Resume Writing for Veterans

Career & Internship Services
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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

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Marketing your military experience to a civilian employer is not easy, but it is essential. Anyone who has served knows the military has a language of its own. It is important to translate this language in order to effectively communicate your skill set. Adding to this difficulty, many employers and veterans don't know how military experience applies to a civilian position. This handout will help you translate your military experience to the civilian world and effectively communicate your skills to any employer.

Type of Resume

The most common type of resume is chronological with the most recent job experience at the top followed by all previous places of employment. This type of resume, however, is not always the most effective for veterans, especially if you are entering a new career field. When beginning a new career, a functional resume might better demonstrate your skills to an employer.

Rather than emphasizing previous job positions, a functional resume emphasizes categories of skills (e.g. Leadership, Communication, and Management). This allows you to market entire groups of skills, regardless of where you developed them. For instructions on how to write a functional resume, see our Functional Resume Handout at: http://www.careerhelp.umn.edu/PDFs/Functional Resumes.pdf

Modifying Military Jargon

In the military, it is difficult to say one sentence without using an acronym, technical term, or jargon. After being in the military for a long time, you often do not even realize you are using language that civilians do not understand. Unfortunately, when it shows up on your resume or comes up in interviews it only confuses employers. Here are some common cases of military-speak that find their way into resumes:

- **Acronyms:** Spell them out and consider simplifying them
  Example: Use the word "Base" rather than "FOB" or "AFB"
  Use "Non-Commissioned Officer" or "Supervisor" rather than "NCO"
- **Occupational Designator:** State your job title rather than the MOS/MOC designator
  Examples: Use "Infantry Squad Leader" rather than "11B"
  Use "Aircraft Loadmaster" or "Cargo Manager" rather than "1A2X1"
- **Technical terms:** Put them into the simplest possible terms
  Example: Use "Military Helicopter" rather than "AH-64"
  Use "Operations Department" rather than "S3"

Tip for Success: Ask someone without military experience to check your resume for confusing terms.

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Military Education

Service members regularly attend military schools but often feel that military education does not belong on a resume. It does! Create a section called "Additional Education and Training" and list the schools you attended, where they were, and the length of the course. If the name of school is not self-explanatory, describe the program. Also, state why that experience was valuable and any accomplishments you achieved.

Example:

Warrior Leadership Course, Fort Bliss, TX February 2012

- Two-week course that used experiential learning to teach valuable skills in leadership, teamwork, and critical thinking
- Recognized as "Soldier Leader of the Class" for outstanding physical and academic performance

Marketing Your Skills

Serving in the military gives you many great experiences and skills. But which ones are useful to employers? Here are some skills common to veterans that would be valuable in any job position:

Leading	Communicating	Training	Facilitating	Planning	Improvising
Motivating	Adapting	Organizing	Inspecting	Supervising	Evaluating
Critical thinking	Working under pressure	Working in team	Decision making	Multi-tasking	Managing

Provide specific statements of how you used these skills, why you used them, and for whom. For example:

- Trained over 20 soldiers in first aid techniques, which facilitated deployment readiness for the unit
- Used critical thinking skills on a daily basis to ensure communications equipment functioned properly
- Worked on a diverse team of five people for three years, succeeding through stressful work conditions

Sources for skills ideas

Award citations, NCOER's, and counseling statements are a great source of ideas for your resume. For example, if on your NCOER it states that you were:

- "Responsible for over $50,000 worth of equipment," change it to a statement like this: "Managed over $50,000 worth of equipment during a 12-month deployment with no loss of inventory"
- "Manages, tracks, and oversees all administrative actions for 130 Soldiers," change it to: "Managed and oversaw all administrative actions for 130 personnel, which ensured efficient operations."

Another resource for translating your military skills is O*Net Online: www.onetonline.org/crosswalk/MOC/ Select your branch of service and occupation, and O*Net it will provide a list of skills for that position.

Questions?

Meet with a Career Counselor to receive one-on-one assistance. Call Career and Internship Services for an appointment at 612-624-2710. You can also find more resources for veterans at the following websites:

- www.career.umn.edu/veteran.html
- www.careerhelp.umn.edu/veterans.html