

5 reasons you should hire a military spouse

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The military can be a funny place to work, but not funny ha-ha. Funny like you might have to move far away and take a new job just when you were getting used to your last one.

That model may have merits, but as some 100,000 service members transition away from military careers, they're finding it doesn't always jive with how things work on the civilian side.

These days, more resources from public and private sectors are designed to help transitioning military veterans. Hooah for that. But here's something you don't usually hear about in that mix: Military spouses.

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These men and women have kept continuity at home while their active-duty spouses have moved, deployed, taken new jobs, moved some more, probably deployed again and earned promotions and commendations along the way. All that often comes at the expense of their own careers.

When active duty is done, veterans can at least point to a solid string of employment and experience. Spouses have different kinds of workforce challenges ahead.

May 6 is Military Spouse Appreciation Day, which makes now a great time to pay attention.

What's the problem?

An astonishing 90 percent of military spouses say they're underemployed. That means they've got more education than the jobs they're filling, or they'd like to work more but can't. And they're paid between 25 and 38 percent less than equally qualified civilians.

That's if they've got a job at all. The unemployment rate among military spouses is 26 percent, or three times the national average of their civilian counterparts.

Why is this?

According to a Rand study, about two-thirds of spouses felt the military had a negative effect on their career. Among the most-cited reasons were frequent moves and employer bias.

Military families relocate 10 times more often than their civilian counterparts. Employers are understandably put off about the prospect of high turnover, and can be unfair when it comes to



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competitive pay, too. It's not unheard of for prospective employers to calculate how much an active-duty spouse makes and say they just don't need any more money.

What can you do about it?

Military spouses have valuable skills that should be appreciated. Not in a patronizingly patriotic way, but in a we all benefit from more of this in our workforce kind of way. Here are five reasons to hire a military spouse:

1. **They hit the ground running:** These are people who've moved around a lot. They know how to cut out the nonsense and get down to business.
2. **They're efficient:** They don't like to waste time or money.
3. **They're resourceful:** They've had to make do in some very tricky situations and don't need to complain about it.
4. **They get along well with others:** They've learned how to build productive relationships fast.
5. **They can take charge:** They've kept households running, often with kids and during deployments and a host of other challenges.



Rachel Bell
Contributing Writer

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