher than the national average for non-veterans. In 2010, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported an unemployment rate of 20.9% for veterans ages 18 to 24, and 12.6% for those between 25 and 34. Those numbers present a great opportunity for private sector companies to bring transitioning vets into the workforce and help them become successful.

The recent Veterans Employment Summit, hosted by the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, drew more than 25 companies with veterans hiring programs, including Prudential Financial, Inc. Participants explored solutions and shared best practices in veterans' employment.

## Veterans Are a Proven Asset

"We look at the hiring of veterans as part of our overall talent acquisition strategy," says Ray Weeks, vice president of Prudential's Veterans Initiatives. In that role, he oversees the company's programs for transitioning vets and fostering their professional growth, and engages peer companies in similar initiatives.

Summit participants agreed that successful veterans programs must have leadership from the top. Leaders can make sure a company's practices support active service members when they leave and return to work. Companies should also help their non-military work-

force, including hiring managers and colleagues, become more knowledgeable about the value veterans bring to the workplace.

Prudential works to address the full employment continuum for recent and active service members. "It's not enough to support recruiting and hiring of veterans—we also have programs designed to retain them in the workforce," Weeks emphasizes.

"These are the kind of men and women who can fix a truck in 100-degree heat," Weeks says. "They may have been entrusted with a piece of multimillion-dollar equipment, and they have a great deal of technical training. They bring practiced leadership skills, and also know how to develop their subordinates. They're very mission-focused, and that translates well to the corporate environment. For all these reasons, we value veterans and want them to be a part of our corporate fabric."

## Supporting Veterans' Success

Prudential has partnered with the non-profit Workforce Opportunity Services organization (WOS) for more than five years. It has used that same training and career development model to create VETalent, a partnership with WOS and Rutgers University-Newark.

The program, which has now enrolled its second technology class, provides fully paid scholarships to help veterans learn a new career. It follows through with mentoring and employment opportunities,



which are sometimes missing from transition programs. Veterans take IT classes at night and have an opportunity to work at Prudential during the day. They are also mentored, learn to polish their written and verbal communication skills, and learn to navigate a corporate environment. Building on its success, the program has now been extended to Ft. Washington, Pa., and Jacksonville, Fla., in collaboration with Penn State Abington and the University of North Florida, respectively.

Prudential can serve as a resource for other companies seeking to tap into the valuable and ready pool of talent veterans offer. "We are very much interested in mutual learning, and welcome dialogue with our peers that will help veterans transfer more successfully to new careers in the corporate world," says Weeks. ■

[Prudential.com/veterans](http://Prudential.com/veterans)

# BRINGING THE TALENTS OF AMERICA'S VETERANS TO AMERICA'S CORPORATIONS.

America's returning veterans deserve every opportunity to deploy their valuable skills and talents. Corporations would welcome a way to facilitate their entry into the workplace.

Prudential's solution: Partner with the nonprofit Workforce Opportunity Services (WOS) and Rutgers University-Newark to create and sponsor VETalent, an innovative training and hiring initiative for Iraq- and Afghanistan-era enlisted veterans.

Since then, the program has been extended to Ft. Washington, PA, and Jacksonville, FL, in partnership with Penn State Abington and the University of North Florida.

We are proud to continue supporting the VETalent work/study program as part of our commitment to provide employment opportunities for some of the country's top talent. Helping returning veterans prepare for new careers is a challenge we can meet.

To learn more about this and other innovations at Prudential, go to [bringyourchallenges.com](http://bringyourchallenges.com)



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