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Time in military can complicate job hunt

Published: Monday, May 16, 2011 at 11:55 a.m.

Unemployment for young veterans is consistently higher than for everyone else. Ted Daywalt, a retired Navy captain and chief executive officer of VetJobs.com Inc., explained why the dichotomy exists.

"Many human resource managers and hiring managers have no idea what a military person brings to the job," Daywalt wrote me in an email.

Recruiters do not understand the skills perfected in the armed forces because military service has become less common with the end of the draft, changing from one in 10 Americans in 1970 to one in 270 today, he said.

"Too many employers think all the OEF/OIF veterans have PTSD," he wrote, referring to post-traumatic stress disorder resulting from participation in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"This is definitely wrong," Daywalt said. "In fact, some employers think PTSD is contagious, which is also false."

Equally as erroneous: Veterans are sometimes "perceived as John Wayne-movie, Sad Sack and Beetle Bailey stereotypes."

He cites common misperceptions that veterans are "not team players, lack of up-to-date technical experience do not have good work habits and lack of civilian certifications."

The VetJobs' newsletter advocates for veterans, announces which companies are hiring people with military experience and skills and lists job fairs. Some job fairs are exclusively for veterans.

Todd Hecht, a Parrish resident and managing partner of MilitaryStars, told me his company is sponsoring a job fair in Tampa on June 2. For more information, go to militarystars.com/career_expos_tampa.htm.

And while you are at the MilitaryStars' website, download its pamphlet, "The Top 10 Secrets America's Best Companies Don't Want You to Know about Hiring Former Military Professionals."

At job fairs, be prepared with a one- or two-sentence pitch, because of the limited time allotted for each job seeker. Additionally, bring a copy of your most recent performance review, assuming that it is positive.

In his book, "Veterans: Do this! Get hired!" Mark Lyden writes that a positive performance review separates you from the broad-brush sameness mentality with which recruiters paint veterans.

Your performance review helps you stand out in the crowd, the national recruiter and part-time Bradenton resident said.

Meanwhile, militaryconnection.com lists job fairs nationally and lets you

upload your résumé and find job openings seeking veterans.

See it at the "Virtual Job Fair" button and match your experience and skills with job offerings by category.

If I were in the military police, for example, I might pick the "Law enforcement" category as my civilian choice. This option yielded 32 employers with job openings. The "construction" choice had four job openings, and "manufacturing/production" listed seven companies looking for employees.

"The United States military is the world's largest technical training school, with over 220 occupational specialties," VetJobs' Daywalt said.

"If you seek candidates with diversity, leadership skills, technical skills, security clearances and who have verifiable work backgrounds," he tells recruiters, "you will find them in a military veteran."

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