

Amid Devastated Economy, Job Mentorship Crucial for Veterans, Report Finds

Military.com | By [Richard Sisk](#)

Veterans able to find jobs in an economy devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic will face the continuing problem of "underemployment" in positions unsuited to their skills, according to a new study.

The underemployment issue is particularly concerning for former enlisted troops from fields such as the infantry who lack a college degree, said Thomas Mahnken, author of the report for the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.

Service members transitioning out of the military tend to "enter the workforce a step behind their civilian counterparts" in terms of familiarity with the language, requirements and responsibilities of the corporate world, Mahnken said Wednesday.

Much of the report, titled "Addressing Veteran Unemployment: A Case Study," went over the well-trod groundwork of other studies on [veteran employment](#), such as the difficulty in adapting to the civilian workplace after committing to the military's hierarchical structure and team-oriented mission.

One of the partial solutions to the underemployment issue is a corporate mentorship program in which civilian business leaders would advise a veteran once a month for a year on navigating the job market, Mahnken said in a webinar co-hosted with retired Gen. Jack Keane, a Silver Star recipient in Vietnam and former [Army](#) vice chief of staff.

The 17-page report singled out the program at American Corporate Partners (ACP), which calls on executives to assist in mentoring transitioning service members once a month for a year.

ACP mentors assist veterans on how to "translate military skills into workplace attributes," Mahnken said, and also how to engage with colleagues and advocate for themselves.

About 17,000 veterans have gone through the program nationwide, he said. In 2019, more than 1,900 veterans who participated said they had obtained what they called "meaningful" employment, according to the report.

Keane said he was stating the obvious in noting that there is "a much more significant challenge for our veterans going forward" in an economy with double-digit unemployment rates due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The ACP program can contribute in preparing veterans for the challenge while also having the side effect of having the corporate leaders "become a catalyst within their own companies" for appreciating what veterans have to offer to their businesses.

"They've got enormous personal attributes" and can make a difference "if given a chance," Keane said of the veterans.

"There has to be some empathy, some appreciation" for their service, he added. "There has to be some willingness to understand and trust who this person is and how they can contribute."

Apply for the ACP mentorship program was on its website [here](#).

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