



## How to Create a Successful Transition from the Military

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The skills that make a person successful in the military are not necessarily the same ones that make a person successful in the corporate environment.

The military is defined by a chain of command and a clear set of rules of behavior and interaction. Uniforms indicate rank, profession and achievements. By contrast, the civilian community has no such clear rules or structure. The qualities that lead to success in the military are not necessarily what will lead to success in the corporate environment.

The last 20 years of research has suggested that there are a number of characteristics that consistently differentiate between what has been called a "star performer" and an "average performer."

According to Jeff Auerbach, Ph.D., these characteristics can be combined into 5 core skills:

- Knowing Yourself
- Maintaining Control
- Reading Others
- Perceiving Accurately
- Communicating with Flexibility

How can this be related to transitioning out of the military?

### **Knowing Yourself**

In the military, it's the mission that matters most. Feelings have no part in completing a mission. Few corporate environments are fully mission based. Egos, instincts, gut feelings; professional courtesy, etc. often come into play. Star performers understand how their feelings affect their decision-making process.

### **Maintaining Control**

What are the consequences to a high ranking officer who yells at a lower rank personnel? Usually nothing. In the corporate environment, yelling is rarely tolerated. Star performers have good impulse control and are not prone to react to situations without thinking things through.

### **Reading Others**

In the military, you give an order and expect it to be followed. In the corporate environment, you need to understand the people you work with and the people who work for you if you're going to get along with them and get them to want to work for you.

### **Perceiving Accurately**

Without the structure and rules of the military, internal cues to success become vital. Some companies have a flat structure. An employee who appears lazy and lacking in discipline and accountability may be highly valued by the company.

### **Communicating with Flexibility**

The "my way or the highway" approach to communicating doesn't result in high productivity in the corporate environment. It's important to learn to use different communication styles depending on the situation while respecting other people's needs.

Transitioning from the military to civilian life is not unlike immigrating to a new country. Often, that person has to learn a new language, a new culture, and a new way of relating to people. Even after being on active duty for only three years, the difference between military life and civilian life is noticeable. It's important for military TAP programs and other agencies who work with discharged military personnel to understand the psychological aspects of this transition.

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