

THE MANUFACTURING INSTITUTE

SOLUTION SERIES: MILITARY TO MANUFACTURING WORKSHOP

Context

In 2023, the manufacturing industry averaged over 500,000 monthly job openings, representing a significant skills gap that will persist as [structural constraints tighten the labor market](#). Military-affiliated talent provides a fantastic labor pool for manufacturers. The MI's [Heroes MAKE America](#) program connects manufacturers with military-affiliated talent with great success.

To discuss key challenges in connecting military-affiliated talent to manufacturers and identify effective solutions, the MI convened manufacturing and military leaders in July 2023. Challenges discussed included finding opportunities to reach military-affiliated talent and developing robust attraction and retention strategies that address the needs of military-affiliated talent and manufacturers.

Through panel discussions and participant engagement, the MI analyzed top challenges and outlined the following solutions which can build stronger ties between military-affiliated talent and manufacturing.

Top 10 Solutions

1. **Make the business case** to senior leadership on the skills and experience military-affiliated talent bring to the table. Continue making the case by identifying key metrics and systems for tracking.
2. **Connect with the Army Reserve**, the readiness force of the US Army, comprised of nearly 190,000 soldiers who live in communities across the country and are often underemployed or unemployed.
 - a. **Contact the [Private Public Partnership Office \(P3O\)](#)** to connect with reservists and highly skilled military spouses at no cost through Army Reserves Careers groups.
3. **Refer to the [Civilian Leadership Equivalency Handout](#)** to understand what skills military-affiliated talent are trained in at various levels of leadership.
4. **Hire military spouses**, a group that is 92% female with an unemployment rate of 22%. Military spouses are a very loyal community with great word of mouth and a larger referral network.
5. **Confirm requirements in position descriptions are actually required** to meet role responsibilities. Veterans may be hesitant to apply because they do not meet typical civilian requirements.
6. **Become known in the community as a company that hires military-affiliated talent.** Word travels around fast in the military community. A small show of support can go a long way. Host a hiring event, inviting military families. Plan activities/care for children while parents interact with your representatives.
7. **Develop and leverage military/veteran employee resource groups.** Investing in ERGs signals your company's commitment to support military-affiliated talent, improving recruitment and retention.
8. **Utilize HMA to build connections to military-affiliated talent** through programming like Heroes Connect, virtual career fairs, virtual employer workshops and resume distributions.
9. **Leverage HMA and community colleges** to source military-affiliated talent who are pursuing certifications applicable to the manufacturing industry.
10. **Train military-affiliated talent you've hired as recruiters.** Whether as official recruitment members or internal/external ambassadors, utilize your existing military-affiliated talent to develop inclusive language for hiring materials, outreach strategies, job descriptions and interview support.

Want a deeper dive? Check out our [full recap](#).