

# Study sheds light on factors affecting veteran hiring

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In the coming years, increased troop withdrawals from the Middle East may result in greater numbers of combat veterans searching for jobs in the private sector. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, military veterans have numerous problems gaining and maintaining jobs in the U.S., and their unemployment rates are consistently higher than nonveterans.

To help solve this problem, University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA)

College of Business Ph.D. student in organization and management studies Christopher Stone is leading groundbreaking research on the factors affecting hiring decisions about veterans. The goal of this research is to uncover the issues that place limits on veterans' ability to secure jobs and to offer concrete solutions that both companies and veterans can take to help veterans enjoy a fulfilling work life.

"Despite the fact that there is documented proof that veterans have a much harder time finding and keeping jobs, there has been limited academic theory or research that focuses on understanding why this is happening and how to solve the problem," said Stone. "Stereotyping and a lack of understanding of how military skills transfer over to civilian roles are only a few of the factors that often prevent highly capable veterans from being hired."

Stone and his colleagues have expanded on a model of the factors affecting the treatment of persons with disabilities to explain the variables thought to influence employer decisions to hire veterans. These factors include: attributes of the veteran; attributes of the observer; nature of the job; degree to which raters perceive that military skills transfer to civilian jobs; and the perceived difference between role requirements in military and civilian organizational cultures.

Based on this model, they suggest that organizations and veterans can use these strategies to enhance their access to jobs:

- Organizations can increase positive contact with veterans, use education programs to dispel stereotypes, publicize veterans' job successes and change the organizational culture to emphasize the value of hiring veterans.
- Organizations can employ decision makers who value hiring veterans, recognize and reward those who hire veterans, expand recruiting to find talented veterans and give bonuses to

employees who refer veterans to the company.

- Organizations can help familiarize decision makers with military jobs and the associated knowledge, skills and abilities that are similar to civilian positions.
- Outplacement organizations can socialize veterans in the norms, values and role requirements of civilian organizations.
- Veterans can use impression management techniques such as acknowledging their health conditions or disabilities up front and convincing [decision makers](#) that they have similar interests and values.
- Veterans can also use coaches, seek feedback and find successful role models to boost their self-esteem and decrease any self-stigmatizing that can inhibit their performance.

Stone served in the Air Force for eight years, first in an aircraft maintenance unit overseas and then as a Military Training Instructor at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland. Independent and entrepreneurial in spirit, once he left the military in 2007 he opened a business near Lackland. In 2010, he sold the business and began his studies at UTSA.

Stone's experience is vastly different than many of his fellow veterans, who weren't able to find suitable jobs after leaving the military. Witnessing this first-hand is what motivated him to pursue this research.

"While most everyone agrees that veterans' unemployment is an important problem to be addressed, few have answers regarding what to do," said Mark L. Lengnick-Hall, UTSA management professor.

"Christopher Stone's research will lay a foundation for understanding the barriers [veterans](#) face when they return to the civilian workforce and how to overcome them."

**More information:** Stone's paper, "Factors affecting hiring decisions about veterans," was recently published in *Human Resource Management*

*Review* and presented at the 2014 Academy of Management annual meeting in Philadelphia, PA.

Provided by University of Texas at San Antonio

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