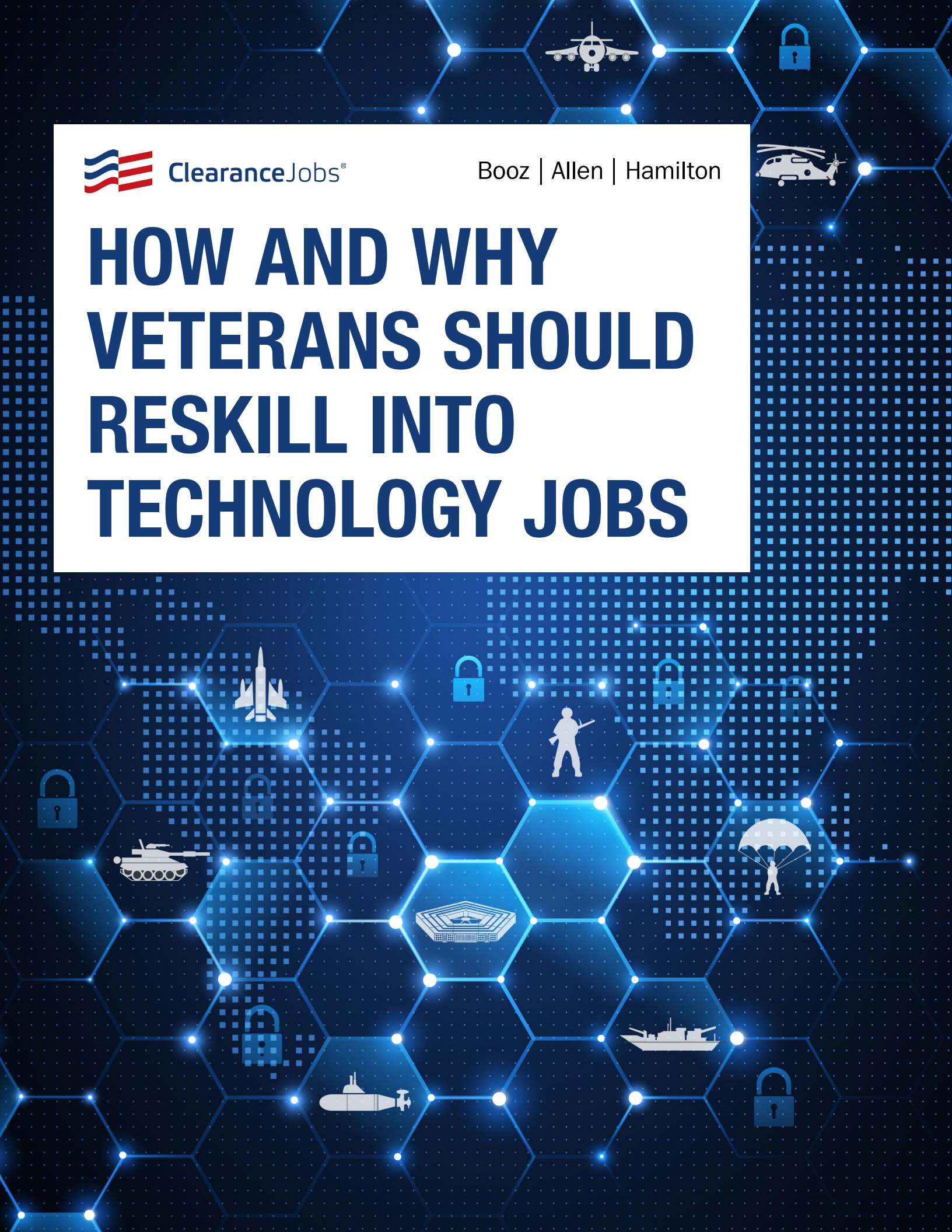




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HOW AND WHY VETERANS SHOULD RESKILL INTO TECHNOLOGY JOBS



Overview

One of the questions many of the thousands of servicemembers transitioning out of the military each year ask themselves is “What am I going to do for my career post-military?” While a lot of factors go into making that decision, a key to the process is understanding which careers have a higher quantity of open positions and the state of the competition. It’s also important to understand what qualifications are needed to be personally competitive.



One of the most common questions veterans ask is how to translate a military career into a civilian industry. Beyond just translating current skills, many veterans can also benefit from reskilling into a high-demand industry like information technology. And several career sectors within that field have some of the highest career demand: cyber, analytics, and digital.

The Veteran Advantage

Veterans are uniquely suited due their military service to fill many different roles within the civilian workforce...including fast-growing fields like cyber, analytics, and digital. Working for the federal government or with a defense contractor can feel like an extension of one’s service to the country. Veterans are also well skilled in many of the desirable soft skills needed to succeed in these

fields, like loyalty, discipline, dedication, and team orientation. While some may have gotten hands-on cyber or tech training in their military career, all veterans have a background that makes them an ideal fit for a technical career. With upskilling options, veterans can walk out of the military and into jobs in high demand tech fields with less than a year in vetted training programs.

Tech Demand is High

As the cybersecurity field grows, other roles, like cloud, analytics, and digital are on the rise as well. Every product or service requires support from cyber, analytics, and digital candidates—from conception to delivery.

Understanding the in-demand skills needed can give a leg-up in deciding what moves to make after the military. Fortunately, there are a number of programs to provide the right civilian experiences through fellowships or apprenticeships that build off of military experience and training.

Cyber is a Great Field for Veterans

The cyber sector is a great choice for transitioning servicemembers because there are many open positions, as well as opportunities for advancement. The threat landscape is expanding rapidly, with COVID-19 ushering in new risks and new bad actors in cybersecurity. Candidates who are committed to U.S. national security are in demand. And there's a wide range of cybersecurity jobs available. From incident responder to cryptographer to vulnerability assessor, veterans have many niche cyber roles to choose from, depending on training and certifications. And, it's possible to start in one role, and branch over to another as careers progress.

In Congressional testimony, Joseph Maguire, former acting Director of National Intelligence, said

“We do face significant threats; I'd say number one is not necessarily kinetic. It's cyber. This is a cyber war. We talk about whether or not the great competition is taking place with Russia and China, and we are building ships and weapons to do that; but in my estimation, the great competition with these countries is taking place right now and is doing that in the cyber realm.”



Analytics Careers for Veterans

Organizations need innovative strategies, services, and technologies to unlock the value of their data analytics potential. The benefit of a field like analytics is that it offers roles in data visualization, machine learning, artificial intelligence, and quantum computing. You don't have to be an Avenger to defend your country with quantum computing.

In order to be successful in analytics, it's important to master coding languages like Python, SQL, or R, as well as get experience working with data or understanding it with visualization tools like Tableau or Power BI. If military service didn't offer this experience, upskilling programs or online training and bootcamps can give a leg up in taking that next step into this in-demand field. By 2025, it's estimated that there will be 20 million new jobs in data analysis, machine learning, and AI. Veterans who can reskill into these careers today—and companies who can support them in doing so—will benefit for decades to come.

“ If America embraces and invests in AI based on our values, it will transform our country and ensure that the United States and its allies continue to shape the world for the good of all humankind.”

– YII Bajraktari, Executive Director of the National Security Commission on Artificial Intelligence (NSCAI)

The Digital Veteran

Regardless of whether or not you're a true digital native, national security needs more candidates who have the skills to design and develop websites, apps, networks, and integrate systems so they talk to each other. Digital careers aren't always highly technical, either. Graphic designers, user experience professionals and systems integrators are in high-demand across the cleared workforce—coding experience is always a plus, but not always required. Problem-solving and creating new and improved solutions are simply another way to support the defense of the United States.

The foundation of the U.S. government is now digital, and digital solutions are the backbone for everyday operations across government and industry. More than half of companies say that they don't have the talent needed for the digital transformation that needs to occur, and with

reskilling options, it's possible to be a part of this digital revolution.



Veterans and Tech Compensation

While graduating from a boot camp may not immediately pull in a six-figure salary, jobs where the individual has a certification or two earn on average around \$85,000 per year. Having an applicable degree can boost pay even more. While starting out without certifications may mean a lower salary, the good news in tech fields is that continually adding on training, certifications, or education can continually increase compensation. A smart career move would be to use Tuition Assistance or Tuition Top-Up (if still serving) or the Post 9/11 G.I. Bill (if already out) to pay for certifications or a degree. It will improve competitiveness and boost starting pay with little to no cost.



The Tech Jobs Landscape:

ROOM TO GROW IF YOU'RE READY TO RESKILL



When moving into the technology field post-military, it is helpful to know the landscape.

According to the (ISC)² Cybersecurity Workforce Study, 2020, 83% of individuals currently working cybersecurity are between the ages of 25 to 56. This breaks down into 39% Generation X and 44% Millennials. The remaining 17% fall either above or below the age range. However, it is important to note that this age range falls perfectly in line for veterans having served anywhere from one six-year enlistment all the way to a 30-year career of military service.

As far as education, 79% have a bachelor's degree; of those, 49% are in the computer and information sciences field; 20% are in engineering. Interestingly enough, in cybersecurity, 8% only have a high school diploma—illustrating that while having a degree is helpful, it is not the only way into this field. Many are successful in finding tech jobs with various high-value certifications, experience, or a combination of both. The key is understanding

the gaps, current knowledge and skills, and then applying to the right programs to fill in the gaps.

Most military members today have some level of computer literacy—even if it is only at the personal computing level. However, due to the complexity of modern military equipment, a large number of servicemembers leaving the military each year have extensive IT training and experience...much of it that rivals civilians already working in the tech field.

Statistically, cyber professionals have on average 11.5 years working in an IT role—6.5 years of which is working in cybersecurity. Again, this meshes nicely with military veterans working IT positions that have a few enlistments under their belt before deciding to leave military service.

Every veteran leaves military service with coveted skills. But not all of them have the exact skillset required to jump immediately into the civilian career field they choose. That's why reskilling and upskilling into new fields is so important.

(ISC)² conducts an annual study that studies the challenges and opportunities in the cybersecurity profession. The most recent one, referenced here is: Cybersecurity Professionals Stand Up to a Pandemic: (ISC)² Cybersecurity Workforce Study, 2020.

G.I. Bill Education Benefits

Veterans with three years of more of eligible service come out of the military with 36 months of Post 9/11 GI Bill entitlement. This entitlement pays tuition and fees up to the in-state resident rate for 36 months at public schools; if attending a private or foreign school, it can pay up to \$26,042.81 per year.

Regardless of public or private, veteran students also get a housing allowance averaging \$1,900 per month and up to \$1,000 per year for books. The financial support from the GI Bill helps ensure graduates come out of college with considerably less debt than many of their fellow non-veterans' students, and some come out of college debt-free!



The Value of Reskilling

Investing in reskilling veterans demonstrates a culture that is people-oriented. It boosts morale and works to fill a gap with already cleared candidates. New employees who feel invested in are more likely to hit the ground running and stick around longer when a career path is outlined from the onset. Not only do veterans have the required clearance, but

they also have the mission focus that is needed in national security. Companies can look at the gaps in the market, factoring in the demand for tech jobs, and come alongside candidates by either creating company-provided reskilling programs or linking up with options available in the industry.



GREG WENZEL

Booz Allen Hamilton Executive Vice President
and Global Defense Digital Battlespace Solutions Lead

“Solving tomorrow’s biggest challenges—particularly in the defense space—requires technology solutions that improve performance, readiness, and resilience. We need people who understand the mission challenges and can bring the best emerging technologies to help our clients solve them through modernization.”

Training Options

As training options grow, it can seem challenging to know which program is worth it. Here a few to consider:

- Microsoft Software & Systems Academy (MSSA) is one vendor-specific option within the DoD Skill Bridge program. It is an 18-week, in-depth program in high demand areas such as server and cloud administration, database and business intelligence, cloud application development, and cybersecurity administration.
- The Federal Virtual Training Environment (FedVTE) program is a Department of Homeland Security (DHS) initiative offering courses ranging from general security awareness to highly technically advanced certifications. The 60 courses offered all fall within the NICE (National Institute for Cybersecurity Education) framework by building the necessary KSAs (Knowledge, Skills and Abilities) necessary to enter the cybersecurity workforce.
- CyberVetsUSA is a cyber industry-led initiative that offers free online training and certifications to transitioning service members. Their courses are a skills-to-jobs pathway that fast-tracks veterans into high demand cyber careers.

Booz Allen has also identified multiple no cost or low-cost cyber training options that help veterans invest in the in-demand skills.

- Onward to Opportunity Information Security Courses—is a self-paced, no cost career skills program through Syracuse University for service members to get certifications for CompTIA Security+, CompTIA Advanced Security Practitioner (CASP+), Information Systems Security Certified Professional (CISSP)
- [Booz Allen's Tech Excellence Program](#) is an option for candidates considering a career in digital, analytics, cyber or engineering. Participants receive hands-on training in these leading-edge fields while earning a salary.
- VetsinTech Security+ Bootcamp is a free, five-day bootcamp to get participants ready to get their CompTIA Security+ certification.

DoD Skillbridge Transitioning Program

During the last 180 days of service, military members should consider participating in a DoD Skillbridge program. Booz Allen partners with both Hiring Our Heroes and Hiring Vets Now to offer fellowship programs that provide valuable hands-on tech experience and training.



“By working together on Booz Allen’s Mil/Tech Workforce initiative, Hiring Our Heroes is making sure that service members obtain the skills they need to transition into in-demand careers,” said Eric Eversole, president of Hiring Our Heroes and vice president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

The Role of Certifications

In the ClearanceJobs 2021 Security Clearance Compensation Report, 49% of respondents said they had at least one certification, and the average total compensation for those who selected at least one certification was \$110,857. However, average compensation for uncertified respondents was \$96,177—a \$14,680 difference. It may seem like a computer science or engineering degree can be a rather straightforward approach, but certifications can seem vague and more confusing for candidates. But with a significant bump in compensation, it's an avenue worth exploring.

Generally, certifications are broken down into two types: vendor specific and non-vendor specific. Vendor specific includes certification in products from companies like Cisco or Microsoft; 49% hold one or more of these certifications. On the other hand, non-vendor certifications are more general in nature; 47% hold this type of certification(s). Some certifications are deemed more desirable than others—especially in cyber. For example, the top non-vendor specific one is the CISSP—held by 43% working in the field.



Other popular certifications in tech are:

- Amazon Web Services (AWS) Cloud Developer
- CASP
- CCNA
- CCNP Security
- CCSP
- CISA
- CISM
- CISSP with concentration
- CompTIA Security+
- Cyber Ops Certified Web Security Professional
- Microsoft Azure Cloud

Each career field dictates the necessary certifications. So, it's important to align certification choices with job requirements. But a certification communicates knowledge and skills to an employer, which is worthy of higher compensation.

A Security Clearance Matters

Because many tech jobs require a security clearance, having (or having had) one can be a major employment decision factor. Depending on a variety of factors, a security clearance can be good up to two years after getting out of the military.

So, transitioning out of the military with a security clearance in hand is a key advantage for service members looking to grow their skills and capabilities in exploding fields.

Creating the Total Package

With the training, experience, and soft skills, veterans are ideal candidates to help fill the tech personnel shortage. With the number of servicemembers leaving the military each year, this is yet an untapped resource that employers—both public and private—should be actively recruiting.

By upskilling into a tech field, veterans are focusing on in-demand and future-focused careers, providing mission-focused work, job security, and growth potential for years to come.

“To warfighters, the digital battlespace isn’t really in the future—it’s here, now, in the form of increasingly savvy adversaries and increasingly complex battlefields.”

—Greg Wenzel, Booz Allen Hamilton Executive Vice President and Global Defense Digital Battlespace Solutions Lead

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