

HUMAN RESOURCE ASSOCIATES

HR Consultants to Management

PERSONNEL NOTEBOOK

For Your Most Important Resource

VETERANS ON THE JOB

Our appreciation for the uniformed military men and women who defend and protect us is certainly immense but it certainly isn't constant. As our social and economic views change and clash our perceptions, attitudes and treatment of those Americans who serve can change, sometimes we forget about them altogether and sometimes we turn against them. Wars end and with a less obvious enemy to confront, budgets get cut, services diminish and public opinion can wane.

During and immediately after the Revolutionary War, The Civil War and World War One veterans were held in high regard. Their fellow Americans showed their appreciation by granting them moderate pensions although most pensions were only for those seriously wounded. But between the wars pensions were always under attack as being too generous and riddled with fraud.

In 1919 at the end of World War One, 'The War To End All Wars', Americans were so astonished at the bravery and so horrified at the devastation of the returning veterans they promised them generous war bonuses. But once the war was forgotten so was the promise until 1924 when it was finally approved but not to be paid until 1945.

During the ensuing Great Depression (1929 - 1939) veterans were viewed and treated as pathetic pariahs. Police ran them out of towns and when they marched on nation's capital in 1933 wanting their war bonuses to be paid early, the U.S. Army fired on them and ran them out of Washington D.C.

But when Pearl Harbor was attacked in 1941 World War Two began. The admiration and respect shown to service men and women during the conflict soared far beyond anything ever experienced in American history. New words and honors had to be invented to express our devotion to our troops and veterans. After the war in 1945, the United States brought into existence the most sweeping, influential and successful social experiment of the Twentieth Century, the GI Bill. Free college education swamped the universities with veterans. VA housing programs kicked off the largest economic growth in the history of the world. These signs of appreciation along with free health care for veterans and their families initiated the highest standard of living on the planet for decades to come. We loved, honored and appreciated our returning veterans.

But by the end of the Baby Boom (1945-1964) social views were changing. Wars where we had not been attacked, in countries we couldn't pronounce and weapons that could end civilization created a fear and hatred of war that eventually included the warriors who fought them. Anti-war protests became anti-warrior protests. As high as the war honors had soared and as long as they had lasted the anti-warrior era would be even lower and last even longer.

By the early 1990s the Berlin Wall was down and Russia was no longer a threatening super power. Wars were no longer considered likely and veterans were no longer seen to be necessary. The mandatory draft was ended and our military became a volunteer-only system. Politicians publically pondered what to do with a military support service they felt would never again be needed. Those already demoralized veterans were often viewed as unwanted, washed out drug addicts. Home-town military parades on summer holidays almost vanished. Veterans in public were called appalling names and actually spat upon. Some employers sought advice on how to terminate those "*military types*". Charges of pensions and benefits being too high and steeped with fraud rose again. Although by the late 1990s the vitriol had gone, little respect returned for America's warriors.

But on September 11, 2001 America was again attacked and 9/11 became the Pearl Harbor of the 21st Century when New York, Washington and Pennsylvania came under attack. Once again did we need and honor those military types. Over the next ten years we improved the weaponry, increased the protective systems and devices for soldiers and provided more technical career training and college level degrees for those who served. Wounded veterans returning found space-age, bio-tech medicine, in-depth personal therapy, job protection laws and a highly supportive public.

But as in the past, we have again become tired of these wars we don't understand and to which we no longer pay much attention. The Iraq and Afghanistan wars are closing down and soon thousands of veterans will be coming home. They are returning to a grateful nation. That nation is promising support for the difficult transition that is necessary when a young American steps right out of school and signs up for the military. They return to our world about which they know very little having missed out on those important years.

They were on-the-job! Did they defend us in our sleep? Yes they did. Did they prevent massive attacks on our home ground? Yes they did. Were we the safest and best protected country in the world while on their watch? Yes we were! Were thousands of them injured, maimed and killed while on-this-job? Yes.

They will soon be coming come back to us needing the support we promised. Many will need years of medical treatment and rehabilitation. Some will need a little time to adjust. But most will need a job. In this struggling economy they will be competing with approximately 12 million unemployed Americans also needing a job. Will we live up to the promises we made when we called upon these returning vets?

Or maybe this time we will finally, firmly and forever assert that we "*aint gonna war no more*". Let's all hope that this time we can truly make that happen. But in case we again fall into that forgetful state, seeing little need for the ex-warrior or the obligations we have to each of them, let's make sure we don't watch history repeating itself.

As we now see countries like China, Russia, North Korea, Iran and Venezuela moving in to fill the vacancies left in Iraq and Afghanistan, signing treaties, providing loans, buying up oil rights, establishing bases, and setting up shop,

are we sure that former or future troops will be anxious to step up to the plate if called upon to serve?

Over the past 230 plus years we have called upon so many men and women to come to our aid and defense. We have honored, praised and thanked them each time. But each time, once the dangers seemed to pass, we forget, we ignore, we disrespect, we even abuse our forgotten defenders. How often have we seen politicians announcing with colorful fanfare new programs for veterans? Services offered, offices opened, phone numbers posted, websites advertised and newly appointed staff introduced. But within a few months, particularly in programs for veteran's employment services, the phones will go unanswered, the websites will no longer connect and the staff will be re-assigned. Let's don't let that happen this time. They have so often been on-the-job for us, let's now let them be on-the-job *with us!*

Uncle Sam is once again expanding support and services for our returning veterans. And there's much we can do to fulfill our promise and our duty to them. Here are some current programs, many newly created, to help us fulfill that duty.

Veterans Job Bank

The Veteran's Job Bank uses a National Resource Directory (NRD) to identify, code and post job openings where veterans can access and apply for them.

If you already post your jobs on-line you can visit their website and see if your job is already posted there. If not, you can enter it, a job code will be assigned and your job will be posted within 48 hours. To post your job go to:

www.nrd.gov/home/

For information or assistance visit:

info@nrd.gov

VOW

The VOW (Veteran's Opportunity to Work) to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 provides transition for service members by expanding their education and training opportunities and tax credits for employers who hire vets with service related injuries.

Tax credits for employers include:

- Reimbursement for up to 50% of wages to cover:
 - ✓ Expenses for instructions
 - ✓ Loss of productivity due to training status
 - ✓ Supplies and equipment for training
- VA provided tools, equipment, uniforms and supplies
- Appropriate accommodations
- Paperwork assistance for employer participation
- VA supported assistance during and following training

Veterans who participate receive:

- Immediate income and benefits (through employment)
- Employment opportunities
- Valuable skills on-the-job
- Opportunity for continued employment following successful completion
- One-on-one support from VA rehabilitation and employment counselors and coordinators

For information visit:

www.benefits.va.gov/VOW

Or visit the Veterans Administration (VA) office in your area.:

One of the most misunderstood ailments faced by some returning veterans is PTSD (Post

Traumatic Stress Disorder). For employers who support veterans with PTSD there is a guide that can help them understand and work with these injured vets.

The guide is available at:

www.amercasheroesatwork.gov/

Select the tab for employers.

For additional information and explanation of the laws covering veterans rights see the Personnel Notebooks:

- **“When Johnny Comes Marching Home”
and**
- **“Uncle Sam Wants You”**

In the Personnel Notebook archive at the association’s website.

Yes everyone wants a job right now and not every veteran is the best candidate for your job. But few have risked so much, served their country so honorably and earned the opportunity and the right as have these. Not every job has to go to a vet, but can even one?

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Have An Employment Question?

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