Study Finds Veteran Talent Underutilized in the Workplace

NEW YORK, November 10, 2015 –Companies are using up to 30 percent of recruiting budgets to source and hire veterans1 yet a new study finds that veterans are stalling out once they enter the U.S. workforce. Sixty-four percent of veterans say they are not using three or more of their skills that could be relevant in the corporate context. Nearly 40 percent (38 percent) say that senior leaders are not capable of seeing their full potential. These findings were published today in Center for Talent Innovation’s Mission Critical: Unlocking the Value of Veterans in the Workforce, a book that highlights the unique opportunities and challenges that U.S. veterans face in the workplace.

The findings, culled from a nationwide survey of 1,022 U.S. veterans employed in white-collar occupations, show that 89 percent of veterans consider themselves ambitious – yet 57 percent of survey respondents report no aspirations to rise above the positions they currently hold. Of the remaining 43 percent of veterans who do aspire to a more senior position, fully 39 percent report feeling stalled in their careers. Additionally, skills that translate into a workplace setting are being left on the table. Twenty-nine percent of veterans feel overqualified for their current position.

Skills veterans frequently say they have but do not use – particularly technical and leadership skills that translate into a workplace setting – include:

- Social media
- Language fluency
- Computer programming
- Accounting
- Statistical Analysis
- Managing the career development of others
- Transparent decision-making
- Relationship/stakeholder management
- Team building

“The extraordinary skills veterans developed while in the military, and the commitment that compelled them to serve their country, fail to translate into career progression” says Julia Taylor Kennedy, senior vice president, senior fellow at the Center for Talent Innovation and co-author of the book. “They feel underutilized and underappreciated. No wonder the veterans we surveyed ‘checked out.’”

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The findings point to additional factors that contribute to the stalling out of veteran talent:

- Only two percent have sponsors, senior leaders who get behind talent and advocate for their advancement.
- Sixty-four percent of veterans say they had a greater sense of meaning and purpose in the military than they do in their current job – while 83 percent say having meaning and purpose is very important to them in their careers.
- Forty-nine percent of veterans have had their colleagues make false assumptions about them based on their military experience.
- More than a quarter (26 percent) of veterans downplay or avoid drawing attention to their service in the military. And veterans of color are more likely than their white veteran counterparts to have avoided telling people altogether that they were in the military: 39 percent of Hispanic veterans, 25 percent of black veterans, and 21 percent of Asian veterans.
- Thirty percent of veterans with a service-connected injury or disability have not disclosed it to their employer.

Veterans also often confront obstacles in their personal lives that make it harder to connect to their civilian teams. Thirty-one percent of veterans, for example, know other veterans who have committed suicide.

"Any company can hire a veteran but not many are successfully utilizing the immensely valuable skills and experiences that veterans bring to the table" says Mike Abrams, U.S. marine, founder of Four Block, and co-author of the book. “Companies that identify the key barriers that are inhibiting veterans in the workforce can unleash the innovation potential from this unique and diverse workforce."

The book showcases programs from corporations working to support veteran employees. Boehringer Ingelheim, Booz Allen Hamilton, and Wounded Warrior Project are companies featured in the book that are leveraging their veteran talent.

*Mission Critical: Unlocking the Value of Veterans* will be launched today at the New York Stock Exchange co-hosted by the New York Stock Exchange and The Moody’s Foundation. Panelist include Horacio Rozanski, president and CEO of Booz Allen Hamilton; Charles Sevola, Jr., vice president of information systems at Prudential Financial; and Garvis Toler, III, global head of capital markets at the New York Stock Exchange.

The book is available for purchase on [Amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com). For more information, please visit [www.talentinnovation.org](http://www.talentinnovation.org).

**Research Sponsors**
Boehringer Ingelheim USA, Booz Allen Hamilton, Fordham University, Intercontinental Exchange, Prudential Financial, The Moody’s Foundation, Wounded Warrior Project

**Research Authors**
*Michael Abrams* is a US marine and founded a veteran support organization called Four Block to help bridge the gap between returning service members and the business community. Abrams joined the US Marine Corps following the 9/11 attacks and served on active duty for nearly eight years including a deployment to Afghanistan as the artillery forward observer and information operations officer.
After leaving active duty, Abrams attended New York University’s Stern School of Business graduating with an MBA in finance, entrepreneurship, and innovation. He is a coauthor of a military transition guidebook titled Networking for Veterans. He is also an adjunct professor at Fordham University as well as an advisor to the Center for Talent Innovation. Abrams is currently serving in the Marine Corps Reserve as the commanding officer for Battery M, Third Battalion, Fourteenth Marines in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

**Julia Taylor Kennedy** is senior vice president at the Center for Talent Innovation where she drives qualitative research and writing. She coauthored CTI’s 2014 study The Power of the Purse: Engaging Women Decision Makers for Healthy Outcomes. A seasoned writer, producer, and interviewer, Taylor Kennedy also hosts a Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs podcast called Impact: Where Business and Ethics Meet. She has collaborated with business and gender experts on articles published in Forbes, Time, and academic journals, and has advised speakers for major platforms like the World Economic Forum and the United Nations. Previously, Taylor Kennedy hosted 51%, a public radio show on gender issues, and reported for NPR and NPR member stations. She earned a journalism degree from Northwestern University and a master of international relations from Yale University.

**About the Research**
This research consists of a survey, Insights In-Depth® sessions (a proprietary web-based tool used to conduct voice-facilitated virtual focus groups) involving more than forty-five people from our Task Force organizations, and one-on-one interviews with forty-two men and women in the US. The national survey was conducted online in June and July 2015 among 1,022 US military veterans between the ages of 21 and 64 who are working fulltime in white collar occupations. Eligible veterans were those who have previously served on active duty, including those who currently serve in the Reserves or National Guard. Data does not form a representative sample so all conclusions speak to our sample only. The survey was conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago under the auspices of the Center for Talent Innovation, a nonprofit research organization. NORC was responsible for the data collection, while the Center for Talent Innovation conducted the analysis.

**About the Center for Talent Innovation**
The Center for Talent Innovation is a non-profit think tank based in New York City. CTI's flagship project is the Task Force for Talent Innovation – a private-sector consortium focused on helping organizations leverage their talent across the divides of gender, generation, geography, and culture. The 86 global corporations and organizations that constitute the Task Force, representing nearly six million employees and operating in 192 countries around the world, are united by an understanding that the full realization of the talent pool is at the heart of competitive advantage and economic success.

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