

Attract, Recruit, Retain:

Creation of a Systemic Pipeline for
Veteran Talent to Address
Tennessee's Current and Emergent
Labor Shortages

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Agenda



Introduction and Background



Literature Review



Design, Methods and Analysis



Findings & Recommendations



Conclusion



Tennessee's Job Growth



Source: <https://www.tn.gov/transparenttn/state-financial-overview/open-eed/openecd/tneecd-performance-metrics/openecd-business-development-quick-stats/new-job-commitments.html>

Veterans: an untapped talent pool

- 400/month separate from the Military from Ft. Campbell alone
- 200,000 service members transition annually, Nationwide
- Numbers don't account for other accessible talent, including spouses and military affiliates





The Veteran Transition Experience

- 48% of Veterans report transition to civilian life is harder than expected
- 76% of Veterans report the transition was stressful
- 52% of Veterans report that the transition was confusing
- Many Veterans report unemployment after transition
- DOD spends nearly \$1 Billion/ year on unemployment for the first 15 months of the post-separation period.

Research Question

What factors or barriers affect labor participation among Veterans and transitioning military seeking to secure a job as they transition their identity from that of a servicemember to a civilian?

What are they and how are they understood and by whom are they acknowledged, if at all?

Sub-questions

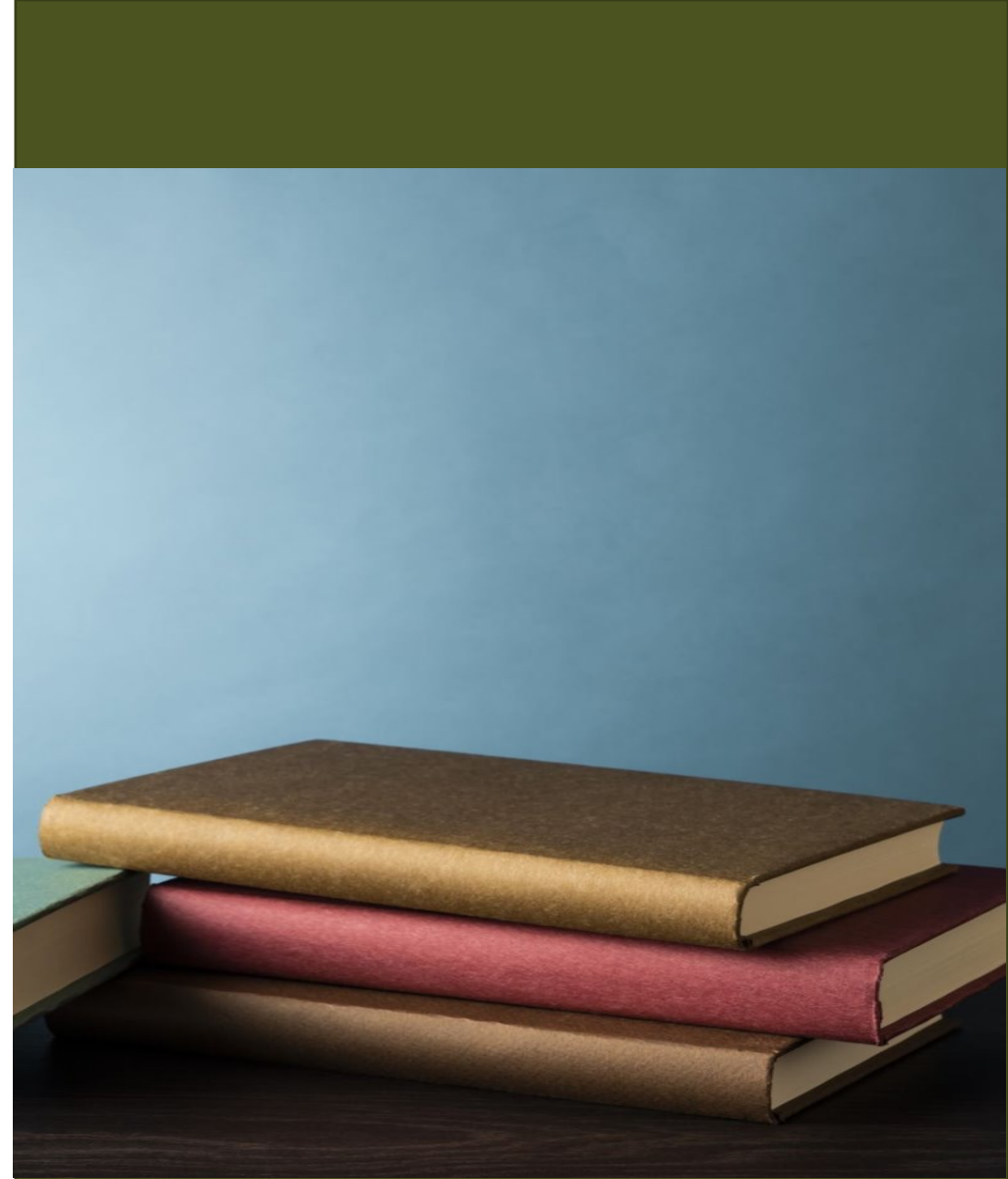
Are Tennessee businesses postured to attract separating service members, Veterans, and their military affiliates?

Are Tennessee businesses postured to recruit separating service members, Veterans, and their military affiliates?

What characteristics do Veterans seek in a business for sustained employment?

Are Veterans armed with resources to facilitate their transition to business opportunities in a timely manner?

Literature Review



Two Broad Themes

**Veterans are
“Broken”
narrative**

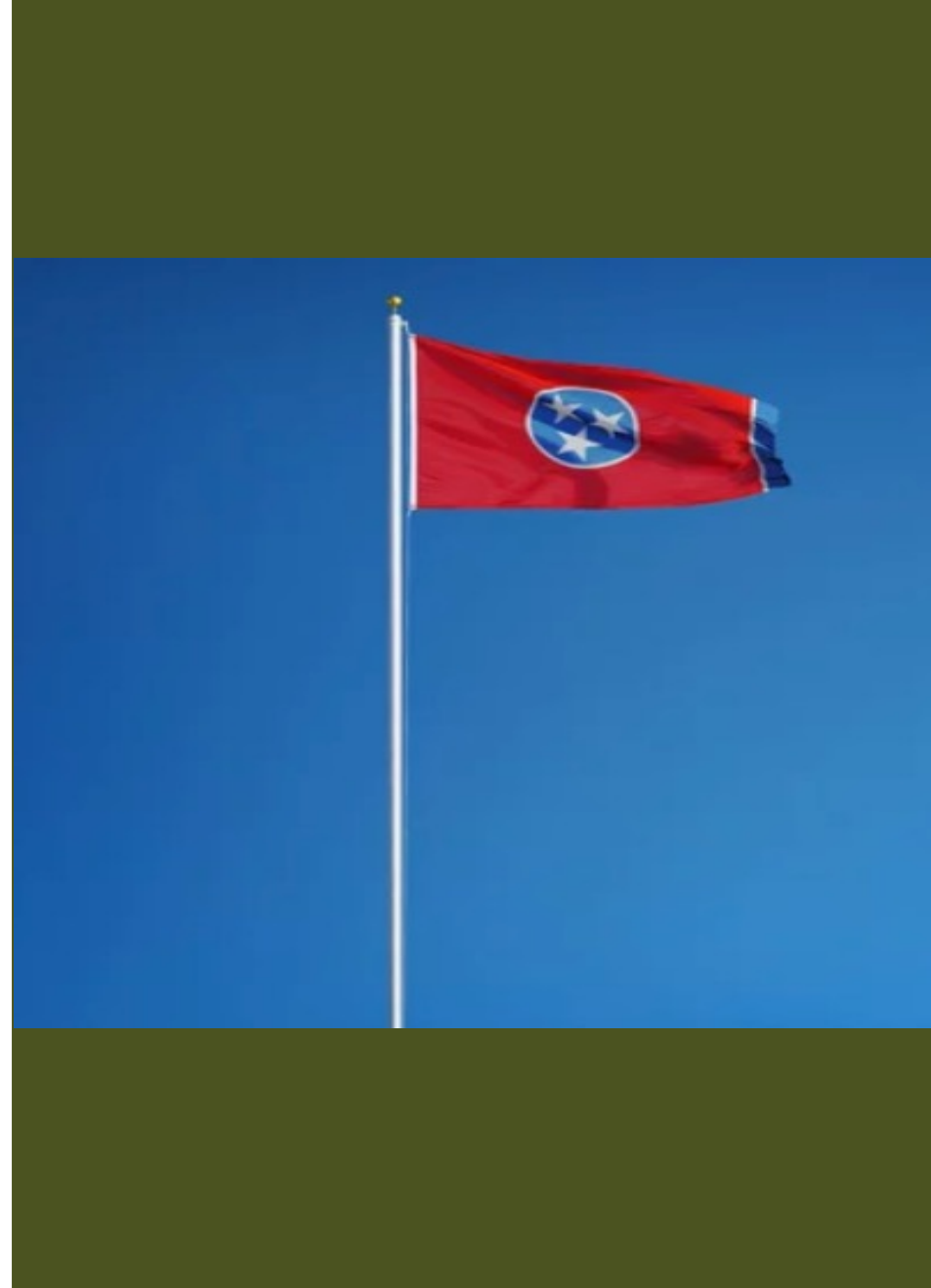
**The Social
Support System
is Difficult to
Navigate**

Gap in the Literature

A significant gap addressing a unified framework for reintegration **Nationwide**, let alone within the state of **Tennessee**, seemingly does **not** exist...



Design, Methods and Analysis



Research Approach, Theoretical Lens

a phenomenological qualitative
research approach...

**Social Identity
Theory**

Tajfel, 2019

**Social Identity
Model of Identity
Change**

Tajfel & Turner, 2019

**Change
Management
Theory**

Kotter, 2012

Participant Selection

17 people

U.S. Military service-members actively seeking to exit military service

8 people

Veteran (transitioned into TN labor force)

9 people

Veteran (transitioned and is seeking entry into the TN labor force)

5 people

Veteran stakeholder, Tennessee State Government

3 people

Veteran stakeholder, state of Tennessee Veteran space, non-profit

3 people

Veteran stakeholder, state of Tennessee Veteran space, education

3 focus groups

comprised of 8-20 people

7 focus groups observed unobtrusively

comprised of 5-14 people



Data Analysis

PHASE I

Analyzed data sources

relative to Tennessee's
vocational environment and the
Veteran transition context

PHASE II

Qualitative thematic analysis of conversations

from interviews, focus groups
and observation groups

Findings & Recommendations



Findings & Recommendations

Barriers affecting labor participation..

**State Level
Challenges**

**Veteran
Challenges**

**Business
Challenges**

State-Level Challenges

FINDING 1

There is disunification of resources, unaligned efforts, and miscommunication within private, public, partnerships (P3).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Design and prioritize policies that make Tennessee the most attractive “Veteran-Ready” state** by codifying practices to streamline P3’s, insert fiscal accountability performance measures, and alleviate Veteran barriers toward employment.
- **Establish a coordination of care network.**
- **Partner to support research toward strategies for improving Veteran & military affiliate outcomes** and leverage their talents. A research group in a leading university could shift the narrative.

State-Level Challenges

FINDING 2

Tennessee lacks a system for attracting, retaining, and tracking Veterans.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Military bases and the State Veteran Affairs (VA) office to track data** on all service members regarding their decision to stay or leave the state upon separation.

State-Level Challenges

FINDING 3

The “Sea of Goodwill” is overwhelming and difficult to navigate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Create a Tennessee State “Seal of Approval”** vetting designation.
- **Create an interactive map** of resources and state partners.

State-Level Challenges

FINDING 4

No network, no work. Veterans face unemployment after transition, as there are barriers and not enough time to find their “after.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Create a pipeline** into the labor force *during* transition.

State-Level Challenges

FINDING 5

The Transition Assistance Program (TAP) and Dept. of Defense (DOD) SkillBridge have limitations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Codify Veteran employment and education initiatives** to break down barriers and serve as interlocutor for retention in the state.

Veteran Challenges

FINDING 6

Veterans are unclear of what their vocation should be after transition.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Implement a Chamber of Commerce-driven, internship model, Veteran Internship & Talent Acquisition (VITA)** to expand experience upon transition and retain in the labor pipeline.
- **Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) and universities to engage in the retention of transitioning Veterans** and explain educational pathways *during* transition.
- **Offer college fairs *during* transition** on military bases.

Veteran Challenges

FINDING 7

Veterans are unable to apply relevant military training and education toward state certification, licensure or credit toward upon transition.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Give credit** for relevant military training and education and make a codebook for what accounts as transferable for not only the Veteran, but for the spouse and military affiliates.

Business Challenges

FINDING 8

Civilians & Business practices lack military cultural competence, leading to the proliferation of stereotypes and bias.

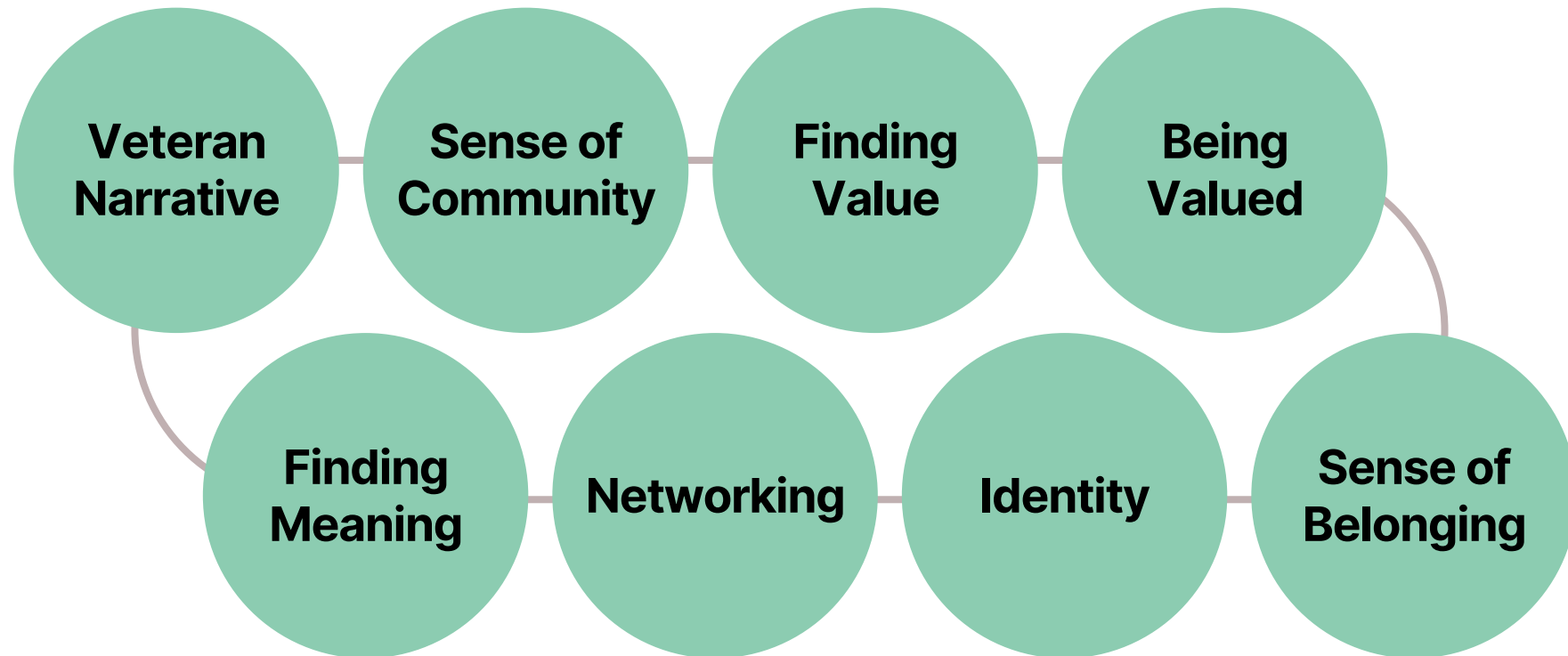
RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Establish a marketing campaign and communication strategy.**

*The root cause of challenges to reintegration into the labor force is failing to attend to shifts in identity.

8 Areas of Focus

During the Military-to-Civilian Labor Transition



8 Areas of Focus

Aligned Qualitative Evidence

Veteran Narrative

“They seem really rigid... and intimidate people”

Sense Of Community

“I felt like a fish out of water”

Finding Value

“Unlike the military, when I showed up to my civilian job, I had no one clearly willing to mentor me”

Being Valued

“They kept telling me to change my resume, but why don’t they try to understand what is on my resume?”

Finding Meaning

“I have no clear path... sometimes I don’t know if I am successful or can be successful in my new job...I leave because those are just jobs, not careers”

Networking

“I don’t know what I am going to do, I am not an Army BRAT”

Identity

“I am told I have no experience for the civilian labor force”

Sense of Belonging

“I went from having a structure in place, to operating solo”

Business Challenges

FINDING 9

“Veteran-Friendly” employers attract, but “Veteran-Ready” workplaces achieve successful integration and retention.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Operationalize a “Veteran-Ready” Business Model**

Veteran-Ready Business Model A FOUR-PRONG APPROACH



| Recruitment & Onboarding Practices | Clear Pathways for Growth & Training | Business Resource Group (BRG) & Mentorship | Public-Private Partnerships (P3) |
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| <p>Aim Implement a veteran hiring initiative. Capitalize on the abundance of veteran talent. Create a talent acquisition (TA) strategy to build a pipeline of veteran & military affiliate talent.</p> <p>Outcome</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Leveraging from the talent pool of veterans grants the ability to fill a labor shortage. Will create a pipeline to facilitate military to civilian integration into the labor force. Will deliver a return on investment (ROI) & social return on investment (SROI). | <p>Aim Provide training opportunities and clear pathways for growth (self-growth and hierarchical).</p> <p>Outcome</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Skill up staff. Ease integration. Ensure retention. Will deliver ROI & SROI. | <p>Aim Create a veteran (BRG), and/or offer a veteran mentor internally or externally via a P3.</p> <p>Outcome</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Skill up staff. Ease integration. Ensure retention. Add to company culture by building a sense of community. Fosters an environment of comradery and simultaneously builds a network. Will deliver ROI & SROI. | <p>Aim Make a positive difference with veterans, military affiliates & staff through corporate social responsibility programs.</p> <p>Outcome</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Create a business culture of "purpose." Contribute to something larger, give meaning to work. BRG can partner with P3 of choice to contribute within the community collectively. Residual effects of contributing to the veteran community by supporting veteran initiatives. Provides an outlet to positively impact other veterans locally, and/or nationally. Will deliver ROI & SROI. |

RECRUITMENT & ONBOARDING PRACTICES

Implement a Hiring Strategy

- Execute formal training sessions for HR leaders and hiring managers to educate them on the value of veterans. Hiring managers can be trained on how to translate veteran skills and talents to actual roles at the company, as well as the best techniques for interviewing veterans transitioning out of the military.
- Or
- Include a veterans' voice internally as part of the hiring practice that can liaise the vernacular & onboarding for veterans.
- Place little emphasis on the resume. Conduct a video or in-person interview for all military applicants via trained HR or veteran liaison.
- Incentivize active duty, National Guard, and reserve military & spouses with job security and paid time off.
- Offer Internship (paid/unpaid) for a designated amount of time, before an official hire/contract.
- Commit to a veteran-preferential hiring practice.

Attract

- Business website, call out value of veterans & military affiliates.
- Job descriptions that are Veteran Friendly. Otherwise, they can deter one from applying. A notation for veteran applicants: "Civilian prerequisites not applicable. If you believe your experience aligns, apply, to be discussed further in an interview."
- Veteran-centric social media campaign. Marketing for veteran talent on social media and company websites.
- Post employment opportunities where veterans can find them, i.e. to Military.com's veteran employment center.
- Create job descriptions that align with military occupations. *ADP offers model examples of such practice.
- Ongoing outreach with branding initiatives: branded career site showcasing the value of the veteran, employee testimonials via video discussing how they have applied their military skill set, integrity and passion within their current role.

Recruit

- Live and virtual career events.
- Relationship building and networking within the military community.
- Leverage outside hiring source. Partner with non-profit(s) for onboarding, i.e. "Veterans Jobs Mission" or "US Army Partnership for Youth Success Program," or "US Pathfinder".
- Company recruiters can partner with local military transition assistance program (TAP).
- Have company recruiters attend the Service Academy Career Conference. It aids in identifying many supply chain and logistics candidates for senior management positions.
- Recruiters to partner with university veteran centers to identify veterans and bring them aboard. Both in school and graduates.
- Become a visible presence at the weekly Department of Labor job fairs.

CLEAR PATHWAYS FOR GROWTH & TRAINING

Training

- Guide in facilitating post-9/11 GI Bill benefits to further one's college education, receive additional training, or credentialing.
- Provide training opportunities internally or partner with P3 to either embed monthly, annually or through mentorship with BRG member(s).
- Train veterans about the business brand, its purpose & values.
- Provide veterans an opportunity to contribute & collaborate to the brand/business.

Clear Pathways

- Create job descriptions that offer clear paths within the company.
- Offer a clear trajectory to promotion and upskill. Set goals for the employee and the company.
- Referral program bonus offered, put in place contingencies. Referral programs can extend to spouses and military affiliates.
- Discuss pathways that are available. Conduct a 6-month review to check-in. Is the position a match, or better suited for a different department.

BUSINESS RESOURCE GROUP (BRG) & MENTORSHIP

- BRG members can volunteer their time to coach transitioning service members on writing resumes, interviewing in the corporate world, and transitioning out of the military and into the civilian workforce.
- Group can meet monthly, in-person and via zoom. Opportunity to network with other chapters of BRG's.
- Cultivate leadership and organizational membership. Open to all staff, not only veterans & military affiliates. Grow company culture motto, i.e. "One Team, One Fight." Residual effects of staff collaboration, motivation, & organizational growth.
- Establish a mentorship program that connects new veteran employees to others, can be via BRG.

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS (P3)

Examples of Partnerships

- i.e., partner with "Habitat for Humanity" to build homes for veterans.
- i.e., annually work with "Operation Gratitude" to assemble care packages for deployed service members all over the world.
- i.e., annual gala or fundraising event to support a veteran initiative, decided on by BRG & staff.
- i.e., partner with the "Wounded Warrior Project," the State Veterans Affairs Agency, or "Military Spouse Employment Partnership."
- Partner with "Veterans Advantage," a military benefits program, to provide veterans and their families with exclusive national discounts.

Business Policy

- Create a company goal to support veterans by focusing on subcontracting to and acquiring products and services from veteran-owned small businesses.
- Create a company policy to allot a percentage of procurements set aside for veteran-owned small businesses.
- Create a corporate sponsorship commitment to support veteran initiatives.
- Create a Veteran Franchise Model: i.e., 7-Eleven offers up to 20 percent off the initial franchise fee (savings up to a maximum of \$50,000), up to 65 percent financing through 7-Eleven; and other specific financing for the business.
- 7-Eleven implemented "Operation: Take Command." An annual competition that enables a veteran to win a fee-free 7-Eleven franchise (valued at up to \$190,000).

Conclusion

The military to civilian identity transition presents significant challenges and opportunities that demand collective attention, empathy, and action.





Thank you!

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