5 TIPS
EXPERT RESUME TIPS FOR CLEARED VETERANS

Cleared veterans are invaluable in the civilian workforce. Their skills, training, experience, education, and security clearances are highly needed and sought after by Department of Defense contracting companies and the corporate world alike. So why does this niche professional group have trouble finding jobs when they are in transition? Resoundingly, an important key to unlocking this challenge is having an effective resume. One of the most difficult aspects of crafting a resume is encapsulating an entire career into a single summary document.

Your resume should not simply list your past jobs. This document can only be effective if the applicant has included all of the necessary information and highlighted their successes in language others can understand. Many veterans struggle with writing about themselves and the shift in mindset from team to self can be a difficult process.

Here are five resume tips for veterans looking to land a great job in the civilian workforce.

ClearanceJobs®

leidos

1 LIST YOU CLEARANCE CORRECTLY

The Intelligence Community, Department of Defense, National Security Agency, and Department of Labor all agree that applicants should list clearance levels on their resume. This guidance has shifted in the past, but the most recent directive is specific on how to list a clearance.

✓ Active Secret Security clearance

✗ Cleared Secret

✓ Active Top Secret security clearance with Sensitive Compartmented Information (SCI) eligibility

✗ TS/SCI

✓ Active Top Secret security clearance with Sensitive Compartmented Information (SCI) eligibility and Counterintelligence Polygraph

✗ TS/SCI with CI Poly

2 TAILOR YOUR RESUME

It is estimated that 90 – 95% of jobs listed online use some form of Applicant Tracking Software to sort and rank candidates. ATS scans resumes for matches to the job description and looks for specific criteria defined by the employer. This means that the job description, keywords, requirements, and qualifications need to be captured on the resume in order for an applicant to be recognized as qualified by the software. A candidate may be highly qualified, but if the software doesn't recognize the terminology on the resume, a human person may never view the candidate's resume. Each time a candidate applies for a position, the resume needs to be tailored to that role. The days of one resume working for all applications are long gone. Since veterans are likely to have held roles with multiple collateral duties and secondary jobs, it is vital to trim down experience and highlight the aspects of past work that speak directly to the position at hand.

3 CHRONOLOGICAL vs. FUNCTIONAL

Chronological resumes are the standard format of resume with which most people are familiar. In this format, the work history is developed in reverse chronological order from present or most recent to oldest. For those with longer work history (20+ years), it is important not to attempt capturing every single role in full. Instead, extensively develop the past ten to twelve years and include a "professional footnote" to list older experience. If a candidate attempts to fit twenty or more years of work experience on paper the resume becomes too long and recruiters will not read it.

Functional resumes are those that describe a candidate's experience within the framework of highlighted skills and abilities rather than formatted within specific jobs. This format is popular amongst candidates who are transitioning into a new field or who have significant gaps in work history because it mitigates those red flags on paper. In large, functional resumes should not be used unless the applicant is sending their resume to an intended reader. With ATS required fields of job title, company name, and dates, functional resumes cannot be effectively scanned through the system and those candidates are screened-out in the initial application process. Many federal hiring managers and the USAJobs platform also require chronological resumes that include full work history.

All transitioning service members should develop both a chronological and functional resume, and use either depending upon the requirements of the company or whether they're applying through an ATS or connecting directly with a recruiter.
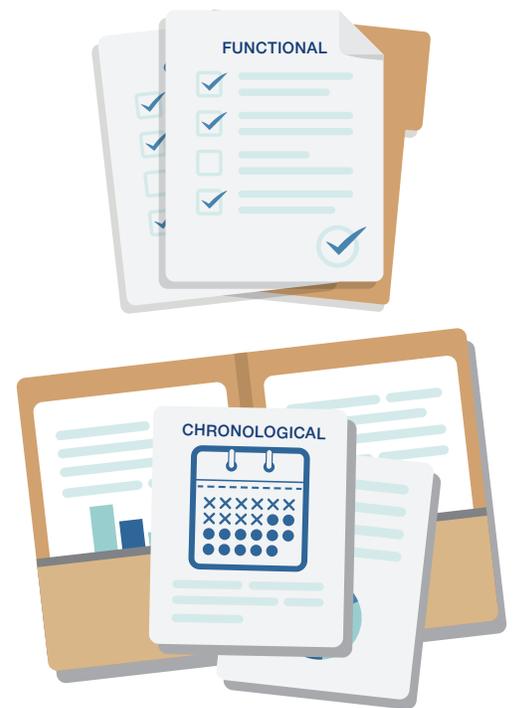
4 UTILIZE PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS

Every branch of service has their own performance evaluations and promotion systems. Whether it is an Officer Evaluation Report, FITREP, or Officer Performance Report, the content is useful. Regardless of career length, you need to show career progression on a civilian resume. In the military, as service members progress and take on roles of increasing responsibility, they move further and further away from their career specialties. In the beginning, a service member may be a logistics specialist with tangible and easily translated skills. As a senior leader, their job may not be logistics-related at all. Instead, their main role may be managing personnel and large-scale operations. This progression is the same in the civilian world. As civilians move up in a company, executive level leaders are progressing in this same fashion. Showing that progression on a military transition resume is key to communicating to civilians that our military have those same executive-level leadership skills. Within each role in the work history section, candidates can showcase their career highlights by using accomplishments listed on their performance evaluations. This formatting technique allows the reader to understand your previous job and your successes.

5 TRANSLATE YOUR SERVICE

For some military occupational specialties, civilians easily understand job titles as they are. For other job titles, translation is key for communicating the role. An "Intelligence Chief" may be changed to "Intelligence Program Manager" or a "Logistics Officer" may be changed to "Senior Project Manager." It is also important not to refer to weapons, weapon systems, or combat missions unless the resume is being written for a Department of Defense or Federal position. On a resume, "weapons" can be changed to "technologically advanced assets" and "combat missions" can be "world-wide/international/global operations." The context of the role is not as important as the skill set itself. Transition resumes need to be written in a way that captures the essence of a person's talents and qualifications. Highlighting leadership, personnel management skills, and professional progression are all key to breaking into civilian industries.

You know it as:	Civilian employers will understand it as:
NCOIC, Watch Captain, Petty Officer of the Watch	Supervisor, Manager, Coordinator
Commander, Chief	Division Head, Director, Senior Manager
Executive Officer (XO)	Deputy Director, Assistant Manager
Action Officer (AO)	Analyst (or Senior Analyst if applicable)
TDY/TAD	Business Travel
PCS	Relocation
OER/NCOER	Performance Appraisal
MOS/MOC	Career Field
Commanded	Supervised, Directed
Battalion, Unit, Platoon	Organization, Agency, Department
Mission	Responsibility, Task, Objective, Job

For transitioning service members, building a resume can seem like a major hurdle to tackle. The good news is that once a solid resume has been developed, it can be tweaked and continually used. It's worth taking the time to develop a quality resume—it will pay dividends in applying for new positions and networking with new companies.

At ClearanceJobs.com Veterans Can:

1 CREATE A FREE
CANDIDATE PROFILE
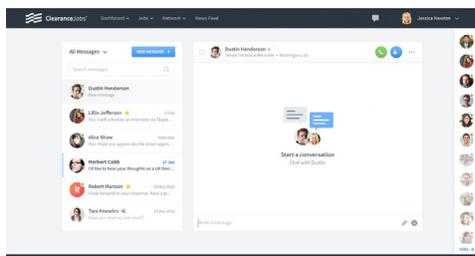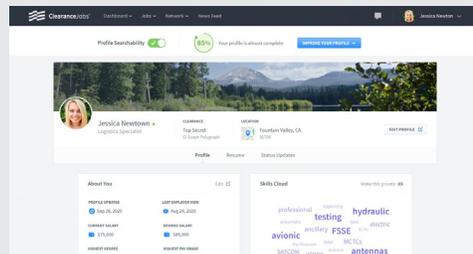
2 TALK TO EMPLOYERS
ONE-ON-ONE WITH
MESSAGE

3 ENGAGE WITH EMPLOYERS
AND CONNECTIONS
VIA DASHBOARD
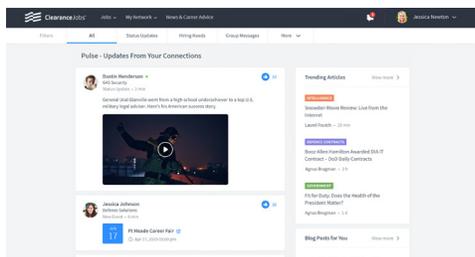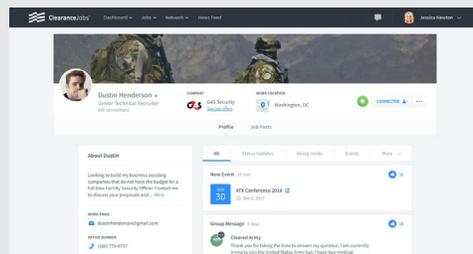
4 CONNECT WITH GROUPS,
COMPANIES, AND
RECRUITERS VIA PULSE

Written by Sarah Plaut, the Write Approach – sarahplautwriteapproach.com

ClearanceJobs®