

10 Job Search Myths and Realities

What do you know about today's job market? You might have an image of how the job market works based on a combination of facts, stereotypes, and myths learned from vicarious experiences and well-meaning individuals. Here are 10 myths you should know about civilian jobs, careers, and the job search before you proceed to organize yourself for today and tomorrow's employment realities. The corresponding realities constitute a set of how-to principles for developing a successful post-military job search.

Myth 1: The military doesn't pay well. I'll be able to make a lot more money in the civilian world.

Reality: To the surprise of many, starting salaries for most departing military personnel (especially officers) are often less, at least in terms of take-home, than their active duty pay. You've been doing much better than you think.

Myth 2: I need a college education to find a good job in the corporate world.

Reality: While a college education may give you a leg up on the competition, the lack of a degree certainly does not close the door. In fact, most Americans do not hold a 4-year college degree. Many employers seek former military personnel because of their reputation for hard work and dedication to accomplishing the mission. Civilian companies seek non-commissioned officers without a college degree because they will benefit from their military experience, knowledge, leadership, discipline, and strong work ethic.

Myth 3: It's best to broadcast or "shotgun" my resume to as many employers as possible.

Reality: Broadcasting your resume to employers is a game of chance in which you usually waste your time and money. It's always best to target your resume on those employers who have vacancies or who might have openings in the near future. Your single best approach for uncovering job leads will be the process called networking, which will be covered in Chapter 6.

Myth 4: Because I was a mid-level manager in the military, I should be hired as a mid-level manager in the corporate world.

Reality: It's possible, but don't be surprised if you end up in some other type of position. While private companies take into consideration past military experience, most will want you to prove yourself before placing you in a leadership position. Mid-level management positions usually go to those who have experience within the organization; few are direct-hire positions. You may quickly re-establish yourself as a leader in the civilian world, but don't expect to begin in such a position.

Myth 5: Few jobs are available for me in today's competitive job market.

Reality: This may be true if you lack marketable skills and insist on applying for jobs listed in newspapers, employment agencies, or personnel offices. Competition in the advertised job market usually is high, especially for jobs requiring few skills. But numerous jobs with limited competition are available in the "hidden job market." Use your networking discussed in Chapter 6 to search out these jobs. Also, consider attaining a certificate or degree required for a particular field you are interested in but don't currently have the skills or work experience needed. Talk to an educational counselor prior to separating or retiring from the military to ensure you know the educational benefits for which you qualify.

Myth 6: Anyone can find a job; all you need to know is HOW to find a job.

Reality: Job search skills, while important, are not ALL you need to land a good job. You must possess the proper skills required in today's post-industrial, high-tech society. It requires employees to demonstrate intelligence and concrete work skills as well as a willingness to relocate to new communities offering greater job opportunities.

Myth 7: My spouse will be just as supportive of my job search as she/he has been of my military career.

Reality: Many spouses justifiably feel insecure about such a career transition. Spouses might be worried about the family's future, so you should involve your spouse throughout your transition and actively engage them in the job search process. You can do many of the exercises together, including assessments, resume writing, research and networking. Such involvement will generate much needed support and assistance, minimize pressure to make premature career decisions, and is healthy for a marriage.

Myth 8: I should take the highest paying job offered to me.

Reality: While compensation is an important factor in the decision-making process, you should not make it the sole criterion. The most important consideration should be whether or not you'll enjoy the job. Remember, your job is something you will be doing for at least eight hours, five days a week. When it comes time to evaluate your job offers, make sure you think about the pros and cons of each and select the one that best fits your skills, interests, and abilities. Exercise ----- in Chapter ----- will assist you in weighing your options.

Myth 9: A good resume is the key to getting a job.

Reality: While resumes play an important role in the job search process, they are often overrated. The purpose of a resume is to communicate your qualifications to employers who, in turn, invite you to job interviews. The key to getting a job is the job interview, not the resume.

Myth 10: It's not necessary to write letters to employers -- just send a resume or complete an application.

Reality: Employers often report that a candidate's letters were more important than his or her resume in landing the job. You should be prepared to write several types of job search letters, including cover, approach and thank you letters. Examples of these letters are provided in Chapter 5. In addition to communicating your level of literacy, these letters enable you to express important values sought by employers, such as tactfulness, thoughtfulness, likability, enthusiasm, and perseverance.

