

Transitioning From Military Service to Civilian Life...

A successful transition to civilian life takes focus and a plan. It's often similar to preparing for an overseas assignment that requires you to learn a new country's history, customs, climate, and currency, not to mention language. Sometimes, a host-family is needed. This type of planning is akin to a successful transition to civilian life. Here are guidelines to consider before leaving the military:

1. **Timeframe for assessment**

Give yourself 12 - 18 months to plan your future. Ask yourself, what you want to do and – dream a little. Take your dreams seriously, to guide your direction and make your next steps easier. These may include: developing a resume, activating a network of contacts and/or enrolling in short-term courses/certification programs to match your goals.

2. **Create a written plan**

A career counselor can help with a written plan for your transition. The public-affairs office at your duty station should have referrals to available services. Or, check out services offered by the Military Officers Association of America: www.moaa.org. If you prefer a private-practice career counselor go to: [National Board for Certified Counselors](#).

3. **Learn civilian language**

Begin to think like a civilian by avoiding military jargon, particularly when writing your resume and cover letters. For instance, say or write: I'll be there at 3:00 p.m. instead of "I will be there at 1500 hours." The exception is for security clearances; always include on your resume. They demonstrate trustworthiness and are required for some positions.

4. **Write a focused resume**

Develop a focused resume that describes accomplishments rather than lists your military titles. Instead of writing "commanded Battalion X," describe your experience in keywords that management uses, such as "personnel management," "budget planning," "profit and loss" and "supervisory/leadership experience." When prospective employers search their database for resumes, your keywords will be easily recognized and understood.

5. **Network and campaign for what you want**

Today's Internet makes networking easier than ever. With social networks like LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter you can begin networking with former military colleagues working in the civilian world, adding to your list:

- Civilian neighbors/business people you've met throughout your moves and relocations.
- Former instructors and classmates in your civilian/military communities.
- Bankers, accountants, community volunteers, with whom you socialize, etc.

6. **Join professional associations/groups.**

By joining professional associations, you will demonstrate your seriousness. You'll also learn about the latest trends in your new field and find membership provides easy access to new contacts as well as job openings and recruiters available only to members.

7. **Go for it!**

Taking risks, charging ahead are familiar military concepts, consistent with the military's mission. Integrate and utilize the best of these attitudes to reach your new goals for career fitness in civilian life.

