

# 'I was an E-4.' Cutting jargon from resumes helps veterans find civilian jobs, career counselor says

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University at Buffalo career counselor Holly Justice is hosting a workshop Nov. 10 to help student veterans translate their military experience into resumes that will catch the attention of civilian companies.

While [veterans](#) completing enlistments come home with valuable skills, finding work can be difficult if employers don't understand how responsibilities in Iraq and Afghanistan apply to civilian jobs, Justice says.

Below, Justice answers a few questions about how a good resume can help veterans improve their chances of landing a meaningful civilian job.

Q: How can a good resume help veterans re-enter the civilian work world?

A: The challenge that veterans face is to translate [military](#) language on their resumes to something that [civilians](#) unfamiliar with the military culture will understand and appreciate. Veterans need to be descriptive in their language so that civilian employers have a better picture of the candidate's responsibilities and accomplishments. There are terms used in the military on a daily basis that are unfamiliar to people who haven't been in the military.

A resume that truly illustrates the individuals' experience and skill sets is critical to getting an interview. Veterans looking to enter the civilian job market have incredible skills to offer employers. They can be a great fit for companies seeking candidates who are adaptable and have great [professionalism](#), along with leadership and management experience.

Q: What are some common mistakes veterans might make when writing a civilian resume?

A: One of the most common issues is the use of military jargon that is not familiar to civilians. Veterans may list their rank as an "E-4," or list a military term for the unit they led. If the civilian employer or staffing agency is unfamiliar with the military, they will not understand the level of importance of that rank, or how large the unit was or what a job actually included in its responsibilities. Instead of saying you're an "E-4," you probably need to include a title that describes of your role, along with information that gives a sense of your duties.

Another typical issue is how the veteran describes his or her experience and accomplishments. The military is very team- and mission-oriented. The civilian corporate world tends to be driven by profit margins and competition within the company. Veterans must highlight the parallel experiences of customer service, team work and accomplishment that come from completing a mission.

Q: What kinds of skills might veterans highlight?

A: Leadership is important. For instance, a veteran might want to say how many people they commanded, but instead of using the word "command," they might want to consider using a civilian term like "managed" or "led."

At our career workshops, we don't go in-depth with the students about

every branch and every position, because there are so many. Everyone's experience is different. We just want to help people recognize that there are changes they can make that will improve their employment opportunity chances, and to point them to some resources that can help them make improvements.

**Q:** For people who can't attend your workshop, what are some resources available to help veterans improve their civilian resumes?

**A:** UB Students are welcome to use the Career Services office and library, of course. Any veteran can check out some great resources online for working on their resume such as The National Resource Directory and Department of Labor's "Hiring Our Heroes" website. There are also many sites that assist veterans with their job search and career development, including MyNextMove for Veterans and the Transition Assistance Online program, just to name a few.

Provided by University at Buffalo

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