

**WARRIORS TO WORK:**



**AN EMPLOYERS GUIDE**





At Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP), we believe that every warrior has a next mission and a positive future to look forward to. Together, with our employer partners across the country, we connect, serve, and empower warriors and their families with the tools and resources they need to achieve their highest ambitions.

**Email [WtoW@woundedwarriorproject.org](mailto:WtoW@woundedwarriorproject.org) to join us in our mission.**



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After service, I struggled with finding stable employment. In too many instances, veterans spend months looking for work after separation. The Warriors to Work program bridges that gap and matches veterans with employers.



— WOUNDED WARRIOR  
**BILL JONES**

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## **BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN VETERANS AND EMPLOYERS**

The WWP™ Warriors to Work® program partners with companies and organizations to educate and inform about hiring and retaining qualified veterans. No matter the size or industry, our team is ready to help you hire next-level talent. Let WWP provide the information, resources, and support you need to attract and hire exceptional veteran employees.

The skills acquired in the military are highly transferable and can provide a successful transition and a path forward. As an employer, you can help them achieve this goal by matching their qualifications to your company's goals.



## THE WARRIORS TO WORK PROGRAM CAN:



**Guide you in creating a veteran hiring committee** that's representative of all departments and includes employees who are veterans and/or military spouses and dependents, and establish a mentorship program for new hires.

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**Provide information to human resource staff and supervisors** about the invisible wounds of service, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury (TBI), and let them know that these injuries are not limited to military personnel.

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**Help you review and write job descriptions** that encourage warriors to connect with your company and picture themselves in the position. This will attract candidates who can easily translate their military experience to your company's mission.

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**Provide information about best practices in accommodation policies** and flexible workplace strategies and help make sure all employees are aware and have access to helpful resources.

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**Guide you in recruiting from reliable sources**, such as the Warriors to Work program, and using these sources to support your mission of hiring and retaining the best talent.

# WHY HIRE A WARRIOR?



When service members become wounded, ill, or injured, they often face a change in their military career trajectory. While some return to the military, many separate from service and begin new careers in the civilian workforce. These warriors are well-trained, highly skilled professionals who can become assets to any organization, increasing both diversity and bottom line.

## Who is a warrior?

Today's military personnel experience a wide range of injuries — from amputations and burns to TBI and PTSD. WWP specifically serves veterans and service members who incurred a physical or mental injury, illness, or wound co-incident to their military service on or after September 11, 2001. Importantly, rather than preventing these warriors from contributing to society, their injuries often make them more resilient, determined, and ready to serve.

## The benefits of hiring warriors

There are a number of different sources that promote the benefits of hiring a warrior. Often included in these benefits are the soft skills that employers clearly value, such as the ability to quickly learn new skills and concepts, strong leadership qualities, flexibility to work in teams or independently, respect for procedures and accountability, and a results-oriented approach to work.

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With highly transferable skills and a shared commitment to service, veterans are a natural fit for our business and many others, but they need the opportunity to secure meaningful employment. Through our partnership with Wounded Warrior Project, we are honored to work alongside these classes of veterans as they receive valuable certifications to help them transition to the civilian workforce.

”

— **JOE HINRICHS**  
CSX President and CEO

# WRITING EFFECTIVE JOB DESCRIPTIONS

While the skills acquired in the military are highly transferable, matching this experience to traditional job descriptions can be difficult. Job descriptions written in a clear format will not only increase the applicant pool, but also help applicants visualize themselves in that position.

## DRAFTING AND REVIEWING JOB DESCRIPTIONS:



**Clearly describe the position's purpose** and overall contribution to the company.



**Identify or describe** the physical environment and working conditions.



**Spell out essential and nonessential functions of the position.** When including nonessential, marginal, or less-frequent duties, consider:

- ★ Physical skills (e.g., standing, walking, lifting, bending)
- ★ Learned skills (e.g., equipment proficiency, industry experience)
- ★ Job duties (e.g., travel, hours, shifts)
- ★ Behavioral skills (e.g., communication, leadership, time management)



**Specify the level of education** and/or experience needed to successfully accomplish the essential functions of the job and include how military experience might equate.



**In addition to duties required, be clear** about what other employees, departments, and customers count on this person to do.



**Include expectations** relating to deadlines, customer service, and company success and link responsibilities to company goals.

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Effective job descriptions help potential employees know what is expected of them — even before they apply. It is always a good idea to revisit job descriptions annually to ensure that they are accurate and true to your company's mission.

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# INTERVIEWING WARRIORS

## Questions to ask

Most of the standard behavioral interview questions should be no different than those you would typically ask any other candidate. These include, but are not limited to, questions related to management style, problem solving, and strengths/weaknesses related to teamwork.

- **“Tell me about the type of training and education you received while in the military.”**
- **“Were you involved in day-to-day management of personnel and/or supplies?”**
- **“How many people did you supervise?”**
- **“If you managed resources such as supplies, inventory, and/or equipment, what was the net worth of these resources — and how did you ensure their timely delivery?”**

## Questions to avoid

Questions relevant to experience or training received while in the military, or to determine eligibility for any warrior’s preference required by law, are acceptable. However, some questions to avoid include:

- **“What type of discharge did you receive?”** Only federal agencies or people who assign a warrior’s hiring preference or have requirements related to security clearances should ask questions related to military discharge (especially in a pre-employment phase).
- **“I notice that you’re in the National Guard. Are you going to be called up for duty anytime soon?”** It is unlawful to discriminate against someone because of membership in the National Guard or Reserves, a state defense force, or another state or Federal Reserve unit.
- **“Did you see any action over there?” “Did you lose your arm getting hit by an IED?” “You don’t have any of that PTSD stuff, do you?”** Questions related to deployments to Iraq or Afghanistan may be interpreted as trying to determine if the warrior has PTSD or TBI and could be construed as violations of the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) or the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

## EMPLOYER REMINDERS FOR INTERVIEWING WARRIORS:

- ★ **Since veterans are not accustomed to the civilian interview process**, they can have difficulty explaining how their military experience relates to the needs of a civilian employer.
- ★ **The concept of “professional presentation”** is often different for former military personnel. They may present themselves with eyes forward and back straight. This shouldn’t be perceived as unapproachable or distant.
- ★ **Former military personnel may feel they need permission to “speak freely”** to create a comfort level that allows them to be seen in the most positive light.
- ★ **It’s okay to thank the individual** for their service to our country.



# UNDERSTANDING DISABILITY

## From combat to career

In the military, disability is a rating one receives after time in service, specifically for benefits and compensation. In education and the workforce, disability is generally defined as a functional limitation, with an associated need for an accommodation to a program, service, or environment in order to promote effectiveness and prevent discrimination.

While the military has come a long way in helping its personnel gain a better understanding of disability and how it may affect future workforce success, most warriors do not identify as or consider themselves a person with a disability. The psychological process for accepting disability takes time, especially for those with a military background. At first, they may view their disability — and the need to ask for help — as a sign of weakness.

Warriors with newly acquired injuries (both visible and unseen) are developing an understanding of how their disabilities may impact their learning or physical environment. Many of these warriors may simply need time to adjust and to figure out what they need to be successful.

## DISABILITY ≠ WORKFORCE INABILITY

Disability is a very personal experience. No two individuals with the same disability will be impacted the same way, and they may or may not require an accommodation to be successful or to feel comfortable sharing disability-related information.

Keep in mind that an accommodation is a change in the way things are normally done at work that enables an individual to perform a job, apply for a job, or enjoy equal access to a job's benefits and privileges.

As a whole, the military community is an exceptionally resilient and resourceful group.

Many experiencing the impact of an injury acquired during their time in combat will come to the workforce with an understanding of what they need for success. Others may need some time to figure out what works and what doesn't. Time, patience, and disability education will go a long way — and our warriors deserve it.



# SERVICE-CONNECTED INJURIES AND SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS

In order to eliminate stigma and misconception, it's important that employers have a basic understanding of some of the more frequently recorded combat-related injuries experienced by today's service members. Although no two warriors living with one or more acquired injuries will experience the same functional limitation(s) or need for accommodation, what follows are some suggestions that may lead to a more informed and productive workforce.

1

**PTSD** can develop in anyone who experiences or witnesses traumatic events. These events may include combat or military exposure, child sexual or physical abuse, terrorist attacks, sexual or physical assault, serious accidents (such as car wrecks), or natural disasters (such as fires, tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, or earthquakes).

2

**TBI** is defined as a blow or jolt to the head or a penetrating head injury that disrupts the function of the brain. The severity of such an injury may range from mild/concussion (i.e., a brief change in mental status or consciousness) to severe (i.e., an extended period of unconsciousness or amnesia after the injury). A TBI can result in short- or long-term problems, although most people with TBI are able to function independently.

3

**Physical combat-related injuries** may include, but are not limited to, spinal-cord injuries, bone fractures, back injuries, and loss of limb. The functional limitations experienced by those living with physical injuries are likely to change over time and, therefore, may require a series of accommodations. It is important for the warrior-employee and supervisor to commit to an accommodation follow-up plan.

4

**Sensory impairments**, such as those related to vision and hearing, are often associated with time in combat. Sensory impairments may present as, but will not be limited to, functional limitations related to low vision, blindness, hearing loss, or deafness. Accommodations for sensory impairments will certainly vary but may focus on access to technology, documentation, and the need for support services.

5

**Severe burns** may not be a "typical" injury for which one might think accommodations would be necessary, but functional limitations associated with fine or gross motor skills, sensitivity to temperature, handling stress and emotions, and issues related to sleep disorders are not atypical for those with burn injuries and may require accommodation.

## SPECIAL ACCOMMODATION CONSIDERATIONS:



Allow the employee to listen to music using a headset



Allow time off for counseling and medical appointments



Permit flexible scheduling or work from home



Allow longer or more frequent work breaks



Provide additional time to learn new responsibilities



Provide written as well as verbal instructions



Divide large assignments into smaller, goal-oriented tasks or steps



Allow telephone calls during work hours to doctors and others for needed support



Use technology or special calendars to mark meetings and deadlines



Assign a mentor to assist in determining goals and providing daily guidance



Assign a supervisor, manager, or mentor to answer the employee's questions



Encourage the employee to use daily to-do lists and check items off as they're completed

# HOW TO BE A PROACTIVE, INFORMED EMPLOYER



Veterans bring a sense of duty to everything they do. We were an asset to the country when we served — we're an asset to the workforce as well.



— WOUNDED WARRIOR  
JESSICA COULTER

By making the process for requesting and accessing workplace accommodations known and being upfront and transparent with this process, employers help alleviate stress and uncertainty. It goes a long way in creating a more productive workplace.

**Create** a process for requesting job accommodations that lets all current and prospective employees know that your company is committed to equal access and opportunity. Ensure that this information is made available in multiple formats to create a more inclusive and universally accessible workplace — one in which the majority of your employees will excel.

**Establish** and make known the process for requesting accommodations, at every point in the employment process — from application to onboarding to retention and promotion. It is good management practice to inform all new hires, regardless of injury, disability, or perceived need, of the process for requesting accommodations at every point in the employment process.

**Understand** that one of the biggest challenges faced by those experiencing the impact of a non-apparent disability is whether or not to disclose this information to a prospective or current employer. Many warriors are concerned that disclosing such information will have negative consequences on their careers.

# QUESTIONS TO ASK DURING THE SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS PROCESS

1

What limitations is the employee experiencing?

2

How do these limitations impact the employee and his/her job performance?

3

What specific job tasks are problematic as a result of these limitations?

4

What accommodations are available to reduce or eliminate these problems?  
Are all potential resources being used to determine possible accommodations?

5

Has the employee been consulted regarding possible accommodations?

6

Once accommodations are in place, would it be useful to meet with the warrior to evaluate the effectiveness of the accommodations and to determine whether additional accommodations are needed?

7

Do supervisory personnel and employees need disability-related education and training?

**For more information, email [WtoW@woundedwarriorproject.org](mailto:WtoW@woundedwarriorproject.org).**



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