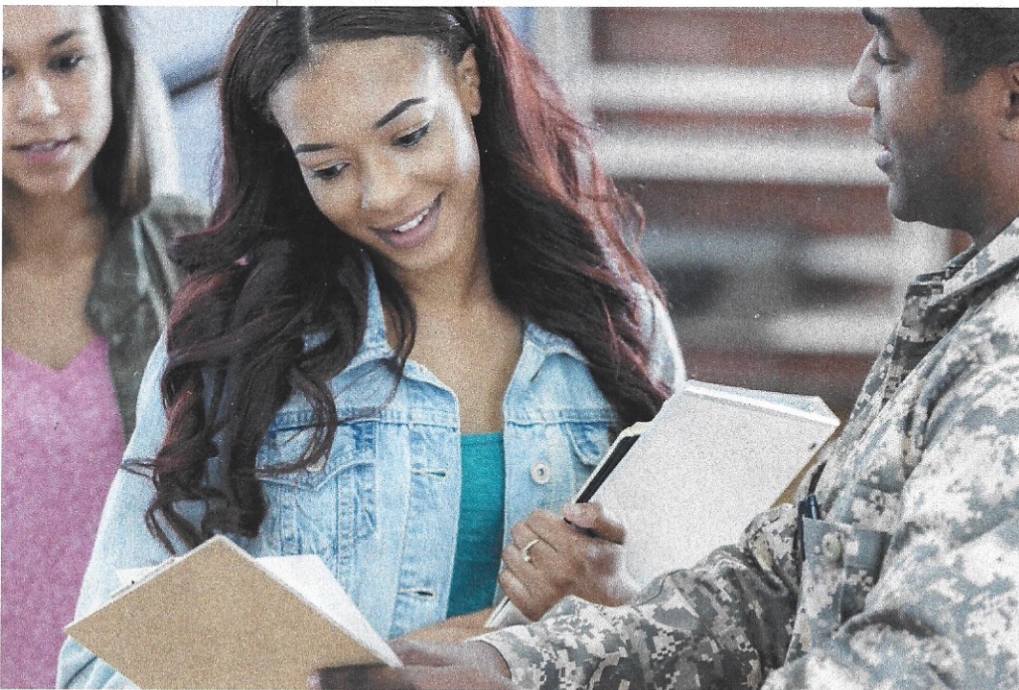




Why military veterans make standout employees

DISCIPLINE, TEAMWORK, LEADERSHIP—IF YOU'RE LOOKING TO HIRE THESE SKILLS, CONSIDER MILITARY VETERANS.



Companies across America are trying to find ways to adjust to new market dynamics and competitive forces, especially in the rapidly evolving tech sector. The key to success? Hiring the right people: employees who commit to a larger vision and thrive in adversity, even when objectives suddenly change—qualities that many companies find in military veterans.

The links between military service and science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) occupations are strong. Veterans are more likely than civilian counterparts to work in STEM, particularly those without an associated bachelor's degree or any college degree at all. Veterans with a degree are more likely to have studied some field of computer science or organizational leadership.

Add strong leadership qualities to those tech skills and it is easy to understand that this talent pool is in high demand. In 2022, the annual average unemployment rate among 8.81 million veterans in the civilian labor force was just 2.8%.

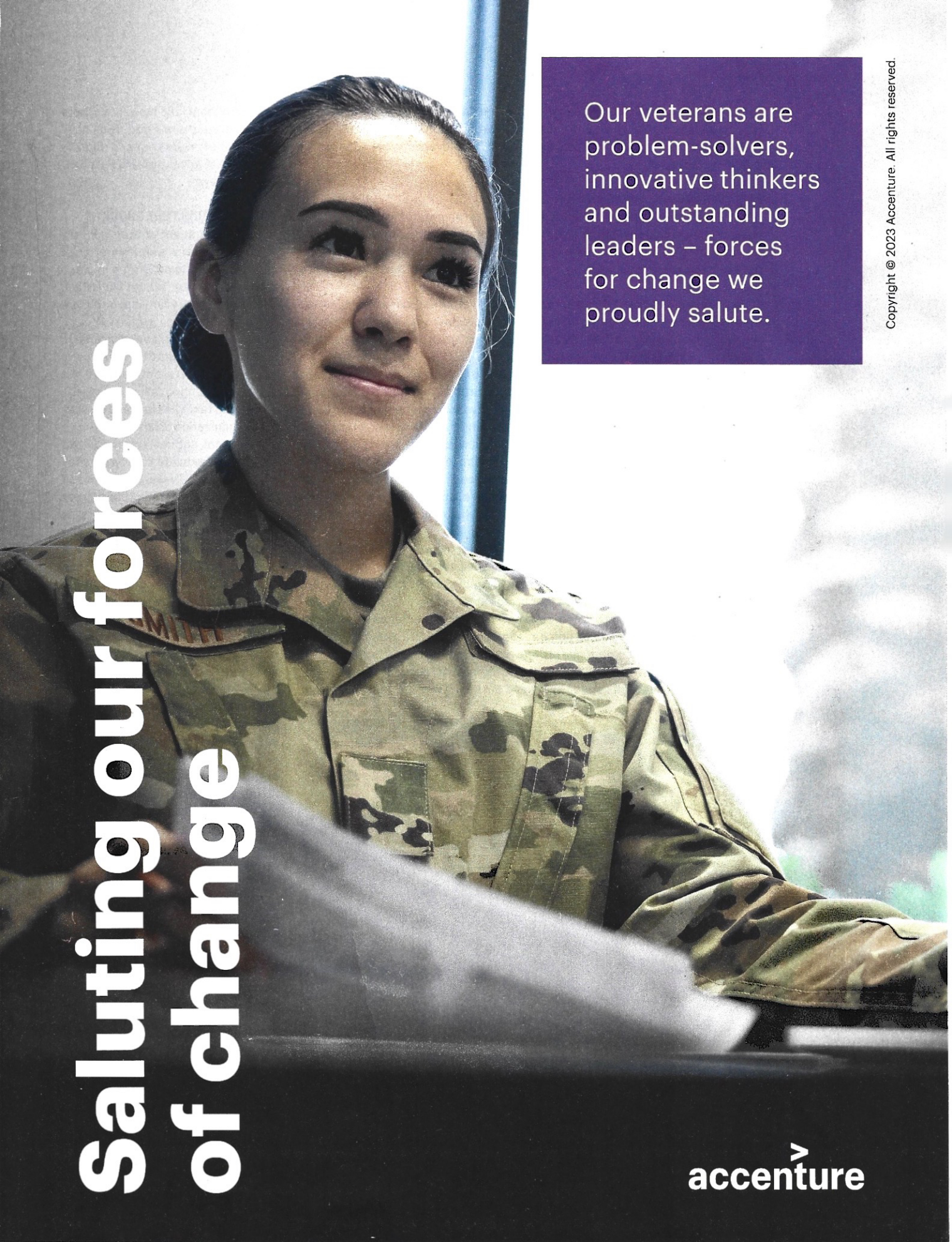
But companies may not be getting the most out of these valuable employees. A recent LinkedIn report found that 33% of veterans are underemployed, and they are 15.6% more likely to be underemployed than nonveterans.

How can companies that are desperate for motivated, skilled workers ensure their veteran hires are fully engaged?

VETERAN-FOCUSED HIRING PRACTICES

Attracting, developing, and retaining veterans often requires a different approach from hiring others. According to the SHRM Foundation, the philanthropic arm of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) professional association, 43% of employers do not know how to promote jobs targeting veterans, and 46% say veterans do not self-identify on their recruiting forms. Even small changes to traditional approaches can help, like explicitly including "or equivalent military service" when listing education or experience requirements in job descriptions so that veterans don't self-select out of applying.

Hiring managers also need to understand how résumés of qualified veterans might differ from those of others. "Employers can struggle to see how military experience and technical skill sets translate into the civilian workforce," says Wendi Safstrom, president of the SHRM Foundation, which offers the Veterans at Work Certificate program, free for HR professionals, to



Saluting our forces of change

Our veterans are problem-solvers, innovative thinkers and outstanding leaders – forces for change we proudly salute.

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help them develop veteran-focused recruiting and retention strategies. The foundation also partners with national and local community organizations that support veterans' transition to civilian careers. "Employers don't need to go this alone," she says.

RALLYING AROUND A NEW MISSION

Accenture is a company well known for its veteran employment programs. The global professional services and technology company recruits veterans for various roles, including strategy and consulting, technology and operations like finance and accounting, human resources, marketing, procurement, and logistics.

"We have veterans who thrive across that ecosystem and in leadership roles," says Greg Anderson, operating officer for human resources at Accenture and a six-year military veteran. "We're a leading company with boundless opportunities for people to find their true potential."

A flagship member of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs program, Veteran Employment Through Technology Education Courses (VET TEC) Consortium, Accenture is helping to create pathways to technology career fields for veterans. The company leverages a specialized military recruiting team of veterans to help military members and their spouses find meaningful careers at Accenture. Veterans and military spouses who join the company can find community through the Military Employee Resource Group, which supports their transition from their military career to Accenture. Accenture people can also join the Military Spouse ERG, which focuses on the unique circumstances of military families.

One key to Accenture's veteran recruitment efforts has been a shift to more broadly evaluate talent based on performance and potential, not simply education. Why? Because the company has learned that veterans have qualities and experiences gained through service that often set them apart.

"Skilling is a core Accenture competency—it's one of the things we do best," says Anderson, who served as a combat engineer in the 82nd Airborne Division and led an 80-person combat operations unit during Operation Desert Storm. "We're looking for motivated, disciplined team players who can work toward a goal. Veterans bring a learned capability to lead in stressful situations, prioritize,

work as a team, and motivate others to rally around a mission. They have a rich set of traits that add significant value to Accenture and our client work," he says.

CORPORATE CULTURE SHOCK

To get the most out of their military veteran workers, employers must consider putting programs in place that help them contribute and thrive. Establishing veteran-led employee resource groups, which Accenture offers, provides camaraderie and an environment to share lived experiences. Veterans can also get advice about advocating for themselves and taking advantage of what their organization offers.

Safstrom similarly emphasizes the need to provide clear paths for advancement. "Veterans are used to structured and predictable career paths," she says, "but there are a lot of different ways one can advance their civilian career. Employers must communicate their performance management and promotional policies and articulate how to access development opportunities."

As much as veterans need to adapt to corporate culture, companies must also adapt. In Safstrom's view, it starts at the top. "Leaders have to ensure their organization's cultures are not just receptive to hiring veterans, but actively support working with veterans," she says. That requires communicating why they have veteran hiring and retention initiatives in the first place. "It's the right thing to hire veterans from a social and moral perspective, but it absolutely makes sense for the business and its communities as well."

As tech-sector competition increases and demand for highly skilled workers rises, companies should look closely at military veterans. To Anderson, doing so is a no-brainer. "The traits they bring in terms of discipline, collaboration, teamwork, leadership, integrity, and the ability to work under pressure are invaluable. Veterans have a rich set of characteristics that we can tap into and add significant value to the work we bring to our clients." ■



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