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MORE THAN A
DISCHARGE
BOOK

WRITTEN FOR
ACTIVE DUTY &
DISCHARGED
VETERANS

MORE THAN A
DISCHARGE
BOOK

TAKE CONTROL.
KNOW YOUR WORT
TRANSFORM YOUR

DAN MILB

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DISCHARGE
BOOK

I discharged after serving for over 10 years and, like many other veterans have experienced, my transition to civilian work and life wasn't easy. The stuff that was normal for me while in uniform suddenly became abnormal. What stuff? Almost everything! It shouldn't have come as a surprise, only 1% of the population serve as Active Duty, which means us veterans need to learn how the other 99% work and adjust to their environment. After transitioning and spending years working with civilians, I can share things that I wish I had known before my career change. It might sound simple enough, but many of us struggle in our first few years after discharge. We can feel lost, frustrated, or misunderstood. Truth is, us veterans are capable of more than we give ourselves credit for. This book is designed to help anticipate discharge and plan for what's ahead.

Dan Milberg is an Australian living in the U.S. After serving 12 years in uniform he moved from Sydney to Chicago to pursue a corporate career. He now helps active duty personnel anticipate their discharge and transition to civilian life. Dan holds a Masters of Business and a Masters of Project Management from the University of New South Wales, Australia.

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"A GOOD PLAN VIOLENTLY EXECUTED NOW IS
BETTER THAN A PERFECT PLAN EXECUTED NEXT WEEK."

~ GEORGE SMITH PATTON JR.

CONTENTS

AUTHOR'S NOTE & DEDICATION

It's 0956h on Christmas eve and I'm sitting here at a quaint coffee shop in Northern Virginia as I write this note. Outside is an American flag waving in the breeze. Below it flies a black and white POW/MIA flag, now recognized as the Solemn Black and White Banner that serves as a symbol for all those who haven't come home. I am proud to call myself a veteran and I hold strong respect for anyone who makes the decision to serve in the armed forces. Wearing the uniform represents more than simply a job, it exhibits a commitment and sacrifice that few people are willing to make. This book is dedicated to these people, to our active duty personnel and all who have served in the past.

It has been 7 years since I had to wear a cap before stepping outside, or had to look at rank slides to learn whether I need to throw a salute. Since my discharge and transition to the civilian workforce, I feel more appreciative for the sacrifices of our active duty men and women. It's that feeling of going to sleep in your own bed, jumping into a hot shower, or tasting your favorite drink while sitting with friends. These are all things that we can begin to take for granted after discharge. It's the luxury of being "home", yet it's what most civilians naturally expect as part of everyday life. Saying "thank you for your service" means recognizing every sacrifice that active duty personnel make, even the small ones, while still respecting the commitment to make the ultimate sacrifice.

Thank you for your service. I hope you enjoy my book.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

After joining the Navy at 17 years old I found myself in basic training, straight out of high-school, standing shoulder-to-shoulder with guys from all parts of the country, each of us coming from different backgrounds. I started my career in the armed forces and it was the best decision I could have made. Fast-forward 12 years, it's my last day in uniform. Everything I had ever known and cared about had become irrelevant. I was a veteran, going to work as a "civvie", ready to start a fresh career with no idea of what to expect. I was 29, excited but anxious.

Skip ahead another 6 years, I went from being a SNCO in the Navy and was now a Director of Technology Programs at a billion-dollar health tech company in Chicago. My transition and this book isn't a "success story", it's simply a "story", however it comes with some tips and advice that I wish I received before I discharged. Very few civilians go-through a total career change, but it's something that every active duty man and woman has to consider. I'm an advocate for veterans in business and the corporate industry, this book shares my perspective on it and the civilian workforce, with an aim to help active duty personnel who are approaching their re-enlistment.

PURPOSE & PREFACE

I discharged after serving for over 10 years and, like many other veterans have experienced, my transition to civilian work and life wasn't easy. The stuff that was normal for me while in uniform suddenly became abnormal. What stuff? Almost everything! It shouldn't have come as a surprise, only 1% of the population serve as Active Duty, which means us veterans need to learn how the other 99% work and adjust to their environment. It might sound simple enough, but many of us struggle in our first few years after discharge. We can feel lost, frustrated, or misunderstood. Without the right preparation these feelings can reluctantly force us back into re-enlistment or see quality operators downward-spiral with no purpose or direction. This book is designed to help anticipate discharge and plan for what's ahead.

I wrote this book for anybody who has served or is serving in uniform. If you've done basic training in any armed forces you have been indoctrinated to work and think differently to civilians. After years in this environment, it's normal to get Joining Instructions for new postings, do Readiness Training for deployments, and wear a patch on your arm that tells people your job. On the flipside, it's abnormal to walk into the civilian environment and do things like write a resume, get phone-screened by a recruiter, or confidently talk about yourself and how you can fill a vacant job. This book helps veterans forecast and prepare for the abnormal, then adapt to it.

Take control.
Know your worth.
Transform your career.

DON'T RELY ON ANYBODY: OWN YOUR DISCHARGE

Our military mindset

From our earliest days in uniform, one of the core principles we are taught is to "work as a team". We learn very quickly that anybody who separates themselves from the team, or gloats about their individual effort, gets high-lighted as not being a "team player". They get called-out and made an example of "what not to do", which typically happens a lot in basic training. I can personally recall this happening to me at the start of my career. It was 0500h and my recruit school squad was standing formed-up out-side our accommodation block, I was the last person to

make it downstairs to join them. Less than 1 minute late, my instructor made a spectacle of my failure to be on-time, and instead of only punishing me, my entire squad was punished. This is something we have all experienced in uniform and it's a deliberate style of military conditioning. It's done to develop trust and to prepare us for active duty service, but it's not normal. Few civilians understand it and even less value it.

Once we have made the decision to discharge, even before we have submitted our discharge papers, it's important to acknowledge that we are leaving this teamwork driven environment. Why is it important? Because it rarely exists anywhere else.

What do I mean when I say it rarely exists? Well, specifically, our typical veteran understanding and experience of teamwork is very different to a civilian's understanding and experience. Most civilians have never been punished for somebody else's failure. They haven't endured the stuff that veterans go-through that builds camaraderie and close-bonds, and they don't undergo the level of group training or repetition that promotes trust in each other. These are all things that contribute to our veteran understanding and definition of teamwork. Instead, for almost every civilian, particularly those working in an office or business, the word teamwork is synonymous with "inclusion", "collaboration", and "synergy". For us in uniform, these words are just useless fluff or something that we might hear during a

'mandatory awareness training'. In other words, the civilian definition and understanding of teamwork is very different to ours and in many ways it's opposite to how our rank structure and chain-of-command works.

My point is that having served for a minimum of 4 years, we no longer work the same way that civilians do and we have a tendency to be reliant on a system that puts the team above the individual. We rely on hierarchy and support from the DoD; we make formal requests, we get approval, and we follow some kind of procedure or policy for anything we engage in. Civilians don't do this, they don't rely on anybody.

Shifting to a civilian mindset

Changing our mindset doesn't mean abandoning who we are and how we think as veterans. It means understanding and appreciating how different we are from civilians, specifically how we think and work differently. Active duty staff make-up 1% of the workforce, the other 99% perform very differently to the way we are accustomed to working. So how different are we from civilians? On the surface and succinctly put, we are more disciplined and structured. We favor things that we are comfortable with, which is usually an organized workplace. For many of us this means referring to a clear process, having some general routines and rules for doing work, and a set of written instructions that explain how things should function.

From personal experience, in the civilian workforce, it is very rare to walk into a company and find these things established and in-place, or even existing. In most cases, civilian businesses will have a loose set of rules and, in general, will rely on individual skill and ability as the core capability for overall company performance. Talk of process, routines and policy doesn't dominate meeting agendas, instead it's seen as a burden or a way of policing how people should be doing their job. This is the opposite to what veterans are used to. These differences are high-lighted more in later chapters, but it's key to understand this workplace disparity from the start.

So, with this common civilian-veteran workplace disparity in-mind, how should we think differently about discharging? Firstly, we can start behaving like civilians before we enter the civilian workforce. That means putting yourself first and putting everything else second to what you personally want to achieve. This is a difficult adjustment to make while active duty because it's the opposite to how we work and train, and it goes against our indoctrinated nature and loyalty to our job. But it's a change we need to make for a successful transition. We can't keep our "follow orders" and "get approval" mindset if we want a lucrative civilian career. We need a mindset that asks for forgiveness rather than permission, which is foreign for most of us veterans, unless you have a conduct record that's deeper than Marianas Trench!

Putting yourself first and behaving like a civilian means changing the way we look at our active duty service. It's important to shift our mindset from being paternal and military-career focused, to simply looking at our active duty like it's a job that pays the bills. This might sound weird, particularly when many of us share a patriotic and proud sense of duty when wearing the uniform. But the fact is, once we submit our discharge papers we don't matter anymore as a military resource. It's an unfortunate truth, but in some cases senior ranks will treat their lower ranks unfairly after receiving their discharge papers, it's not overly prevalent, but it exists.

I personally had a good rapport with my chain-of-command and didn't get any rough duties or tasks on my way out, but I have heard of guys and girls being treated poorly in their final months, which sadly resulted in disgruntled feelings. In the next chapter, we visit how to control rough treatment in our final year of service. I would like to think it's uncommon, I haven't done any surveys on how veterans feel about their time in the service, but in my experience, I've noticed that many of us hold some bitterness that is linked to our reasons for discharging. We've all had the tough gigs, whether it's a lot of time away from home or getting shafted with regular weekend duties. There's always something that we can reflect on and think, "yeah, that sucked." For some of us there are more significant reasons, but on the flipside there are some awesome experiences that every active duty and discharged veteran

can reminisce on with a smile and think "hey, that was pretty cool."

The key is to be disciplined about our mindset, to control our thoughts in how we approach our discharge. Don't wait for approval to start your discharge planning, just do it, and do it alone. Nobody cares about your transition more than you. The DoD "transition assistance" offered to us isn't sincere, it's a government initiative that makes it look like they care about our successful civilian employment. Take the money and time they give us, then own your discharge. Don't rely on anybody.

CUTOUT TIME TO...
PUT YOURSELF FIRST

CIVILIANS ARE COMPETITIVE AT WORK
SELF COMES FIRST

WHY DO THEY THINK LIKE THIS...

CIVILIANS DON'T...
✓ HAVE TRANSPARENT SALARIES
✓ LIVE WITH THEIR COLLEAGUES
✓ TRAIN AS A TEAM TO SURVIVE

VETERANS THINK DIFFERENTLY

ADJUST YOUR HEADSPACE
WHEN YOU DISCHARGE, ADJUST YOUR THINKING. START PUTTING 'SELF' BEFORE 'TEAM'...BUT BE RESPECTFUL

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YOUR DECISION: BE DELIBERATE, BE CALCULATED

Don't be bitter

I can think back to old postings and bosses that I could have happily given the bird to and walked out on, but I didn't. This makes it sound like I had a choice, but the reality is we have no choice. We get told to take whatever posting we're given and sometimes that means dealing with a rough deployment, a difficult boss, or a mess full of deadbeats. A bad SNCO or chain-of-command can make our life misery and see us counting-down the days until our post-out date. We don't get emotional about it, we just deal with

it and each of us have our own ways of doing that. Some guys find solace in the gym, others spend time alone and read books, then there's a bunch of us that prefer a drink. We go through a lot, it's normal to release it.

When it comes to our decision-making though, we shouldn't use the negatives that we experience as our main reason for wanting to leave the service. Doing this will only cause us to be bitter on our way out. Instead, we should take an approach that has some strategy, then execute that strategy with a tactical plan that sees us making forward progress to a better career. This strategy should consider 3 things: the career we want, the prerequisites needed, then the time and cost to get them.

Sharpening our skills & building confidence

Prior to creating a detailed tactical plan, it's important to know 2 things: our goals and our strategy. Abraham Lincoln was quoted with saying, "If I had five minutes to chop down a tree, I'd spend the first three sharpening my axe." Before we even get to the sharpening of our axe and chopping down trees, it's helpful to take a walk through the woods and pick a couple tall oaks that we want to take a swing at. Staying with this analogy, we can picture the axe being our resume or set of skills, and the different trees being the career opportunities. The thicker the tree, the better the salary, but the longer it will take us to cut down. Meaning, we will see a bunch of bar tender or coffee barista

jobs, which might take less time to get skills for, but don't pay as well. Typically, professional trades or corporate jobs take us longer to align ourselves to, but they are higher paying and more solid careers.

Starting a new career should be deliberate and calculated. Take some time looking at the different type of trees, pick the ones you like, then sharpen your axe and start swinging. Keep in-mind that doing this takes a while, it's not easy work. Similar to bringing down a tall oak, we sweat, our hands blister, and we need to take breaks to check our progress and refine our technique or angle. We get no return or benefit until the tree falls, meaning we only do this work for the hope of landing the job.

This tree-chopping analogy might sound odd for describing our discharge and career change. But it's an accurate way to explain the kind of preparation needed to do things like (1) getting civilian qualifications, (2) writing a resume, (3) interviewing for jobs, then (4) starting work at a civilian company. If we do these things well, there's a better chance of success in our career change. Truth is, when we discharge most of us don't do these things well, because we never had to think about that stuff while in uniform. The promising part is that we, as veterans, are familiar with repetition and training to improve our skills until we are confident with meeting a required standard. Whether that's training for a fitness test, passing a range shoot, or doing first aid drills to treat a sucking chest wound, we are used to doing stuff

over-and-over, then reviewing the results until we're at a level that gets the job done. It's important that we take this same approach when preparing for our discharge.

The odd part about discharging is that we don't have anybody telling us what standards are needed to enter the civilian workforce. Obviously, if we become a tradesman there's clear qualifications needed for electricians and the like, but there are many unwritten expectations that civilians have and understand. They aren't explained because it's stuff that's just normal for them. It probably exists more in corporate jobs, but there's a big civilian cultural difference that we need to feel out.

The happy man

Most of us enter the military from humble beginnings. There are very few of us that come from rich and affluent backgrounds with opportunities to go to Ivy League universities that lead to high-paying careers. The majority of us come from backgrounds that fall into the categories of: having family that served, holding a strong sense of patriotism for our country, or needing a job that would help us escape the town or position that we're in — sometimes it's all 3. Our decision to enlist saw us enter a better position of status, finance, or geography. In many cases, it's the better financial position that's the main drawcard. If we reflect on our recruiting interviews, most of us can recall being sold

the benefits with lines like "You will get to travel the world, while getting paid to do it!"

For me, it was getting a decent paycheck without having a university degree and getting out of my small town. I didn't have family that served and I had no idea what to expect. I was 17 years-old and was joining the Royal Australian Navy having never spent a single minute in the open ocean. After I joined, every experience I had was new and, despite how hard the situation was, it felt awesome. I was in a place that had zero tolerance for kid-like behavior and was fast becoming a man. Looking back, it was the best decision I've ever made, it's given me some of my happiest memories.

I recall even the shittiest jobs being cool to experience. Ditching gash at sea with another 5 blokes, separating the ship's trash for the week, and playing frisbee with the cardboard boxes that were supposed to be compacted into recycling. There was something therapeutic about flicking those boxes into the ocean and watching them float away into the Pacific. Another kickass gig was being overseas in Malaysia, dressed in my whites and standing on the gangway at midnight while overlooking the city lights, thinking to myself "How the fuck did I get here? This is awesome!"

At some point, ditching gash and doing gangway tricks gets boring. In fact, it gets old real quick. All the new

stuff that we experience eventually becomes routine and instead of seeing it as something that's cool to be a part of, it turns into work. We find ourselves doing weekend duties on-base thinking "This sucks." But it's normal for us to be changed by the things we've done, it matures us and it naturally sees us take stuff for granted. The rough part is that sometimes we can convince ourselves that our situation is worse than it is. Things like being overlooked for promotion year-over-year, not getting the postings that we wanted, or constantly doing shit jobs that don't make sense. I remember having to regularly wax polish a ship's passageway between the hours of midnight and 0400h — stuff like that can annoy us. If we're honest with ourselves, discharging won't make our frustrations disappear.

That said, I totally get what it's like to be pissed-off with our chain-of-command, to get given orders that have zero logic and then having to follow them without complaint. For me it happened a lot and I was more aware of it during the later years of my career, mostly because I had to pass down the orders to lower ranks and wasn't blindly following them like I would have earlier in my career.

If we take a big-picture perspective, the stuff that frustrates us is temporary and it also exists everywhere we go. It might be a different kind of frustration, but it sticks around even after we discharge. For me, when I think back, it was the tedious stuff that would tick me off. For

example, picking up every single shell casing on the range after a shoot, cleaning a ship's bulkhead that's already spotless, or pretending to extinguish your third fake fire for the day because you didn't do it fast enough the first two times. All this stuff can wind us up in the moment, but it really doesn't matter. Why doesn't it matter? Because most mental conflicts are temporary and it's our mindset that makes us think that it's a bigger deal than it really is. Don't get me wrong, getting pissed-off with a dumb decision or a stupid process is normal, in fact it's common. But unless it's constantly screwing with our situation or if it's causing us pain, we can deal with it. We can change our headspace and adjust our focus on what really matters. The takeaway is that decisions and processes don't matter.

If the message here is that decisions or processes aren't worth getting frustrated over, then what does matter? What stuff should we consider worthy of influencing our decision to discharge? There are 3 questions to ask ourselves:

> **(1) Care:** Do the people we work with care about us, or are they ignorant and inconsiderate? There's a balance here, because let's face it, we go to work to get stuff done. But if there is no personal attention, genuine conversation and banter, or appreciation for our time and effort, then it's red flag that we are an unvalued resource.

(2) Generosity: Are the people we work with cheap or are they unselfish and giving? This applies to every aspect of our work. From salary, vacation, and work hours. Even further, to things like stopping for a chat or sharing a laugh with us in a hallway, bringing food and snacks for everybody to try at work, or organizing an out-of-work event. It includes stuff like "after work drinks" at a bar, throwing darts at the local pub, or going for a walk with a colleague to grab a coffee.

(3) Commitment: Do the people we work with make us feel like we are part of the team or is there suspicion that we don't fit-in and belong? Most of us can handle a lot before throwing in the towel, as long as we are going through it with others. Our basic training is probably the best example of us feeling like we belong to something bigger than ourselves, but at some point, this either disappears or we take it for granted. Commitment is shown with things like pay-rise and promotion, but our work relationships are a better gauge. Belonging to the team matters, it's important to identify the effort being made to keep us included and reciprocate that through to others.

The common theme in each of these 3 questions is obvious — it's people. The people we work with is what sets the tone for how happy we will be at work. There's an old saying that goes "You don't leave the job, you leave the boss." Meaning that our unhappiness isn't caused by our

job description or title, but instead unhappiness is driven by experiences and the personal exchanges we have while doing the job, and in many cases our bosses are a big part of that.

It's important to acknowledge the stuff that drives our happiness because it's a feeling that can takeover and have an emotional influence in our decision-making. The key is to recognize the degrees of happiness and unhappiness we are feeling, then ask ourselves whether our unhappiness is caused from (a) personal conflicts with workplace processes or decisions, or (b) whether it's caused from a lack of care, generosity, and commitment from the people we work with. If it's the former, then perhaps the solution is to separate the frustrating processes and decisions from the people we work with, and instead acknowledge that not all processes are going to be perfect and not all decisions are going to be good ones. On the other hand, if people are being ignorant, not giving us any personal consideration, or not appreciating our time or effort, then we can take this feeling and use it to decide whether to endure it for financial benefit or make a change. Ultimately, our happiness sits with people and jobs usually get done better when people have care, generosity, and commitment to each other.

Controlling our discharge anxiety

In my experience, "anxiety" isn't word that we associate with in the armed forces. Why? Because anxiety typically

comes from discomfort, unfamiliarity, and situations that we want to avoid. Oddly enough, these are things that we are expected to get acquainted with during our military careers. The difference is, we are taught how to deal with this in our military environments, and in many cases, we instinctively revert to our training and rely on Standard Operating Procedures to control any discomfort, unfamiliarity, and high-risk situations. In the instance that we are expected to enter an unfamiliar environment, we are usually sent on a course to help prepare us for it. For example, if we're about to embark on a deployment, we will undergo Pre-deployment Readiness Training beforehand. We are instructed to get familiar with stress or anxiety, then work through it by trusting the skills we obtained after being deemed competent during some type of training or exercise.

The problem is that we have a course for everything in the military, but there's no course for re-entering the workforce and becoming a civilian. This is why we struggle with the decision to discharge. We receive very little guidance in the vocational differences between us and civilians. If we combine this lack of guidance with our natural expectation to get training for new environments, we essentially feel lost.

Running our discharge like a course

Let's imagine for a second what it would be like joining our first military posting without ever having gone through basic training. Or even further, imagine being posted without having done our MOS or Category training (e.g. SOI for Marines, AIT for Army, 'A School' for Navy, etc). If this happened, we would walk into our unit with zero knowledge or skill. We wouldn't know rank structure, how to handle a weapon, what jobs that others do and what their patches mean, or simply how to behave with other guys in the unit. We would be a total liability to the unit's efficiency and would need handholding during every task. Ultimately, we would feel a lot of pressure to rapidly learn stuff to contribute to the work going on. If there was nobody to help us learn or get comfortable with the work, we would probably feel annoyed, with a headspace that sees us feeling useless and lost. If we're not prepared to discharge, this is what it can feel like when joining a civilian workplace.

So, how do we prepare to leave the armed forces and enter the civilian workforce? First, we need to know where we are going to land, then we need to learn the differences between our military workplace and the civilian workplace we are looking to enter. Once we have this scoped out, we can work to build our knowledge, skillset and new behaviors that will make us successful in our civilian environment.

There's no such thing as a "civilian bootcamp", we won't get training at the level we are accustomed to receiving as veterans. Instead, civilians have something called "onboarding". It's a common civilian term and its purpose is to get us acquainted with our new workplace. Onboarding shares the same purpose as our basic training but has a very different and more relaxed approach. Depending on the industry we choose and the job we land, our onboarding can vary anywhere from 1 day to a whole month. Typically, the bigger the company, the longer the onboarding will be. Smaller startups may simply hand us a laptop and point towards where the bathrooms are. Others will layout a schedule with meetings for us to attend, in these meetings we undertake learning to understand different parts of the company. It's important to consider what the onboarding process looks like because it has a big impact on our success in the first few months. The better the onboarding process, usually the more successful we will be in getting accustomed to our new workplace.

If onboarding resembles a watered-down bootcamp, then what does civilian MOS or category training look like? Answer is, there is none. It doesn't exist. We need to run it ourselves. This might be strange for a lot of us, because we aren't used to learning new stuff without receiving instruction or guidance. But in this case, we need to create our own personal course, teach ourselves, and check our own competency.

We have options to consider before starting work in civilian industries and jobs, which we will dig into more during the next chapter. But staying focused on our decision to discharge, it's helpful for us to be aware of the civilian expectations before we even decide to pull-the-pin and enter the regular workforce, particularly after being away from it for years. The civilian expectation is that we will possess a skillset that can immediately contribute to business performance. It's reasonable and makes sense really, this same thing is expected of us with every new posting.

When we post-in to a new unit we don't get coaching on how to do our core jobs, instead we get introduced to our Command and get told to sign a piece of paper stating we have "read and understood the Unit Standing Orders". These expectations are much the same for civilians, the difference is we have less confidence in doing the core job we are hired for, which is due to a lack of knowledge, training, and experience. This is a foreign feeling for many of us who served in uniform, but, it's how civilians typically go about their day. Civilians rarely rely on process, instead they think through problems and solve them using either their experience or intuition. I know, this might sound like it would lead to a lack of teamwork and a whole bunch of cause-and-effect problems, but it's reality. The helpful takeaway is to be aware of the skills we lack, but not let it discourage us from job opportunities.

As odd as it might sound, putting a discharge course together for ourselves is a deliberate and conscious move to get prepared for a new civilian environment. If we pretend for a moment that our first civilian job is a military deployment, we would expect to get training on the new environment and an introduction to some common scenarios. At the very minimum it would include a pre-deployment brief on stuff like the people and their cultural differences. This might be how they dress, the way they greet and talk to each other, the things they find valuable, and what they consider to be offensive. It's helpful to get a lay-of-the-land before stepping foot into a new environment, this is the reason why we typically get this kind of brief before entering a new country while deployed. I totally get we aren't stepping into a foreign country when we discharge, but getting a new civilian job means working with people that think, act, and work differently to what we're used to. With that in-mind, running our own discharge course might be something as succinct as this:

(1) Do research: Discover and learn about different jobs, then narrow down a shortlist.

(2) Build your profile: Position ourselves to win shortlisted jobs and get the skills needed.

(3) Get noticed: Know what civilians value and get good at that stuff, be memorable.

There is no cardboard-cutout discharge course that will suit everybody. Each of us finish our careers with different skillsets, education-levels, and interests. This means everybody is uniquely positioned to line-up their own discharge path. However, what is common to all of us, is the institutional and paternal mindset that we all share. It's a mindset that is unique to us as veterans, no other workplace really takes control of our life the way the armed forces does. It's not a bad thing, in fact it allows us to collectively belong to something, but in return we sacrifice a lot of personal freedoms that many civilians pride themselves on being in control of. It's an adjustment for us to learn how to live with these freedoms again and, in some cases, it can make us look naive or immature.

For example, I personally recall working as a Junior Sailor on-base and wanting to get a bartending job during nights and weekends. I had to submit a request to my Commanding Officer asking to pull beers at my local pub. In the end, my request didn't get approved and when I told my civilian friends who were in college, their response was "why did you even ask for permission?" It's this kind of mindset that makes us different from civilians. More specifically, it's our natural instinct to seek approval for things that are considered normal freedoms for civilians.

Whatever our course and path is, whether it's becoming a tradesman, working in a corporate office, or starting

our own business, each of us have a unique discharge experience but we all share the need to ditch our paternal mindset. It will take time and it might even feel foreign for a while, but eventually we will get more comfortable with not being part of a paternal organization.

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GETTING A NEW JOB: DETERMINE YOUR PATH

How all civilians work

There are 3 areas that all civilians work in. They either build, sell, or maintain. When we discharge, it's helpful to know how different jobs fit into these 3 areas. In most cases, every company or organization will have teams of people to focus on all 3, or sometimes a company will only focus on 1 or 2 of these work areas. The obvious question is: what is being built, sold, and maintained? The answer is a product or a service, which we expand on later with examples. If we take this build-sell-maintain perspective in everything we see, it becomes easier to view the world

as civilians do, meaning we begin to appreciate the civilian value system. It's important for us have a frame of reference to understand how civilians think, because it helps us adjust and blend into their workplaces, social settings, and lifestyles. I'm not saying that this build-sell-maintain model is something that all civilians know or talk about, but these are categories that all civilians belong to, whether they aware of it or not.

Whether it's a tradesman going out to multiple jobs during the day, or a guy that's suiting-up for an office job, every civilian and workplace fits into this model. If we keep this in-mind it can help us picture how civilians work and it reveals the different job types available for us to consider.

	Job Description	Build, Sell or Maintain	Discharge Tip
Electrical Engineer	Design new ways to use electrical power to develop or improve existing products and systems	Build The job description shows this position will "design" and "improve"	This person works with other engineers who are focused on *selling* or *maintaining* products already built
Sales Engineer	Understand client requirements and develop solutions to best meet their business needs	Sell The job description has the person talking to clients who buy the products	This person works closely with engineers who build and improve products, to explain exactly what the client wants
Maintenance Engineer	Fit new parts and make sure equipment is working correctly, diagnose any breakdown problems	Maintain The job description requires this person to keep products "working correctly"	This person gives feedback to the engineers who build products, they share data on product quality

The grid gives an intro into how a company might advertise jobs for (1) building new products, then (2) selling them to people, and then finally (3) maintaining them to keep their buyers and customers happy. This is an obvious example, but we can apply this job type and model to every product that exists. Any industry that has products available to buy will have jobs that build, sell, and maintain them. Products can include anything from our cars to our local restaurant's menu. Even our favorite TV series is a product! Every industry will see somebody creating or improving products, with others that either advertise and sell them, or keep them running and accessible. When we discharge, we can expect to find ourselves working in 1 of these 3 areas.

Some of us might be reading this thinking, "I'm going to join the police force, there are no products being sold there, so this model doesn't apply." I totally get it. The government is rarely portrayed as having a set of products or services that people buy. But it's important to shift our mindset to think like civilians, and if we do this, we can see the police force as being a product that the public pay for via their taxes. The police don't build, they don't sell, but they do maintain — they maintain law and order, and the product they deliver us is safety in our neighborhood. This shift in mindset gets us thinking beyond a single job. It makes us think bigger and lets us appreciate how our job and work is connected to other people and the jobs they're doing.

What job do we pick?

The next question is, "which work area is best for me to discharge and transition to?" Answering this is different for each person that discharges. Ultimately, it's a choice of building, selling, or maintaining. For me, I transitioned to Project Management, which meant nothing to me before discharging. After working in it, I realized I was employed in the maintenance work area. I don't regret this decision but looking back I appreciate how important this decision is when discharging. Why is it important? Because after we enter either the build, sell, or maintain work area, all our thinking and effort will be focused on that single area. Once we start working in it, we gain experience in that area and eventually start getting good at it. When this happens it reinforces the path that we are on, this is the reason why it is rare for civilians to make a complete career change. Civilians will rarely move from one work area to another. For example, we will rarely see moves from a maintaining job (e.g. checking quality control, auditing, managing oper-ations) to a selling job (e.g. cold calling, running product demos, talking to clients about their needs).

When I discharged, I had nobody to explain how the civilian workforce functioned, what they valued, or the work area that suited me best. Take time to think about the work area we want to fall into, as it will shape the direction of our civilian career.

There are some personality indicators that can help us learn what work area we are best suited for. For example, civilians that sell are usually people who are very likeable and engaging. They are typically the kind of people that are comfortable talking to strangers, they kickoff friendly chat and keeping conversations rolling. In the civilian workforce, this is considered a skill. Companies will send these kinds of people to meetings with potential customers in the hope that they will enjoy the interaction and casual conversation first, then afterwards they will learn about the products that are available to buy.

These meetings can be on a golf course, over a coffee or lunch, and sometimes at a sporting or corporate event that the company buys tickets to attend. In sales, this is what's known as "warming a prospect or lead". If this type of work sounds cool, I should caution, we can expect to start with humble beginnings and doing things like cold calling people on the phone to setup a demo or meeting. We would be sitting in internal company "sales team meetings" to discuss our progress in getting a prospect to attend a meeting or demo. Then eventually, we will get promoted to a position that sees us hosting the lunches, running an event, or watching the football from the company corporate box. This is the life of working in sales. It can be high pressure and a brutal numbers game, but if we're good at it, it's lucrative.

For those of us with very organized personalities, we might find ourselves better suited to a maintenance type of job. There are a wide variety of maintenance jobs, which all have very different ways of maintaining products and systems. 'Maintain' is a term I use to broadly describe the delivery and upkeep of a system that contains products. A good analogy is to think of ourselves as riders of a bicycle, where all the components of the bicycle are connected products that only work together if we control what's going on. In this case, the bicycle is a system that includes parts like wheels, handlebar, chain, etc. But it doesn't work without somebody to look after it; somebody to monitor speed, direction, and performance. This same principle applies to almost every civilian workplace, no system survives without control. Those with an organized mindset fit into this work area, they are the glue that keeps stuff together and working like it's supposed to.

If we aren't creating a product or selling one, we can bet that we are employed in the 'maintain' work area. This means we follow processes; we monitor people and technology to measure and optimize performance. If we work in this area, we can look at ourselves as the vehicles needed to deliver products to people and keep things moving. Some examples of these jobs are nurses, teachers, bank tellers, truck drivers, waitresses, line-cooks, and mechanics. The maintain work area is the widest of the 3 areas, meaning it has the most jobs compared to the build and sell work areas.

The last of the 3 work areas is typically best for those people who are both creative and natural problem-solvers. Anybody that has ever built something has attempted to solve a problem. In a lot of cases, the general public aren't usually aware that a problem exists until a product is created. Nobody really thought they needed an iPhone in 2009, but now it's a problem if somebody's phone is running at 2% battery. My point is, this work area is unique for people who are driven to improve things by building new products, which sometimes might not even be in demand yet.

If we find ourselves being attracted to this line of work, we can search for a range of jobs that have the word "product" or "engineer" in the title. There are differences in job descriptions depending on what industry we choose to work in, and also the kind of customers that will be buying products, but overall we would be on-the-hook for solving customer problems by creating new products or improving existing ones. Product people regularly work with sales guys, they both talk to customers and step in their shoes to get a good gauge on the customer problem, before thinking of product solutions to solve it.

In almost every case, doing this job is a cycle of (1) learning of customer problems, (2) discussing how annoyed they are or how costly the problem is for them, then (3) thinking of solutions that the customer would pay for. People in this 'build' work area are always focused on 3 things when developing new products: Quality, Cost, and Delivery Time.

How much time do I need to prepare for civilian work?

Before discharging, I simply thought getting qualifications would be enough to land a civilian job. Now, after working in civilian companies, I recommend taking as much time as we need for us to do these specific things:

(1) Get the required qualifications and skills to be an eligible job applicant

(2) Explain how the industry makes money overall

(3) Explain how the company's products help customers

(4) Explain how the chosen job fits into the company and how it's linked to the products

(5) Ability to write our own resume/s to align with advertised job description/s

(6) Confidently answer interview questions using industry language to exhibit competence

The above 6 are basic things that every civilian does. It's routine preparation for civilians, they're good at it and it's natural for them. They will typically do it with little to no effort, but as veterans it's foreign for us. Over time, we will get more comfortable with applying for new jobs. Initially, though, it takes effort and learning.

From the day we enlist, we learn new skills and undertake repetitive training to make us better at doing our core job. For most of us, the skills and experience we get is unique to the armed forces environment and they don't directly transfer over to civilian work. We do, however, possess something that takes years or even decades for civilians to get. What is it? Our leadership and management experiences are second-to-none. I get it, words like leadership and management get tossed around a lot these days, our eyes can glaze-over when somebody talks about it. Getting civilian qualifications takes time, but the leadership and management skills that we learn in the armed forces are typically beyond most civilians' understanding or experience. It's stuff like leading a team, being held responsible for their performance, or making decisions that will impact them while having to sleep in their same mess or quarters afterwards. These experiences make us remarkably different to the regular workforce. In contrast, most civilians will chalk-up leadership and management experience to a difficult 1-on-1 conversation with an employee about their annual goals.

The takeaway here is to know that veterans won't immediately hold civilian job skills, but once we get qualified and become comfortable with the work, our natural tendency to do things as a team will get noticed by others. We usually need to tweak our approach, but generally, us veterans will instinctively put the team before self. This behavior positions us for fast promotion to management jobs.

Your resume & interview

If you're not owning your resume, but instead allowing some unknown "resume expert" to translate your military experience into civvie-speak, then you've already failed at finding a new career. Truth is, these people don't care whether you find the job you want, they get paid for each resume they knock out. "Resume experts" are like a factory that dish-out words on a page. They stroke your ego with language you've never heard of and will tell you "This is what recruiters want to see". They get paid for effort, rather than the result of getting you an interview. It's no secret that writing a resume is a lot of effort. But if we are serious about getting a new career, we wouldn't outsource something as personal as our resume. If we suck at knowing what to say in our resume, we are going to suck at interviews.

The sole purpose of any resume is to get us an interview. It's a foot-in-the-door for us to talk to others and elaborate on what's written in our resume. There's an art to talking about ourselves in a way that is humble yet sells our skills and experience enough to convince others that we're qualified. How do we do that? It takes practice and a balance of personality to chat about ourselves in a rolling conversation.

The key to any interview is to share examples of our skills and experience. It's almost storytelling, but succinctly and in a way that lets others get an idea of our value as a future employee. The number one rule when interviewing is to be personable, don't sit there and read the resume!

Earning a trade & starting apprenticeships

Depending on what job we chose on enlistment, some of us get the benefit of learning trade skills that are transferrable to the civilian workforce. These are our Electronic Technicians, Combat Engineers, Dental Hygienists, and the list goes on. The tough part is we don't receive full qualifications that allow us to simply walk into civilian trade work. Instead, we get given "certificates of attainment" or "recognition of prior learning". The good thing is that these veterans will already possess the confidence and skill needed in their area of work, so it essentially becomes a paperwork exercise to get qualifications recognized. Getting recognition is administrative and it can take time, but it's worth it, particularly if we already possess the all of the competencies needed to get certified. Most of us that have the skills, but not the papers to prove it, may simply take a shortened course to become eligible for certification.

For those of us wanting to pursue a new trade, an avenue that we may elect to take is an apprenticeship. Some guys that obtain trade skills while in uniform can find themselves working alongside civilians that are starting out in

the industry and, despite not having as much knowledge or skill, they will be getting paid the same. This kind of comparison can be a tough pill to swallow, but the truth is any comparison to another person's experience is a waste of time. Why? Because we don't all enter industries on the same starting blocks. The only situation where these comparisons make sense is when we are business owners and competing for the same customer's money. In business they call this "competitive analysis", but when we are working for a routine paycheck it's stupid to treat our colleagues as somebody we need to get-ahead of. In fact, it can turn us into a black sheep and see us being pushed aside at work. The best approach is to help others succeed despite any skill disparity.

I can share my personal experience with this. Specifically, I can recall being immature, getting pissed-off about less experienced people who were promoted before me. Like many of us do, I would check the promotion signal that gets released and naturally compare what enlistment intake people were to see if I got overlooked for promotion. Tenure usually goes hand-in-hand with experience and skill. So, seeing somebody receive a promotion, who enlisted after us, can feel unfair. There might even be a tendency for us to make up reasons why we were overlooked. It's sad, but a lot of women in uniform, particularly those who perform well, put up with lies and insults from guys who accuse them of brown-nosing their way to promotion, or worse. The boys cop it too, but it can get nasty for girls.

There's a term for this, it's called cognitive dissonance. It's a fancy way of saying that we have a natural tendency to draw conclusions as to why something is wrong or unfair. It's a behavior that can influence our state-of-mind and have us seeing an altered reality. The key is to acknowledge the tendency to do it and not establish some stupid emotional reasoning. It's easier said than done, but it helps to be positive and raise-up others, congratulating them on their success. Doing this is in-line with the previous chapter's reference to being generous, it shows maturity and puts others before ourselves.

Getting back on-track with trade apprenticeships, there's a chance of undertaking an apprenticeship program with others. In corporate companies they can refer to this as an apprenticeship rotation, where each person gets exposed to several different jobs to help them get a feel for the kind of work they might like. If we find ourselves going through this group-focused type of program, we should treat this like a less disciplined MOS or category training, where we are ultimately focused on getting ourselves competent, while still helping other guys get through it together as a team. One thing to keep in-mind is to be independent throughout the program. It's an individual pursuit for a trade or skill, and we can expect much less teamwork and attention than we are accustomed to receive while in uniform. Why? Because companies take-on apprentices as an investment and will usually allocate a minimum budget to run these programs. This means we need to personally

invest our own time and money to better position our-
selves for success. It can be extra stuff like buying equip-
ment, or taking courses to learn stuff that isn't taught in
the apprenticeship. We might not always be given the best
tools for the job or given comprehensive training during
the program we're undertaking, so it's important to iden-
tify these gaps and decide whether we need to reach into
our own pocket to bridge the gap. For corporate guys going
through rotation, it can be as simple as buying your own
stationery and binders to contain all the stuff you're re-
ceiving and learning. For guys getting a trade, it might be
buying better tools for the jobsite. Whatever the situation,
don't expect the company to issue everything you need to
get the job done.

DM DAN MILLERO

DISCHARGE KNOWING

HOW ALL BUSINESS WORKS...

ALL BUSINESSES ARE CONNECTED

KNOW THE TYPES

THERE ARE TWO...

B2C
BUSINESS TO CONSUMER

B2B
BUSINESS TO BUSINESS

GET COMFY WITH IT
BECOME FAMILIAR WITH REVENUE

UNDERSTAND HOW COMPANIES MAKE MONEY

KNOWING WHERE YOUR COMPANY MAKES MOST OF ITS MONEY FROM IS THE FIRST STEP IN KNOWING HOW YOUR JOB FITS INTO THE ENTIRE COMPANY.

YOU DON'T NEED TO KNOW EVERY PRODUCT OR SERVICE IN DETAIL, BUT YOU SHOULD KNOW WHY CONSUMERS OR BUSINESSES BUY STUFF FROM YOUR COMPANY.

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WORKING WITH CIVILIANS: ADAPT TO YOUR NEW ENVIRONMENT

What is a civilian?

We all know the definition, but few of us understand the meaning until we discharge and begin working with them. Almost all of us will discharge at some point of our careers. When that happens, we will trade-in our disciplined "get shit done" task-oriented mindset for a more diplomatic mindset. Why? Because civilians respond better when you are considerate and can deal with them politely. This is different for us veterans, not because we are all assholes, but because our training and work environments are setup to

be succinct. We don't indulge in polite conversation when stuff needs to get done, civilians do.

If there's one key pitfall that the military doesn't address in any transition training, it's our lack of workplace diplomacy. I know diplomacy sounds like something that should be reserved for the politicians, but the truth is that all civilians are familiar with it and many use it as a tool to influence workplace decisions and performance. To be crystal clear, the diplomacy I'm talking about isn't the international relations we see on the news. Instead, I'm referring to the ability to deal with people in a sensitive or effective way. It's a key skillset for any professional civilian.

Unlike the military, work won't happen unless you're friendly with people. Or rather, the work will happen, but the poor results will clearly show. This alone is a huge cultural shift for most of us discharging, because being diplomatic at work requires dialogue, and let's face it, dialogue is not encouraged in uniform.

If being a civilian is closely tied to being diplomatic, then how do we execute that and get good at it? We can start by doing things like chatting to people, being active in online work messaging, or casually greeting people at their desk to share food and snacks. We can chalk these casual interactions up as diplomacy. There's a huge caveat here though, don't be a suckass! Be generous without any intent for reciprocation, just do it and genuinely focus on getting

to know people. Doing this stuff will help balance our impulse to be succinct during work tasks and meetings.

I get what some might be thinking, "people should just do their job!" But this is a reality, it's how the civilian workforce operates. Civilians don't respond well to being given orders and they don't like being given a Standard Operating Procedure. Instead, they respond well to a smile when you walk into a room or a sincere compliment. How important is this? Very! Many companies rank workplace diplomacy over efficiency.

In some workplaces "good working relationships" are considered the key driver for company productivity. This can be a big transition for a lot of us. When I was in uniform it was normal to dish-out insults in jest, it was a bit of fun and banter with the guys and girls. Swearing was part of everyday vocabulary and helped with storytelling, and even physical roughness was part of bonding with the guys in the unit. After discharge this all changes. We should expect civilians to raise an eyebrow if we brought this military culture into the civilian workplace. We will need to feel them out, but in most cases, we can expect to have a very unfamiliar relationship with our civilian work colleagues.

I rarely had a work relationship that resembled anything like I had while in uniform. It just doesn't exist, it's very different. We will adjust to it and, gradually, we will find ourselves adapting our behavior to align with civilian

norms and expectations. Eventually we will feel normal doing stuff that might feel foreign or weird for us at the start.

Becoming a civilian

The word 'transition' doesn't simply mean changing jobs. It's obviously our main objective, but transitioning is far more than just landing a day job. It means becoming a civilian while being respected as a veteran. Question is, how is that done? There's a simple answer, but not an easy one, and it's one word: learning.

We will learn more about being a civilian in the first week of our new job than years of discharge preparation. My advice is to use military buddies to get in touch with other veterans that have discharged, who are either working in a trade or a corporate job themselves. These guys can often put us in touch with civilians who can school us on what to expect in different industries. Civilians have a word for this, in fact they chalk it up as a work activity and label it as "networking". Meeting for coffee, talking about job opportunities, and engaging in casual chat are all examples of networking.

The key is to remember that every chat with a civilian is an opportunity for a network connection, use them to help drive towards a new career. There's one caveat when doing this, try to focus more on the relationship rather than the

job itself. It can be painful to adjust to, but many civilians rank 'self' over the 'job and performance of the team' — this takes some getting used to and is the reason why we might not fit-in right away. It's a mindset shift and may take a bit of time working with civilians to realize the lack of team loyalty. The loyalty exists, but not before themselves. It's very different, it's competitive.

Personally, I struggled to adapt in my first civilian job. Everything was different and I didn't immediately gel with it. There was little urgency in their work, they talked a lot longer about work tasks that needed to be done, and there were no routines in-place. The job I landed was a step above entry-level, meaning that it required some qualification or experience. To be honest, I wasn't qualified, and I only had a slight idea of what was expected of me. The job paid 85k a year, which was a pay cut from what I was on as a SNCO, but I was cool with it. So, how did I get the job if I wasn't fully qualified? Here's the story:

> I signed-up to play squash (it's like racquetball) with a random civilian sporting club. I would regularly play squash on-base, but this was my first-time rubbing shoulders with non-uniformed guys. I was in a team full of civilians. We played weekly and the 5 of us occasionally hit the bar for drinks afterwards. I was 26 and these guys were business professionals in their late 20s and early 30s, all working in some kind of corporate gig.

Playing squash was their one night out during the week and it was obvious they were all very career driven guys. It was my first exposure hanging-out with working professionals. These lads would rock-up to games in suits and ties, while I would be rolling-in with my camouflage and boots. After a few nights out at the bar, I learned that one guy worked at Google, another two were structural engineers putting up skyscrapers in Sydney, and one dude worked in corporate Human Resources. At the time, that all meant nothing to me and I had no idea what their day-to-day looked like. To be honest, I didn't care either, it bored me.

Fast-forward 2 years, I'm 28 with my discharge papers signed and submitted, and I have less than 6 months before my last day in uniform. I'm not totally ill-prepared for discharge, I managed to graduate from university, but I had no clue on what I was going to do for work. I had a resume written for me as part of my "transition assistance", which looking-back was terrible, and I had lined-up interviews with a few recruiting firms in the city to learn what jobs would suit my experience. After chatting with these recruiting companies, I quickly learned that having a military background isn't as valuable as I thought. God knows I debated with civilians on the subject "why a veteran is more favorable over a college graduate", but it was a dead-end. I decided that I would be willing to take

a pay cut for my first civilian job. It wasn't an easy decision because typically we always look to level-up in every career move we make, but I was comfortable with it, particularly knowing it would widen my job opportunities and help get my foot-in-the-door to start my transition.

It's a Wednesday night, the start of a new squash season and my team is the same 5 guys we started with 2 years ago. We kickoff our first night with a win and all wander down to the pub to celebrate. After bending the elbow with a few beers, one of the lads asks about my job in the Navy. I gave a short update on how it's going, then ended it with the statement "...but I discharge in 6 months anyway, so I'll be looking for a new job." After casually chatting for the next hour, he offered to get me an interview for a job opening at his company.

The next week I show up to the interview. Not having a wardrobe full of business clothes, I'm dressed in the stuff that I would typically wear to a wedding and was kind of overdoing it for an interview. Afterwards, my squash buddy pulls me aside to tell me that "they're not totally convinced but leave it with me." Within the next 2 days, I received a job offer.

Everybody has their own discharge story. Some of us fall on our feet and follow a career path, while others bounce

around different jobs and find themselves figuring it out for a few years. Looking back on mine, I wasn't prepared, I was lucky. But if I could do it again, I wouldn't change what I was doing, I would simply do more of it. I would engage with civilians more and learn about what they do.

There is immense value to surrounding ourselves with people we want to be influenced by, because it helps us become a combination of those people. I can't paint all military service careers with the same brush, but I know what it's like to spend years pissing money up against the wall, clubbing every weekend, partying until the early morning, and waking-up in hotel bathtubs during port visits across Southeast Asia. It's fun for a while, but let's face it, it doesn't make us better.

If we're in our late 20s and surrounded by guys that are cool with doing lines off toilet seats, then we can probably guess the direction we're headed in. I had a to make a conscious decision to ditch a lot of friends before discharging, it was a deliberate and hard decision to make. But in pursuit of a better situation, I spent the last 3 years of my career studying on weekends and most weeknights. I ended up discharging with a Masters of Business and a Masters of Project Management. In the process, I distanced myself from aimless people who were set on "having fun" all the time and posting it on social media. It was a distraction from the path I was on and it didn't help me grow to be better. There are fewer feelings of regret that match being

hungover while sitting in-front of a laptop, while trying to hit a postgraduate assignment deadline. As my professor kindly explained to me, after reading a paper that was submitted by me and Jose Cuervo, "this isn't undergrad anymore." We all need a wake-up call to ditch the stuff that is holding us back, that was mine.

Find somebody that makes you better & builds your confidence

I was very lucky to enter my first civilian corporate job at the same time as another person. He helped coach me through the basic and unspoken norms that were naturally understood by all civilians. That might sound weird, but we've all had our friends visit us on-base for a tour. They look around like it's Alice in Wonderland, meanwhile we think little of it. We walk them around the base, seeing them point out things that they find interesting, or they start asking questions about basic military traditions and stuff we take for granted.

For example, I once invited my friends onboard for a "family day" cruise. It's where the ship basically does a lap of Sydney Harbor and then cruises around the Opera House for a couple of hours. After it's over and the civilians disembark, we would always be reminded of how exhausting it is to spend the day playing "show & tell", answering questions on basic stuff that we would never ask as sailors. Questions like "What do the different color

fire extinguishers mean?" One of the more memorable differences was seeing people waiting in-line to step down a ladder-bay. I totally get it, they are very steep, but civilians would slowly take each step down, one-at-a-time like they're on some obstacle course, only to be followed by an on-duty sailor who would slide down in under 2 seconds.

The point is, when we enter the civilian workforce, we are going to feel like we're in Alice in Wonderland for a while. We are going to ask dumb questions, we will probably take things one-step-at-a-time, and we will need help to figure stuff out.

Many workplaces will assign a company employee to show us the ropes and make us feel comfortable. The problem with that is, the person assigned feels obligated to give us a rundown of the workplace, it's not their main job but an extra curricula task for them. They usually have work deadlines to get done and showing us around is a disruption to their workday. With that in-mind, it's important we don't rely on these people too much, but instead be cool with them. Why? Because they tell the others about "the new guy" and it helps to have some cred to build-on when we start meeting other people that we will be working with.

The best approach is to become genuine friends with somebody in the workplace that sincerely cares and wants to help us. Depending on the workplace and the people, this can be tough to find, but it's a huge help having somebody

that we can rely on who doesn't mind being asked the basic questions and showing us the ropes.

Most of my learning was done socially, outside of work. It wasn't all done at my desk or in the office. It was at the bar after work, at the coffee shop during work breaks, or during casual strolls walking through the downtown city streets. It might sound strange, but the biggest learning curve wasn't the different tasks at-hand. It was, rather, more about how to engage different people and teams, how to approach a particular problem, or how to influence certain decisions. Essentially, it was me learning civilian workplace diplomacy. Stuff like who to speak to, what to say, and what to do in order to influence work tasks. Sometimes it felt like rehearsal of a scenario, where I would chat with colleagues about what's going on at work and we would discuss different options on what to do.

The guy I joined my first job with was a seasoned corporate dude. He was an absolute legend and a wealth of knowledge. There were times where he would blatantly laugh at how naive I was at work, which I was glad to have happen, his laughing at my expense served as a guardrail. John was the same age as me and we both hit it off right-away. Having a colleague that taps us on the shoulder and says "You wanna dip out for a coffee?" is as important, if not more important, than the job itself. We should never say "no" to those offers. If we're busy, then we should check our calendar and respond with a time that works. The more

social interactions we have, the more exposure we get with civilians, and every chat is an opportunity to learn. It's not learning like we get through a traditional military course, instead it's exposing ourselves to a new social dialogue and learning through incremental experience. It's social learning, which is the predominant method in the civilian workforce.

I spent about 6 months at my first civilian job. It was my induction to the corporate world and it was the experience I needed to gain confidence for my next job. After moving from Sydney to Chicago, I tweaked my resume and applied to about 30 jobs a week. Applying for jobs was work. It chewed a lot of time and it was a tedious data entry routine. I ended up getting a bunch a phone screens, and called-in for a handful of interviews. During one of the interviews, the hiring manager immediately told me that her husband was a retired Army veteran. A 'hiring manager' is usually the person that will be the boss of the position being hired for, so it was a big deal for me that she already respected my military background.

I got the job and kicked off my onboarding. Again, like my job in Sydney, I became buddies with a couple of guys that helped me get the lay-of-the-land around the office. It's important to show some appreciation for the time and effort that people put-in to get us up-to-speed. Personally, I can't stand suck-ups or awkward "thank you" gestures. Instead, I showed my gratitude in ways that were more

personal or genuine. Stuff like getting the Pay-Per-View boxing fight on at home, and then inviting the guys from work to watch the Mayweather vs McGregor fight. Or occasionally, on my way back from lunch, I bought chocolates and would drop them in bowl for our team to get amongst. If we were going to the bar, I would pay for our cab ride or take initiative to order our Uber, or buy a round of drinks or shots when we got into the bar. These types of gestures take us back to chapter 1, where the message was: if we want generosity and care at work, it helps to show it first. Doing this kind of stuff without wanting reciprocation, and without making a big deal that we're doing it, is the definition of generosity.

Money & your paycheck

There's some taboo stuff that is very different when you start working as a civilian. They won't tell you what that stuff is, because for them it's like telling us "don't walk across the parade ground", it's common knowledge. It will take time to learn what these taboo things are, but there's one huge thing we should all be aware of: When we discharge, we can no longer talk freely about our pay. Any civilian reading this might be thinking "yeah, duh!" But it's a huge change for us veterans.

In uniform, everybody knows what we get paid. Most of us feel comfortable enough to pass around our paycheck to make sure that we're not missing out on any money.

There's a free and open culture to discuss our pay and entitlements. Some Personnel Offices even encourage it as a "check" to make sure our admin is correct.

Outside of uniform, we will find that nobody talks about their salary. It's a very intimate and personal topic. Unless we're cool asking our civilian colleagues about their sex life, don't ask about their salary. That's how personal it is. When we start working, our employment contract will specifically tell us not to discuss our salary. Why? It's been proven that when companies create policies to keep staff salary discrete, they can pay significantly lower wages over-all. It's a strategy, they do this to keep their business costs low, and salary is usually the biggest expense for business owners.

How civilian companies are structured

In the previous chapter we touched-on the build, sell, maintain model and how all jobs fall into these 3 work areas. With this same model in-mind, all companies separate their internal teams in this way. Let's take the analogy of a Navy ship being like a civilian company, it has different branches, and jobs within those branches. The Supply branch will have jobs like Cooks, Stores, Medics, Dental Assistants, etc. Depending on the service, branches may be termed as something different, but we get the picture. Civilian companies do something similar, and we usually learn how each company is organized after working in it

for a while. It varies, but here is an example of how a company will organize their teams, this example is particularly familiar to tech companies.
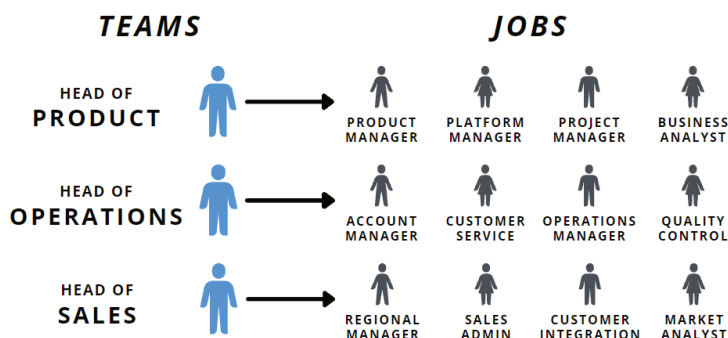
This is obviously just an example to give an idea of the different teams that companies will create. It can vary depending on the industry and company. For example, some companies will also have a Legal team, an Engineering team, a Marketing team, or a Finance team. In any case, each of these teams can be aligned to the build, sell, maintain model and it helps to marry that with a mental picture of a company's organizational structure.

If we're proactive, before applying for jobs we will already have a LinkedIn profile and perhaps several different resumes, each tweaked with language that aligns to the different jobs that we might be targeting. When shooting for these different jobs, it's important to know the kind of civilians that work in each team. As mentioned earlier,

Sales will have very outgoing and sometimes bold personality types. They dress well and are typically people that need to take pride in their appearance, because let's face it, we've all bought something we didn't need from the hot girl that said "that looks so good on you!"

Then there's Operations, these guys can be a bit highstrung. They value efficiency, which means they don't usually indulge in much conversation and are happiest with people who make their day easier.

Lastly, the Product team can have an air of arrogance. They set the direction of the company and can use their product knowledge as a currency to maintain their status above others in the company. Oddly enough, it's common for civilians to keep things close to their chest. It allows them to stay relevant and important in the company. You'll see these guys, they're the people that know how stuff works.

How to talk and engage with civilians at work

It might sound basic to discuss a topic like "how to talk with civilians", but when I initially left the military, I was stuck with a very hierarchal mindset. I was still very status oriented and was cautious with who I spoke to at work. This mindset comes from our background of respecting rank, and only speaking when spoken to. Even when we are spoken to, we keep our replies succinct, especially

when addressing higher ranks. My point is, I wasn't good at talking in a professional setting. It took me a while to shed my instinct of being quiet and reserved, which was out of respect for rank. Our proclivity to be succinct, and our customary "Yes, sir; No, sir" dialogue, doesn't set us up for success in the civilian workplace. In fact, it inhibits us from building relationships with key people in the workplace.

So how do we get stronger at it and adapt our instinctive communication habits? We can start by getting some reps in and begin chatting with our civilian colleagues more in the work setting. This will help us get more confidence, encourage us to be more relaxed, and we will soon find ourselves being more comfortable chatting with different people. The big caveat here is knowing how to read a room.

For example, if we are riding an elevator, that's a casual chat environment that ends when the doors open. But if we're in a meeting or crossing a hallway, we are cutting into people's time for a chat. It's important that we are aware of both *when* and *where* to engage in conversation. There is an etiquette in sparking up a conversation at work, and it changes depending on the setting and the people we are talking to. It's something that we will feel-out over time.

When I first started working with civilians, I was very matter of fact when talking about work. I scheduled meetings with people I didn't know, and for every calendar invite, I would include a list of 'Meeting Objectives'. I would

walk into these meeting rooms and introduce myself, then recite the list of objectives we had for the next 30 minutes. While some people appreciated it, this is not how most civilians work. It's too disciplined and it's impersonal.

I soon learned that every civilian puts themselves before the work. Meaning they want us to care about them first and the task always comes second to the personal inter-action. This is a complete reversal to what most of us are accustomed to in uniform. As a Junior Sailor, I recall once being told to see my Lieutenant. After knocking on his door, I was ordered to "Enter and stand at attention!" Then told, "Listen up! This is a 1-way conversation!" It was obvi-ous that the task came first, and any relationship-building or any care for me personally was clearly second.

Once I understood this key difference between the civil-ian and military workplaces, I started to consciously adjust my approach. For example, I would kickoff meetings with "Hey, what's up Tom? How did your son go? Did he win that soccer tournament?" or "I thought of you the other day and wanted to show you this..." We covered this earlier, but there are huge benefits in getting familiar with our work colleagues. It might feel insincere at first, but over time we will build a relationship and it becomes genuine — it's effort, we can think of it as part of the job. One thing to keep in-mind, though, is the team and person we are en-gaging with. This will help us read the room and adjust our approach when chatting with different civilians.

WHY YOU SHOULD...

CREATE YOUR OWN RESUME

YOUR RESUME IS...

YOUR BRAND

IT'S A STEPPING-STONE TO GETTING AN INTERVIEW

DON'T OUTSOURCE IT...

KNOW IT INSIDE + OUT!

WRITE IT YOURSELF
...AND DON'T HALF-ASS IT

HOT TIP

KNOW YOUR RESUME

IF YOU SUCK AT KNOWING WHAT TO SAY IN YOUR RESUME, YOU'RE GOING TO SUCK DURING THE INTERVIEW

SCAN FOR VIDEO
... CLICK FOR E-BOOK

DEBRIEF

Be open-minded & vulnerable to change

This is the last chapter of the book, but we could really carry-on forever talking about "what's different when we discharge?" That's because there really isn't any cardboard cutout for discharging, everybody's experience is different. But what we can acknowledge as being standard, though, is our need to change. We all leave a military workplace for a non-military workplace; we leave the *known* for the *un-known*. Which is kind of similar to how we felt when we enlisted, it was all unknown territory. We might have had some idea of what it was going to be like, but the stories we hear and the movies we watch only scratch the surface of what it's like to spend a career in uniform. If we think

about it, the mental picture we all had about the military when we enlisted is the same idea that civilians have of veterans after we discharge. It can be hard for us to remember what that picture looks like, especially after serving for a minimum of 4 years.

If we leave the armed forces with the same vulnerability that we entered it with, we can have faith that we will navigate the unknown well-enough to succeed. The vulnerability I am talking about is that feeling we all experienced at the start of our careers. It's how we felt in Recruit School, standing formed-up in the cold on the parade ground, in the pitch-black dark at 0500, with zero knowledge of what was going to happen to us. It's a feeling of being completely open to whatever comes our way and trusting that we are capable enough to work out any tough situation that hits us.

This is the same feeling we need to embrace when we discharge, but there are a couple of major differences: (1) we don't have a lot of the securities that we get while in uniform that allow us to be amenable to change, and (2) we don't endure the struggle of our new environment with others. This is the hardest part and it's what makes discharging even more vulnerable than enlisting. Most of us will discharge alone. We will do it with little help, limited guidance, and no instruction. This sees many of us awkwardly celebrating our last day in uniform without being prepared to enter another civilian job or career.

So how do we fix that? We can do stuff that prepares us for discharge, and should do it well-before our walk out date. What stuff? Anything that helps us get better acquainted with the civilian workforce. Many of us might need to work on things like talking about ourselves and our resume, others might need to get better at understanding civilian industry vocabulary, and some will need to get a handle on how to interact with colleagues in a lower-risk work environment. There's a lot of stuff that's new and it will feel weird or different at the beginning.

The best thing we can do while we're still wearing the uniform is to surround ourselves with the people and environment that we are looking to transition to. It can be as simple as joining a local sports team and grabbing post-game drinks at the local bar, or as committed as doing some volunteer work with a local civilian business. Whatever we do, our main goal should be to immerse ourselves in a new civilian environment, learning about what they value, then choosing to either (1) align to those values, or (2) pick a different civilian environment. We will feel like the odd-man-out at the beginning, but after we get more comfortable with civilian settings we will become more confident in knowing how to apply our military skillset in a non-military workplace. It takes time and I'm obviously biased, but once we work it out, I am 100% sure that all veterans have the ability to integrate into any business and do a better job than the average college graduate would.

CONCLUSION

If you're reading this book, you are likely contemplating your decision to re-enlist or discharge. I hope what I've written helps you anticipate some of the differences between service-life and civilian-life. It's a massive change and one that all of us in uniform must consider at some point in our career.

Transitioning is learning. It means us learning about civilians, and civilians learning about us, then getting comfortable with each other in the workplace. The hard part is civilians will never completely understand what it means to wear the flag on our shoulder, nor the obligations or experiences that come with that. If they did, I suggest we would be held in higher esteem and perhaps would have more respect for our capability and skill, rather than solely applauding our dedication to service. I can't influence civilians to recognize our value, but instead I can share my discharge experience with you and have faith that it positions you to be more confident in anticipating your own transition journey.

For those of you preparing to discharge, I suggest keeping this book as a reference guide. I sincerely thank you for reading it and wish you all the best in your new civilian career. If you liked my book and found it helpful, I invite you to checkout my course and coaching sessions. Below is an introduction to both the course and my coaching. If you're interested or know anybody that is, feel free to contact me to get more info and I can share the brochures.

'Discharge with Confidence' course

This is a self-sufficient course that can be completed at-your-own pace. It's geared to be done in 4 weeks, with more than 10 videos that help guide your discharge preparation.

The course is specifically made for guys and girls that are currently serving in uniform who are approaching their re-enlistment or discharge date. Whether you are active duty, a reservist or a recently a discharged veteran, this course is deliberately built to benefit you. It's setup to build confidence in making a career change and better prep for a successful move to a civilian workplace.

I personally know what it's like to make the change from service-life to civilian-life and, together with my book, this course shares what I have learned along the way. If I could turn back time and get him to listen, it's the course I would tell myself to take before discharging.

Group & 1-on-1 coaching sessions

If you like what's in this book and find my course helpful, then you can use me as a personal coach to discuss and help steer your discharge plans. If you know other guys or girls that are interested in a group coaching session, we can run sessions with a small group.

You can think of these sessions like a Personal Training consult. Much like a Personal Trainer helps with advice in the gym, you do the lifting, but you get guidance on what stuff to work on. My discharge coaching is the same. I will take a look at what you're doing to prepare for your new career, then give you advice that will help make you a stronger candidate. My pricing for coaching sessions is similar to that of a PT. I'm not here to milk fellow veterans for

their dough, but my time isn't free. Don't hesitate to contact me if you want to learn more about what the coaching sessions look like.