



EMPLOYERS' IMPRESSIONS OF VETERANS

The perceived value of veterans in the
workforce



in partnership with



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This survey seeks to bridge the disconnect between employer impressions and the true value of veterans in the workforce. The results identify traits, attributes and skills in which employers are underestimating the value of veterans the most. We are hopeful that this research will help the business community leverage veterans in the workforce while helping veterans attain more access to employment opportunities in San Diego.

As identified in the [Regional Jobs Strategy](#) 2017 Dashboards, San Diego ranks highest in veterans in the workforce compared to our competitor metropolitan areas. In 2016, 6.8 percent of San Diego's workforce were veterans compared to a national average of 4.7 percent.

Having the largest percentage of veterans in our workforce does not translate to lower unemployment levels for veterans in San Diego. When compared to the same competitor metropolitan areas, San Diego ranks second highest in veteran unemployment. At 5.6 percent in 2016, San Diego's veteran unemployment rate is nearly double that of Austin, TX (3.0 percent). Younger veterans in particular have experienced greater unemployment than their non-veteran counterparts and older veterans.

For this effort, 300 employers were surveyed by Competitive Edge Research resulting in a margin of sampling error of +/- 5.66 percent. All respondents employed at least five employees. The survey was conducted between October 25 and November 3, 2017. Results presented are weighted by size of employer.

Veteran-Focused Human Resource Practices

It is easy to think, because employers operate in San Diego, they likely have experience and understanding of the veteran community. Of the respondents interviewed, 52.4 percent had not employed military veterans, members of the National Guard, or reservists as employees. Only 12.2 percent of employers had employed more than two veterans. This finding helps to emphasize the need for additional outreach to employers about the value of veterans. Of those employers with experience hiring veterans, 77.0 percent were very satisfied with the military veterans, members of National Guard, or reservists who have worked at their organization.

Potentially identifying an opportunity for business outreach, the survey found 42.6 percent of respondents were unfamiliar with the veteran-focused federal and state tax breaks.

Additionally, the survey found that 49.1 percent of employers surveyed have never made deliberate efforts to hire veterans, and 45.0 percent of companies surveyed do not take any special steps to ensure that current human resources practices are veteran friendly. These should be seen as areas of opportunity for the business community that would result in increased veteran employment.



Traits, Attributes and Skills

This survey intends to understand those traits, attributes and skills that are of most value to employers, and to understand the degree to which employers believe veterans embody them more so than the typical civilian. Prior to designing the survey, the Chamber Defense, Veterans and Military Affairs Committee worked with staff to identify the traits, attributes and skills that are consistent with military service. That discussion helped to inform the survey design and analysis.

Traits are deep-seated qualities that are difficult to learn and unlearn. Attributes are qualities that can be developed. As opposed to traits, they are not ingrained, but learned over time and through experiences. Skills are the ability to translate your traits, attributes, and knowledge into real world expertise and capability.

Eighteen traits, attributes and skills were identified through a literature review as valuable to employers. The traits, attributes and skills indicated as at least “somewhat valuable” by over 98 percent of employers surveyed were:

Traits, Attributes, & Skills	% of Employers Indicating Value			
	At Least Somewhat	Extremely	Very	Somewhat
Accountability	100.0%	63.4%	33.3%	3.4%
Organization & Managing Multiple Priorities	99.7%	45.5%	38.0%	16.2%
Detail-oriented	99.4%	48.9%	40.8%	9.7%
Ablity to Listen & Communicate	99.2%	60.1%	36.1%	3.0%
Professionalism	98.6%	59.7%	28.9%	10.0%
Determination & Resilience	98.6%	23.4%	55.8%	19.4%

Employers were also asked about their impression of workers who are military veterans with respect to each of the valued traits, attributes and skills. The traits, attributes and skills for which over 50 percent of employers believe veterans are “somewhat better” or “much better” than others were:

Traits, Attributes, & Skills	% of Employers Indicating Value		
	At Least Somewhat	Much Better	Somewhat Better
Determination & Resilience	55.3%	27.7%	27.6%
Accountability	53.5%	29.0%	24.5%
Team-focused	53.4%	24.8%	28.6%
Detail-oriented	52.8%	24.2%	28.6%
Leadership	51.2%	23.7%	27.5%
Professionalism	50.6%	24.0%	26.6%



The survey results reveal several potential areas of focus for veteran employment efforts. These may include the traits, attributes and skills that scored highest in importance to employers, and lowest in employers' impressions of the value brought by veterans. They include: (% At Least "Somewhat Valuable" / % "Somewhat Better" or "Much Better")

Traits, Attributes, & Skills	% At Least "Somewhat Valuable"	% At Least "Somewhat Better"
Ability to Learn Complex Concepts	87.6%	24.9%
Organization & Managing Multiple Priorities	99.7%	42.0%
Creativity	79.3%	21.7%
Problem Solving & Critical Thinking	96.6%	41.2%

Conclusion

Across San Diego County, employers understand that veterans are of substantial value. Nearly all employers find veterans are better than their civilian counterparts in such areas as determination, accountability, and professionalism. However, by comparing our veteran unemployment rate to competitor metropolitan areas, it is apparent there is room for improvement. With so many veterans in our workforce, and such high veteran unemployment, San Diego employers are missing an opportunity.

It may be more strategic to focus on traits, attributes, and skills that scored highest in importance to employers, and lowest in employers' impressions of the value brought by veterans. These areas include the ability to learn complex concepts and managing multiple priorities. This focus could help to close the gap between perceived and true value of veterans in the workforce.

San Diego's connection with the military is deep and long lasting. We are home to one of the largest military regions in the country resulting in an immense amount of talent and expertise in our veteran community. San Diego's connection to the military is what helped establish our city, businesses, and communities. Better understanding veterans' strengths should go a long way towards serving employers, veterans, and our entire region.



About the San Diego Regional Chamber Foundation

The San Diego Regional Chamber Foundation is a 501(c)3 foundation. The Foundation's mission is to create the most business-friendly region in California through investment in research, education, and leadership. The Foundation focuses its research, education, and leadership cultivation around the issues that influence San Diego's business climate: workforce development, cross-border business, veteran's employment, infrastructure, and quality of life.