

The Veteran's Guide to Developing a Resume

By Lisa Rosser

The single biggest mistake I see service members make when creating resumes is that they dump everything they have ever done in the military into one document and use that document as a resume to apply for all types of jobs.

A resume will not get you a job. A good resume will increase your chances of getting a phone call from a recruiter who wants to screen you for a job. Therefore, the resume you submit has to be targeted to the position for which you are applying, has to use relevant keywords (in order to get picked up by the employer's applicant tracking system), and has to highlight not only your skills and competencies, but also your accomplishments.

Most of you did not have a burning desire to work in your military occupation before you chose it. You took the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) and it indicated your strengths: Perhaps you demonstrated strong analytical skills or mechanical skills. Based on those results, your recruiter provided you with a list of military occupations that were open to people who demonstrated strength in those aptitudes. You chose your occupation, the military trained you in that job, and you spent years working in that job. If you served more than one enlistment, you likely took on additional assignments outside of your occupation, perhaps as a staff member.

Now, you have the daunting task of assembling that hodgepodge of skills, aptitudes, experiences, abilities, and interests into something that will catch the attention of a recruiter and/or hiring manager.

You may be thinking, "Wait a minute...I was a truck driver in the military. I have zero interest in being a truck driver in the civilian world." Fair enough. Before you begin typing anything, you should take a moment and reflect on what you did in the military and what you think you'd like to do in the civilian world. Take the time to examine the parts of your military occupation that you really liked and the parts you really disliked.

We will use a fictional character to illustrate the next steps. John Stevens served six years in the military as an infantryman. He was medically retired as an E-5 after a training injury damaged nerves in his back. He's now in college, working on the degree he started while still in the military.

John spends some time reflecting on his infantry career. People keep suggesting that he could be a police officer or security guard, but he feels strongly that he does not want to work in law enforcement. He makes a list of things he liked and disliked about being an infantryman.

He did enjoy the time he spent preparing his team for training exercises, and developing creative ways to help his soldiers attain skill-level mastery.

When he worked as the unit training NCO, he demonstrated such strong organizational and follow-up skills that his unit won recognition for its level of training readiness, an achievement for which he is very proud.

One of his strengths that was routinely mentioned on his performance reviews is that he has a knack for explaining complex subjects in a way that makes it easy for people to understand.

He didn't like extended time away from his family, working in oppressive heat humping 30 pounds of gear, or being shot at.

With those likes and dislikes in mind, John is first going to assemble a master list of his skills. From this master list, he will later be able to pick and choose which skills to highlight on a targeted resume. John first reviews the civilian-friendly explanation of his Military Occupation Code (MOC) on his service's recruiting website and makes note of the "plain English" descriptions of his military occupation. John also goes through old performance reviews (OERs/NCOERs or the service equivalent) and makes a list of the different jobs he held, including any secondary or additional duties. He spent

some time as the training NCO in his unit, as well as stints as the unit's voting officer and tax administrator. Both of those jobs required him to advise his fellow soldiers on complex subjects and coach them through processes.

Next, John uses O*Net Online to do a military-to-civilian crosswalk of his MOC to civilian occupations (see <http://online.onetcenter.org/crosswalk>). Unfortunately, he discovers that O*Net does not crosswalk combat arms occupations. But, John can still use O*Net Online to look up some of the other skills he has listed to see what kinds of jobs might require those skills. So, he types in "training" and sees occupations that include "training" in the title or as a key skill of the job. John also makes note of any alternate job titles that O*Net lists for an occupation. He notes the various skills that a civilian holding that occupational title would be expected to have and adds them to his master list.

Now that John has a list of potential civilian occupations and alternative job titles, it is time to start researching job sites for posted positions for those titles. Note that John has still not assembled a resume, nor is he applying for any of these jobs yet. He is researching.

John finds a number of jobs that have "training" in the job title or description. He carefully reads each job description, making more notes on his master skills list of the commonly required or desired skills for those positions and circling those that he believes he has. John also makes note of any required or preferred certifications; he notices that Certified Professional in Learning and Performance (CPLP) is a certification that is listed as preferred in a number of postings. John makes a note to research the requirements to attain that certification and will later decide whether to pursue it.

John also notices that a number of these positions mention "performance management" or "talent management." He makes another note to research these keywords to see if there are other types of jobs that might use his skills and meet his interests.

John then goes to an online salary calculator and types in some of the keywords/titles to compare the civilian job titles he saw listed on the job boards. For example, he wants to know the difference between what a training director does compared to a training manager or training specialist, so that he can gauge his skill level in civilian terms and, more accurately, present his skill level and target more appropriate jobs down the road. He also does a quick check of each title to see the average salary range by zip code for someone who holds that position.

Now that John has developed a master list of all his skills, including the civilian terms and job titles for those skills, he is in a better position to create tailored resumes that only list the skills required for the job(s) to which he is applying. He has decided to focus on jobs that are training focused or related to performance management (which he discovered is the professional development of people in an organization, something he indicated during reflection that he enjoyed doing while serving in the military).

John is now ready to develop his first general resume highlighting his skills as a training specialist.

Here is an example of how John might have described his time as a training NCO, using the military language he is comfortable with:

S-3 Training NCO, 6/52 ADA BN, Darmstadt, GE

- Submitted training requests in ATRRS
- Completed training slides for the QTB
- Ordered ammo, pyrotechnics, and MREs for unit FTXs
- Reserved ranges, billets, and maneuver space
- "Green" on all training readiness evaluations; BN ranked #1 in the BDE

Now that John has done research, he has a better grasp of the civilian terms he should use. This is the same entry, "demilitarized":

Training Specialist (U.S. Army, Darmstadt, Germany)

Conducted all clerical and administrative duties related to the training and professional development of a 500-person organization. In this role, I:

- Scheduled all required and optional professional development courses for the employee base using a proprietary learning management system.
- Tracked individual completions and identified nonattendance/non-completes for remedial action.
- Prepared monthly reports to keep leadership apprised of overall organizational training status.
- Controlled an annual training budget of \$500,000, through which I procured training materials, reserved training facilities, and arranged for meals and lodging for all students.

Results achieved:

- Saved the organization \$50,000 in 2009 by recommending two business units within the organization consolidate similar training events and share common resources to avoid waste of materials.
- Achieved top ranking (out of five business units) for overall training compliance and completion two years in a row.

John plans to post his first general resume on Military.com and Hero2Hired.org, and also on his LinkedIn profile. This general resume can later be further customized should he desire to use it to apply to a specific position at a specific company. He will later create a second general resume focused on performance management.

Your Resume: What Employers Want to See

Resumes are more than just a list of things you know how to do—employers want to see what results you achieved while performing those tasks. Did you increase, decrease, save, or improve something? Be ready to articulate that in the resume.

If you supervised people, how many? If you managed a budget, how big was it? If you served in a role that would typically be held by someone one or two grades above you, tout that. If your team was named the #1 team or you, yourself, were selected as “soldier of the year” (or the service equivalent)—be ready to explain this outstanding accomplishment.

You also need to run the resume past a civilian (not a military buddy or a spouse, who probably understands many of the military terms you use) who will point out all the places where the language you are using needs to be “de-militarized.” The vast majority of civilian recruiters are searching resume databases using civilian keywords, not military keywords, so if you want your resume to be found, it has to speak “civilian.”

Military Service’s Recruiting Websites

- www.goarmy.com/
- www.navy.com/
- www.airforce.com/
- www.marines.com/
- www.gocoastguard.com/

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Courtesy of the [National Association of Colleges and Employers](http://www.nacem.org/).