

## Business and Professional Women's Foundation First Impressions Matter When Hiring Women Veterans

Civilian employer attitudes about the value of military service in the workplace made a lasting impression on women veterans, according to Business and Professional Women's Foundation 2007 survey, *Workingwomen Speak Out II: Women Veterans in Transition*. The research project captured the transition experiences of women moving from the military into the civilian workforce.

Women veterans were more likely to find their desired job when their first post-military employer indicated positive opinions about the value of their military work experience. Employers who didn't encourage women veterans to talk about their service during the job interview were perceived as less supportive.

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The survey also found that numerous factors play a role in determining the success of a woman veteran's transition, including education level, marital status and responsibility for dependents. Workplace culture is another factor that affects how a veteran employee may feel about her new job. For example, when women veterans felt their military service was appreciated by coworkers, they were twice as likely to respond positively about their first post-military job and were more likely to provide a positive assessment of their job skills.

### **Employers Should Care What Women Veterans Think**

Women veterans are a growing segment of the U.S. labor force. In 1980, there were 1.1 million women veterans, but by 2007 their numbers had increased to 1.7 million. Understanding how to fully engage this growing segment of society could pay off for employers and community leaders facing an impending leadership drain as Baby Boomers age out of the workforce and leave behind a smaller generation of mid-careerists to fill in the gaps.

Women veterans have many of the skills employers desire. Recruiting women veterans makes good business sense, because the military has already expended extensive resources to train them to be the most skilled, efficient, inventive, disciplined and adaptable employees possible.

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*In-depth analysis of this survey and more information about the Women Veterans in Transition research project is available at [www.bpwfoundation.org](http://www.bpwfoundation.org).*

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Veterans who experienced successful work transitions expressed confidence in the following skill sets.

### **Women Veterans Have the Ability To**

- » Set and achieve goals.
- » Locate, understand and interpret written information.
- » Perform high level computer skills.
- » Communicate effectively with coworkers.
- » Think creatively, make decisions and learn on the job.
- » Recognize and solve problems.
- » Act responsibly.
- » Maintain positive self-esteem.
- » Demonstrate friendliness.

### **How Employers Can Make a Good First Impression**

Employers made a good impression on women veterans when the prospective hires felt:

- » Comfortable talking extensively about their military career during the interview.
- » Their military experience gave them an advantage in the workplace.
- » Employers appreciated their service to the country.
- » Employers valued their military training.
- » Employers valued the skills they learned in the military.

### **How Employers Can Recruit and Retain Women Veterans**

- » Create a culture of acceptance.
  - » Inquire whether women applicants have been in the military.
  - » Ask women veterans to talk about their military experience and to relate what they've learned in the military to the job for which they are applying.
  - » Encourage coworkers to see the connection between a woman veteran's military experience and her civilian job skills.
  - » Articulate the value the organization places on their military background.
- » Provide resources and services that enable women veterans to translate the skills learned in the military to civilian positions.
- » Do not use a one-size fits all approach: Younger, non-college educated women veterans surveyed were less likely than their older, college-educated veteran peers to observe the value of their military experience in the civilian workplace or to have positive job search experiences. Employers wanting to recruit young, emerging leaders will need to provide more initial support.
- » Encourage Human Resources to provide information about veteran benefits to both male and female employees, even if they haven't self-identified, because many women do not indicate their veteran status. *SWD*

Business and Professional Women's Foundation | [www.bpwfoundation.org](http://www.bpwfoundation.org)

**Deborah L. Frett** | *Chief Executive Officer* | [foundation@bpwfoundation.org](mailto:foundation@bpwfoundation.org)