Bringing the strengths and achievements from your military training and experience into the civilian world is your goal. Being aware of how civilian workplaces may differ from the military will be helpful in making this a smooth transition.

ROAD TO SUCCESS

Know your value to the organisation and why you were chosen for the job.
Assess the existing workplace culture and the behavioural norms.
Respect the diversity of civilian workers and their value to employers.
Exercise judgement and diplomacy with peers and supervisors.

GET STARTED

1. **Present your strengths and work style in the best possible light.**

   Co-workers and managers may not automatically respect or understand the rank and responsibilities you had in the military. As it is with entering a new workplace at each new military posting, it is important that you take the time to identify all the workplace expectations and learn the different personalities within the team/organisation to know who is well respected by co-workers (regardless of their position held). Offers by you to change things too soon after you start may be met with negativity if colleagues feel you don’t know or that you don’t respect, what it took to refine procedures to this point. Take some time to get to know the team, personalities and expectations, before offering suggestions of how you believe things could be made better. When making suggestions take care in choosing words that will be well received by your chosen audience. As part of that process, also take the time to share some of your personal history and work experience to help build rapport.

2. **Accept colleagues with diverse work styles.**

   Typically, people from a military background have a strong commitment to:
   - Safety
   - Teamwork
   - Direct and clear communication
   - Timely task completion

   Employers will value these strengths and appreciate you applying them to your work. However, workplace realities mean that not all staff will exemplify these standards at all times. Depending on the work environment, your employer may be willing to trade off some fluctuations in productivity in order to maintain a loyal and reliable workforce, thereby minimising recruitment costs. Take time to reflect before taking issue with different approaches by colleagues and management. The exception to this is workplace safety. If you have a concern, raise it immediately with your supervisor.

jobsearch.gov.au/jobseeker-info/employment-assistance-for-veterans
3. Be constructive about procedures and training which may need improvement.

You may experience some gaps in information sharing, training and performance standards in your new workplace. Take time to formulate constructive suggestions and find the right person to pitch them to. Exercise care and judgement not to embarrass staff who may have been doing their best under difficult circumstances, but did not have the insight or initiative to suggest changes to business processes. Fitting in is not entirely about adapting to the existing standards. It’s also about bringing new perspectives, with judgement and diplomacy. You have differences and strengths that will complement the diversity within the existing workforce, keeping in mind it is ultimately up to the employer to determine whose views best support the sustainability and improvement of the organisation.

4. Deal with mismatches between you and your employer or team.

Finding the right job can be like finding the right accommodation. Sometimes it is not suitable, but it is best for you to have control of the situation and be able to choose when to move on. Always take an interest in what is required in the role and demonstrate you can do what is expected in a professional manner. By exercising care and taking time to learn workplace expectations and differences you’ll be able to make a decision in your own time.

SUCCESS STORY

Navy Leading Seaman - Chef to Human Resources

After sustaining an injury, I could no longer be a Navy Chef, so I decided to try administration in the Australian Public Service, as I thought it would be a good cultural fit. As it turned out, it wasn't as good a fit as I had hoped. Hindsight tells me I needed to adjust more than my work colleagues were going to in order to make it work. I then found a HR job with a commercial organisation and found military and work ethos connections with some of the staff. By this stage, I had learnt to slowly assess the workplace culture and not jumping in boots and all with my thoughts and outgoing personality. After a few adjustments, I found my rhythm and have been there for the last 10 years.

NEXT STEPS

Use the Fair Work Ombudsman:

fairwork.gov.au

SEARCH FOR:

- Information about your workplace rights and responsibilities
- Help resolving workplace issues

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