MISSION CRITICAL
UNLOCKING THE VALUE OF VETERANS IN THE WORKFORCE

MICHAEL ABRAMS
JULIA TAYLOR KENNEDY

talentinnovation.org
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 full-time 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.
Companies across the US are losing their investment in veterans. Up to 30% of recruiting budgets go to sourcing and hiring veterans, yet we find 64% of the working veterans we surveyed are not using skills relevant in a corporate context.

Veterans bring to their employers a highly desirable set of technical and leadership skills which they aren’t using.

**TECHNICAL SKILLS**
- Social media
- Language fluency
- Bookkeeping
- Statistical analysis
- Computer programming

**LEADERSHIP SKILLS**
- Team building
- Relationship/stakeholder management
- Managing the career development of others
- Transparent decision making

Nearly 9 in 10 veterans consider themselves to be ambitious.

Veterans tune out and stall out at work.

57% of veterans don’t aspire to more senior positions.

39% of the remainder feel stalled.
Don’t downplay

1 in 4 veterans avoid drawing attention to the fact that they served in the military

Why are veterans tuning out and stalling out?

THEY’RE INVISIBLE TO SENIOR LEADERS

38% of veterans say senior leaders are not capable of seeing their full potential

Only 2% have sponsors—senior leader advocates

THEY FEEL MISUNDERSTOOD BY COLLEAGUES

49% of veterans have had colleagues make false assumptions about them based on the fact that they served in the military

VETS SAY THAT COWORKERS OFTEN ASSUME THEY:

- Have violent tendencies
- Are gun enthusiasts
- Have PTSD
- Have killed someone in combat
- Are politically conservative

VETS FEEL THEY NEED TO DOWNPLAY THEIR MILITARY SERVICE

1 in 4 veterans avoid drawing attention to the fact that they served in the military

- Downplay
- Don’t downplay
of veterans say they felt a greater sense of meaning and purpose in the military than they do in their current job

Veterans of color are more likely than white veterans to downplay their military service or avoid telling others that they served in the military

Many veterans lack the sense of meaning and purpose that the military provided

Veterans want work to allow them to:

- Promote global health
- Grow spiritually
- Protect the environment
- Save lives
- Develop deep camaraderie
- Improve the lot of humankind
- Provide social services
Only 13% of hiring managers are familiar with the few veteran resources available to help veteran candidates.3 Here are some ways to connect veterans and civilians at work, educate them, celebrate them, and unlock veterans’ potential:

- **Connect veterans to both civilian and veteran mentors.** That way, they can get a range of feedback on their style and approach.
- **Make clear to veterans that the company is ready and willing to accommodate any disabilities or reserve duty for a smooth transition to civilian life.**
- **Provide educational materials especially to managers of teams with veterans.** These would celebrate veterans’ potential and debunk false assumptions.
- **Have a Veterans’ Employee Resource Group, and include both veterans and civilians to further normalize veterans and their activities.**
- **Connect veterans to philanthropic efforts of the company outside of the veterans work group.**
- **Celebrate veterans who have risen to senior levels of the company as role models.**
- **Frame veterans’ roles in terms of the meaning and purpose they bring.**

**Sources:**

Mission Critical: Unlocking the Value
of Veterans in the Workforce
CTI Project Team

Authors
Julia Taylor Kennedy, SVP and Senior Fellow
Michael Abrams, US Marine; Founder, Four Block

Founder and CEO
Sylvia Ann Hewlett

COO
Peggy Shiller

CFO, Director of Research
Laura Sherbin, Ph.D

SVP, Director of Communications
Tai Wingfield

SVP, Director of Publications
Melinda Marshall

VP, Strategic Outreach
Jennifer Zephirin

Senior Associate, Project Manager
Deidra Mascoll

Senior Research Associate
Pooja Jain-Link

Research Associates
Isis Fabian
Charlene Thrope
Anna Weerasinghe

Communications Associate
Silvia Marte

Intern
Cat Chapman

©2015 Center for Talent Innovation. All rights reserved. Unauthorized reproduction or transmission of any part of this publication in any form or by any means, mechanical or electronic, is prohibited. The analyses and opinions represented in this report are solely those of the authors.
THE CENTER FOR TALENT INNOVATION (CTI) is an NYC-based think tank which focuses on global talent strategies and the retention and acceleration of well-qualified labor across the divides of gender, generation, geography, and culture. CTI’s research partners now number 86 multinational corporations and organizations.