

“I have vowed for the remainder of my life that I will do what I can to help our vets.”

- President George W. Bush



Veterans and Civilians: Bridging the Gap

Veterans and Civilians: Bridging the Gap

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ABSTRACT

Approximately 200,000 military service members transition each year. Of the vast array of transition tools and resources at their disposal, only a handful focus on the transferable skills with which service members transition. Of that handful, there are no readily available resources that use anything more than a basic algorithm to match military fields to civilian careers or assist the service member in identifying the type of post military career they are best suited for. After transitioning, military veterans struggle to communicate their extensible skill sets to potential civilian employers as a result of their highly specialized vocational language leading to inequitable employment opportunities. The objective of this body of research was to evaluate veteran career statistics compared to their intended career paths and employer hiring methodologies in an effort to determine the typical veteran's career outlook. This was compared to the approximate level of comparable civilian equivalent. After conducting statistical research from numerous resources, reviewing various types of job listings and comparing that data to veteran experiences it was revealed that veterans have a high employment rate. However, most of this employment remains at the labor or technical level and not the supervisory level that many veterans achieved while serving. It is apparent that a communication gap exists between military occupational terminology and civilian employment vernacular. The most effective solution to this predicament is to afford veterans an instructional resource to assist in accentuating their hard-earned skills and attributes and adapting their resumes into comprehensible formats readily accepted by hiring managers. The Vet Bridge skills translation program is the initial format for this solution. Further research and knowledge contribution by veterans and employers is of the utmost importance to building and maintaining a robust and effective program.

Chapter 1: Introduction

THE PROBLEM

Military veterans struggle to communicate their extensible skill sets to potential civilian employers as a result of their highly specialized vocational language leading to inequitable employment opportunities.

It is relevant to solve this recurring issue with graphic design using a highly effective solution that can serve as a roadmap for veterans when learning how to translate their highly sought after skills into well received, industry standard vernacular to assist in bridging the gap between the terminology used for their military skills and their civilian counterparts.

THE PURPOSE

This study had three purposes (a) to examine the veteran employment rates across various fields in comparison to their civilian counterparts, (b) to use the findings from purpose (a) to provide proof that veterans are not reaching their workforce potential when ending their service due to inefficient methods of translating their work skills and determine which fields veterans are more likely to work in when leaving the military service and (c) to provide data to assist in the creation and provision of a solution which will foster the development of veterans' capability to better articulate their hard earned technical and supervisory skillsets and obtain better opportunities for employment in positions closer to their levels of expertise.

THE SIGNIFICANCE

Veterans represent the less than one half of a percent of American Citizens that elect to place the welfare of others and that of the nation ahead of themselves. While many may think of military service as a job it is much more than that. It is a life of dedication to service and a commitment to lay one's life down if necessary to protect the freedoms we as Americans enjoy and at times take for granted. While only an approximate 17% of military members continue their service to fulfill at least 20 years and retire from the service all who complete their service obligations have earned the gratitude of the American people.

Military members are known for having strong work ethics, being trustworthy, and always getting the job done. This is because at one point literally lives depended on it. They gain very specialized skillsets and impressive leadership skills during their tenures as Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines. Despite these attributes sounding appealing to anyone hiring new employees there is a significant number of veterans who have severe difficulty obtaining a job after leaving the service and when they do obtain employment it is usually of lesser potential and authority than they are skilled enough to handle.

Bridging the gap between the two languages of the military and civilian workforces would position veterans to better articulate their attributes to potential employers and begin to achieve the level of post military careers they deserve. This would benefit employers as they would gain a hard worker that can operate at a higher level than many. The fact that hiring hardworking veterans into the right positions just makes sense, America owes it to them to ensure they are taken care of after their watch is complete.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

From the start, my rationale for this thesis was based on my personal experience transitioning from the United States Army after my retirement to becoming a member of the civilian workforce. In the military service members are taught to succeed in a team environment and never to focus on putting our own accomplishments on display, but to ensure credit for our successes passes laterally to our teammates or down to our subordinates. This came at a detriment to me personally as it made it extremely difficult to write my resume and truly capture my skillset and managerial skills. I felt completely unprepared to write my resume effectively which kept me from landing any interviews for the first year after retirement.

Throughout the required two-week Army Transition Assistance Program courses of study, we were told numerous facts about transitioning and many myths were debunked as well. We were well informed about medical benefits, how to plan financially for our transitions, and what to expect to go through upon our transition. We were given resume formatting classes, interview practical exercises, and even tested on elevator pitches and our abilities to conduct ourselves during an interview. All of this except how to specifically translate our military skills into their civilian counterparts. We were told to do it, but not how to do it, nor where to go to learn how to do it.

This thesis has the aim of providing veterans a roadmap which can serve to inform them on the best way to translate their skills into civilian vernacular in order to become competitive for a position akin to their military experience.

Chapter 2: Research

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology behind my research was to look at the issue from several different datasets and find the best set of elements to use to inform my graphic solution. The first was to look at sources that confirm the existence of the issue. While I surely confirmed that the problem exists, I had to be sure that the solution was not already available and if it was that it was not easy to find or use.

After that I proceeded to focus on what civilian employers thought a veteran was. I know what a veteran knows that they are, but it is also important to understand how others view us or stereotype us. I knew that it is important to at times remove my personal biases from the situation and think objectively as much as I could when researching this thesis.

I then needed statistics. While statistics can be misleading at times, it was necessary to retrieve data from the U.S. Department of Labor in order to have a better grasp on the brass tacks numbers of veteran post service employment. This would provide me insight as to veteran employment compared to civilians and allow a further look into the years of service and other demographics that may affect the outcomes of their quest for work.

Now I knew the problem existed, what employers thought about veterans, and statistics on veteran employment. I now needed to know if there were any effective sources used by veterans to help answer the thesis or at least point me in a better direction in answering it myself.

After researching scholarly findings, I needed to identify more primary research methods in order to identify more current and significant datasets I could employ into my thesis plan. I then

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determined that cognitive mapping would help create a solid framework on which to build a cohesive strategy to bridge the gap between the vernaculars used between veterans and potential employers. It is a great method to map out vernacular in general terms applying to numerous fields as well as more specific node sets to refer to more specific fields. Similarly, mind mapping is also very much a useful research method to find the links between military and civilian versions of the same field. In this case, the difficulty is in how the military and civilian experience line up with one another. After this a questionnaire would offer more direct and specific answers to inform the brief allowing for a more cohesive and thought-out design plan.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Statement

Existing resources assist veterans in the process of writing resumes, understanding the civilian workforce, and setting up potential job interviews. However, little exists for employers to use to understand the comparable skillset and experience a veteran has acquired over the course of their service compared to a civilian competitor in the job market. This makes it increasingly difficult for veterans to be considered for the initial interview simply due to the civilian counterpart being the easier choice. Personal experience with this process, the review of the Department of Veteran's Affairs (VA) separation training materials, and veteran forums all conclude that there exists a large gap between the veteran and employers. While the VA provides ample services to assist service members with employment services during and after their transition from service, this does not assist them in landing an interview if the employer remains uneducated on what being a veteran means and what they bring to the table.

Continued research of statistics from the VA employment services, census employment statistics, and interview of both veterans and employers will be conducted in order to identify the most current data on the subject and identify the biggest knowledge gaps of the employers. This information will inform the visual solution by providing context and make determinations on which type of visualization is necessary and what elements of knowledge are to be formalized in the final graphic solution.

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Knowledge Gap

1. Terminology: There were little to no references that offered the actual civilian terms paired with their military equivalents. Even the ones that did were only basic in content such as saying leader in the military is like a supervisor or manager in the civilian world. What are the best data sources for identifying these terms for major field types i.e. medical, construction, administrative, finance, intelligence, etc.?
2. What level in terms of years of experience or military service schools is equal to which levels of a civilian field skill hierarchy? For example, does an Army Corps of Engineers foreman with six years of Army experience equate to a civilian foreman with 6 years of experience?
3. What portions of their career do veterans struggle with translating the most? What skills in available positions do employers have the most difficulty equating to military experience?
4. What percentage of veterans feel that they found a civilian job that is in line with their skillset, pay, and performance expectations whether officer, enlisted, or warrant officer? What percentage of veterans feels the opposite?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Stakeholders

Stakeholders for this thesis exist from the military services branch wide transition assistance programs, all the way down to the individual service member. At the service level, all veterans are required to attend a 1-2 week transition assistance program to afford them all of the information they need in preparation for their transition from the service, whether they served for only 6 months or made it all the way to 32 years of distinguished service. These few weeks would be a very effective timeframe to embed the resulting resource from this thesis in order to ensure the widest dissemination possible for all veterans.

The next affected party would consist of potential employers from major corporations hiring veterans all the way to individual hiring managers for small companies. This resource could give them a better understanding of how veterans work and the benefits associated with hiring veterans. It also provides a much clearer understanding of the veteran's skillset which can be mostly comparable to positions they may be hiring for.

The individual veteran would be the most important stakeholder for this thesis as they exist as part of every stakeholder element. The veteran can gain a better understanding of what employers need from them, learn a functional way to translate their skills into vernacular that civilian hiring managers can utilize in their search for employees, and gain confidence in their abilities to properly present themselves to the hiring managers effectively bridging the existing gap between them.

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Research Implications

Every month thousands of military service members end their service to the nation either by deciding to end their service after completing one or more tours of duty or by retirement after twenty or more years of faithful service. As a result of the natural social engineering that occurs throughout military service these veterans become accustomed to using a very specific vernacular that is mostly foreign to civilians. When it comes time for a veteran to write a resume and attempt to join the civilian workforce, they often have difficulty translating their military skills into their civilian equivalents because they are never really taught to do so. This results in most veterans being hired into positions of lesser quality, requiring less experience, or for less compensation than a similarly skilled civilian only because there is a gap in the knowledge of what their military experience equates to in the civilian realm. This leads to hiring managers not seeing the full potential of veterans and offering them lower positions than they deserve or being overlooked for all positions.

This thesis is an answer to that issue and is an attempt to provide veterans and employers with a common solution to bridge the gap that currently exists, placing veterans into positions they deserve and allowing employers to hire the best candidates for their open positions. Not only is this good for the veterans career goals, but it allows them mental solace as well as there is a high number of veterans unemployed due to not being able to find the right position and get hired.

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Research Methods

1. Terminology: There were little to no references that offered the actual civilian terms paired with their military equivalents. Even the ones that did were only basic in content such as saying leader in the military is like a supervisor or manager in the civilian world. What are the best data sources for identifying these terms for major field types i.e. medical, construction, administrative, finance, intelligence, etc.?

Cognitive Mapping is a great method to map out vernacular in general terms applying to numerous fields as well as more specific node sets to refer to more specific fields. The possibilities are endless. A decent size sampling of employers and veterans could produce a high quantity of node sets that could be overlaid and compared to one another to identify similarities and differences that need to be addressed. This could create a solid framework on which to build a cohesive strategy on how to bridge the gap between the vernaculars used between the two. In fact, a working group of each set, veterans and employers working separately to create their field specific nodes and then coming together to compare and contrast would do wonders for the thesis. I would not be surprised if there are more similarities than differences and if put into a room to have a conversation on what specific words mean, that veterans and employers could not easily come up with a common set of language list put in place for veterans to use when preparing resumes and for interviews to better align themselves with employer requirements. This would also assist the employer in finding the best candidate for the job.

2. What level in terms of years of experience or military service schools is equal to which levels of a civilian field skill hierarchy?

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For example, does an Army Corps of Engineers foreman with six years of Army experience equate to a civilian foreman with 6 years of experience?

One of the biggest difficulties that veterans face is how to outline their levels of experience in comparison to the civilian world. In the military personnel are moved around a lot within different bases and units. They also tend to move to new bases every 3-5 years. This means that there is a lot of experience in different places and scenarios that have to be accounted for on resumes. But how do you compare that to a civilian who probably worked in the same city and maybe for the same company in the same type of position for 5-10 years? Much like Cognitive Mapping, Mind Mapping would very much be a useful research method one could use to find the links between military and civilian versions of the same field. In this case, the difficulty is in how the military and civilian experience line up with one another. Also, how does military technical training match up with civilian technical training? College degrees make it easier to make these connections. However, only military officers are required to have degrees and they do not even have to be in their chosen military field. Another full arrangement of node sets, this time from a combination of military leaders and employers would suit this knowledge gap.

3. What portions of their career do veterans struggle with translating the most? What skills in available positions do employers have the most difficulty equating to military experience?

This is yet another set of questions that likely require a set of questionnaires as it will mostly be based off of the opinions and experiences of both veterans and employers alike. I would

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develop two sets of questionnaires. One set would include a questionnaire that asks questions to veterans pertaining to their beliefs on their own abilities to translate their skills into civilian terminology. The other questionnaire in the set would ask the same types of questions, but from the employer's point of view. This would allow an analyst to ascertain whether or not the veteran is correct in their beliefs or if their thinking needs to be adjusted based off of the data collected from the employers.

Similarly, the second set of questionnaires would include two questionnaires, one asking about employer's understanding of military skills and matching them to civilian requirements and the other asked to veterans thoughts on employers abilities to do so. This would provide the other side of data allowing an analyst to determine whether or not the employers and veterans are on the same page. A disconnect between what needs to be changed and what does not could greatly play against the effectiveness of any solution to this thesis.

4. What percentage of veterans feel that they found a civilian job that is in line with their skillset, pay, and performance expectations whether officer, enlisted, or warrant officer? What percentage of veterans feels the opposite?

Questionnaires would likely be the best approach to identifying these data as the answer to this question is based on the individual perception of each veteran. A Simple pole with just a few questions about each area sent out to a large number of veterans would provide the best data to include in the analysis of the results of this question. As most of the military has three main branches of personnel there are also inherent skill, position, and class

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types within each one.

Officers are more of administrative leaders (commanders) and do not have field specific skillsets as they do overarching managerial skills. They are not technical experts, but rather analyze the key components of a mission requirement and establish the intent to complete those requirements. These orders are then passed to subordinate leaders to complete. They are more of a white collar element that makes more money for the thinking side of operations and require college degrees.

Enlisted personnel are field specific. They conduct the mission to meet mission requirements as directed by officers. Senior enlisted personnel run the missions for the officers and ensure that the mission intent is carried out. They are more of a blue collar element with a more physical requirement and do not require degrees.

Warrant officers are technical experts. They are the personnel within their field that have the most technical acumen and provide the commander with the specific means to be able to conduct the more technologically complex sides of the mission. They drive the training requirements for enlisted personnel within their fields to determine training requirements to meet the mission intent. They are more of blue collar elements that think they are white collar. Because they are all different with different skillsets, pay, and expectations, the only way to gauge the proper data is from a direct questionnaire.

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Research Questions

1. What values do veterans bring to the workplace? What do values do employers believe that veterans bring to the workplace?
2. How does military training/experience relate to or differ from trade schools or college degrees?
3. What resources do veterans find useful when planning for their transition into the civilian work environment?
4. What particular qualities of veterans do employers wish to capitalize on when electing to hire veterans?
5. What do veterans find most difficult when trying to translate their skills into civilian vernacular? The easiest?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Thousands of military veterans exit the military service each month with the goal of succeeding in the civilian sector the way they did in the military. Unfortunately, they face difficulties when transitioning from their respective military culture to the norms of civilian life. Their military way of life includes very specific operational terminology unique to the military and sometimes to the specific service. Military veterans struggle to communicate their extensible skill sets to potential civilian employers as a result of their highly specialized vocational language leading to inequitable employment opportunities.

Body

Numerous forms of literature exist to aid military veterans with their transition from military service. While most of these teachings focus around resume writing, interviewing, and job equivalency analysis, not much exists to help the veteran translate what they did in the military to what they could do for a particular civilian organization. Many websites and books broach the subject and offer some brief translation techniques between military phrases and their civilian counterpart; however, it is only a start. According to my research, no tool exists to provide for a truly effective approach to bridging the vernacular gap between military veterans and civilian employers. This literature review mostly serves to illustrate the lack of writing on the subject of translating a veteran's skills into civilian English. It also points to the mostly inaccurate stereotypical beliefs that most members of society have of our veterans.

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Sources that confirm the issue

One of my favorite sentences read throughout my research was “But there is little evidence to suggest that military training does, in fact, leave veterans at a deficit relative to their civilian peers.” This according to *Why Is Veteran Unemployment So High?* Is astonishing to read. Numerous sources out there all say the same thing. They say that veterans are at a disadvantage due to the non-transferability of their skillsets. However, if there is little evidence to suggest this than maybe it is just lost in translation. Hence the reason we must bridge the gap.

Military.com is a highly used source for information by both service members and civilians alike as they publish hundreds of articles about all things military. They have a tool that seems promising called Military Skills Translator. It allows you to select your service and military occupational specialty and then displays equivalent civilian jobs based on its own algorithm. The only issue is a complete lack of accuracy. I used myself as an example. For twenty years I was a 35N Signals Intelligence Analyst in the United States Army. Most of what I did remains classified and cannot be discussed here, however, it mostly dealt with analysis of target information, locations, communication, and creating intelligence products to identify, locate, and inform the commander and decision makers on where the enemy was, what they were doing, plan to do, and what to do about it. As fancy as that sounds it does not equate to much outside of some form of government or law enforcement job. However, Military.com says there are 2,357 equivalent positions including, but not limited to surgery manager, preconstruction coordinator, and nuclear technical supervisor none of which I have any clue about. This

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further illustrates that the translation of military skills is either non-existent or inaccurate by current methods.

5 Reasons Why Employers Are Not Hiring Vets is an article published on Military.com and written by Lisa Nagorny and Dan Pick of the Department of Veterans Affairs. This article contains further statements about several arguments posed in this thesis. The top three reasons out of their five are skills translation, skills mismatch, and veteran stereotype. Even the Department of Veterans Affairs which is charged with safeguarding the rights of veterans after they end their terms of service and providing them with numerous services after their military careers to include career transition is admitting that there is a severe disconnect between the language spoken in the military and that of the civilian sector. But why has no one developed a comprehensive methodology to solve the problem. We can not only talk about issues, we are also charged with addressing and solving them, especially the Department of veterans Affairs.

In Down Range: a Transitioning Veteran's Career Guide to Life's Next Phase veterans are again stated to be the cream of the crop and what everyone in the civilian hiring structure wants, especially due to their functionality as a member of a team. "Our experience in the armed forces gave us an ability to adapt, while teaching us a process for planning and teamwork that leads to the pursuit of flawless execution." Executing missions as a team is great, but it does not teach you to be able to sell yourself as an individual potential employee. The team concept is necessary in the military, but must be shed when writing a resume and selling oneself in an interview.

According to Business Networking for Veterans: A Guidebook

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for a Successful Transition from the Military to the Civilian Workforce, civilians won't understand military occupations, names of operations, or personal awards. It also goes on to say that veterans should seek out other veterans in an organization in which they are seeking employment. These are folks who may be able to help them frame their skillset for their sought profession. As stated by Castro, Andrew, and Dursun in *Military Veteran Reintegration: Approach, Management, and Assessment of Military Veterans Transitioning to Civilian Life*, "These unique military occupations, often combat positions, such as infantryman and tank operators, may have few or no equivalent occupations in the civilian world". This is a relevant fact, however, skills are at times all in how you package them and any veteran can have a slew of leadership, labor, and problem-solving skills highlighted on their resumes with a little wordsmithing.

In *Ten Frequently Asked Questions About Veterans' Transitions: Results of a Decade of RAND Work on Veteran Life* numerous data sources were analyzed over time to answer key questions in terms of veteran employment difficulties. One such area spoke of the difference between military and civilian skillsets. "These differences likely reflect the differing degrees to which skills are transferable to the civilian labor market across military occupations." While a very relevant statement many military skills are more transferable than one might think. When explained in broader more leadership or problem solving based terminology a lot of overlooked military skills can easily be adjusted to suit civilian job requirements.

In *Life After the Military: A Handbook for Transitioning Veterans* I believe that a disservice to our veterans is done and it is repeated

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all over military transition service. “American veterans are superbly qualified and capable of meeting the needs of the current and future civilian labor force.” You hear this phrase uttered by all of the transition service professionals as you prepare to leave the service. If it is so easy to meet these needs, than why is it so difficult to be hired? As veterans we believe that people know what they are talking about. Therefore when I was told that I would easily meet the needs of the workforce and that veterans were in high demand, I thought that finding my next career would be easy. It still took a year and I consider myself lucky. These types of literature make veterans believe it will be easy and do not prepare them for the tough road ahead especially when it comes to translating their skills to civilianese.

Sources that identify the Veteran Stereotype

In *Veterans in Higher Education : When Johnny and Jane Come Marching to Campus* the author wrote about a veteran student who wrote an essay reflecting on his time during the war and reflections of taking lives. As modern society always does, the school failed to handle this situation gracefully. For some reason the essay was published in the school newspaper and the student was not able to return to class until he underwent a psychological evaluation. This writing solidifies how ill-knowledged the general populous is to veteran experiences and how to handle them. Frankly, it is sad that everyone will automatically jump to the notion that a veteran will commit violent acts against innocent people due to their experiences. If one veteran has difficulties and mismanages a societal situation then they all will...right?

In *Caring for the Military: a Guide for Helping Professionals* the

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veteran stereotype is address and its negative impact on veteran post military life and work is explained. According to the book “For many Veterans, the transition to civilian society creates a psychological invisibility which can be defined as a sensation of depersonalization and a feeling of being overshadowed by stereotypical assumptions and prejudices.” These assumptions that every veteran is the same and that they cannot function as a regular person can has devastating effects on their employability and limits the benefits an employer can receive from hiring a veteran.

Sources that provide Statistics

On the Pew Research Center website How veterans and non-veterans fare in the U.S. job market Drew Desilver authored an article that provides statistics the employment types and frequency of civilians compared to veterans. It is based off of information from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and uncovered some interesting data. A much higher percentage of veterans stayed in the blue collar workforce of installation, repair, construction and the like as compared to their civilian peers. Although the military has numerous field associated with administrative, management, development, research, and other white collar based positions veterans did not seem very successful and being hired into these roles. I find this to be a direct correlation with the lack of understood transferable skills as opposed to an actual lack of the skills themselves.

In a news release report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor data gathered from 2019 breaks

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down the employment statuses of veterans of various wars and conflicts and compares them to non-veterans of the same generation. This data further solidifies the information as seen in Drew Desilver's article on where the majority of veteran workforce efforts have been placed. The data reveals higher percentages of veterans working in the blue collar more physical positions and non-veterans working in more institutional white collar jobs. This data again reflects a trend of veterans skillsets not translating well into those white collar positions although there exists positions in the military service that are directly comparable to those positions in the institutional world.

In *White-Collar vs. Blue-Collar Jobs: What's the Difference?* An article on thestreet.com we get a look at the comparative factors between blue and white collar jobs. These differences are job type, labor type, pay, hours, and other factors. This data can be linked to what most veterans are used to and may have some key takeaways as to why most veterans remain in the blue collar realm. Most people tend to flock to what they are used to and veterans are the same. The article also goes into job skill and education requirements as well as some health considerations which may affect veterans as many of those that separate do so with some kind of disability rated by the Department of veterans Affairs which lists them as a disabled veteran.

In an article published on Resume Now's website by Don Sjoerdsma titled *How Blue Collar Jobs Are Changing in 2020*, statistics are provided along with reasoning to show how blue collar jobs are changing in the 21st century. As more work age adults push to become educated through post-secondary institutions, the demand for white collar jobs from job seekers is

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high resulting in a much high rate of competition for veterans versus civilian peers. The article provides data surrounding affected fields, companies, and generations and also breaks down pay changes and educations requirement changes. This data provides good insight into the challenge of resume writing for today's veterans hoping to enter the white collar force and not get stuck in a low paying blue collar labor position.

In an article published by the U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics A closer look at veterans in the labor force data is revealed about the demographics of veterans of specific war and conflict timeframes compared to their civilian peers of the same generation. While some would assume that the large numbers of veterans working in the blue collar area as opposed to the white collar realm would be tied to education, this data would reveal an astonishing fact. The civilian populace would only exceed veteran's post-secondary education levels in the Baccalaureate category and only by about a percent. In fact more veterans had more education than civilians in the five other categories; finished high school with no college, some college with no degree, an associate's, master's, and professional or doctoral degree. This leads again to the question as to why? If veterans are more educated than why are they filling the jobs requiring the least amount of education. The answer is most certainly a failure to properly translate their military experience, leading to a civilian with more "experience" but less education to be hired into the position deserved by the veteran.

Effective Sources

One of the quality resources I found was Expert Resumes for

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Military-to-civilian Transitions. In it Wendy Enelow and Louise Kursmark provide some quality information as to the five Ws of resume writing for veterans. According to Enelow, “One of the biggest problems we see is too much military jargon in a resume. We also see a lot of military titles that don’t mean much in the corporate world.” While this is a common phrase for such literature they go a step further and break down various steps along with good examples on exactly how to avoid the mistakes most veterans make with their resumes.

In *Out of Uniform, Second Edition: Your Guide to a Successful Military-to-Civilian Career Transition* the differences between military operational terminology and civilian organization terminology was discussed. The importance of writing your resume to speak this new language is very real. In addition, this book also spoke of knowing oneself being even more importance in terms of the type of employment one is seeking. I firmly believe this to be true and all veterans should be mindful of this during their transition. It is important to truly understand what you are saying with your resume and not just providing a basic translation of what a skill could mean to a civilian employer. You may have to do some extra research to find out say what a production manager does for a specific field and not just broadly what they are defined as before you put that on your resume in translation of being an intelligence collection management officer.

Google has done it again. In the article *Improving job searches for veterans with Google Cloud’s Talent Solution* a new application in the google cloud suite is explain and comes at an advantage to veterans working to properly translate their skills to the civilian terminology to get them hired into similar positions they are

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appropriate for. The tool begins to answer the very questions raised in this Thesis. The CEO of Siemens was on board at the start. “But to fully support veterans entering the civilian workforce, employers need to meet them where they are,” said Barbara Humpton, CEO, Siemens USA. “That’s why Siemens is thrilled to be an early adopter of the Google Cloud Talent Solution feature, which will make matching veterans’ skills to our open positions easier than ever before.” This is a leap in the idea of assisting veterans in finding the right positions. The only issue is that companies have to be on board with adopting the app into the hiring systems. That makes it a slightly complicated solution. It works for bigger companies and corporations, but not the smaller boutique organizations that cannot support that kind of technological marvel. Therefore, as great as it is a veteran still needs to be able to learn how to translate their skills themselves to ensure that they can compete for any position they believe they are ready for.

Endorsed as the top recruiter and number one resume expert by Dr. Phil, Tony Beshara wrote *Unbeatable Resumes: America’s Top Recruiter Reveals What Really Gets You Hired: America’s Top Recruiter Reveals What Really Gets You Hired*. In the book I was astonished at how directly his teaching could be applied to veterans and to even me in particular. One specific statement that I think really brings the point home of needing to translate your resume well for veterans is “40% of resumes that are opened to be read are deleted because the reader isn’t clear about what kind of job the person has done, who the applicant worked for, and how successful the person has been.” That statement in and of itself sums up the entire reason this thesis came to be. Especially

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because of that fact that elsewhere in the book Bashara also states that 70% of resumes received are initially reviewed by a third party who has no experience in the field the job is for and are simply going off of what they were told to look for and ask by someone else. While this text does not speak to veterans specifically it will provide great source material for the solution to the thesis by informing the methodology and terminology used in the solution.

Expert Resumes for Managers and Executives is another book written by Wendy Enelow and Louise Kursmark. This book is written in the same format as their resume writing book for military veterans transitioning from the service. As this book is for executive and managers, positions that I believe more veterans are capable of assuming a comparative study between the two books methodologies is necessary to first see how the writers view veterans in terms of what types of positions they qualify for and two the best way to approach the transition from writing in the style of the first book to conforming more to the second hoping to land a would be manager a higher position should their military skillset be translated properly.

Conclusion

The need to apply some formal methodology to translating veteran skillsets into civilian terminology is apparent in most scholarly sourcing documents. More information is available which lacks a method than the very few that provide it. Unfortunately there is a strong veteran stereotype that exists in the country and likely across the world that limits the potential employment opportunities for veterans. This can diminish their confidence and

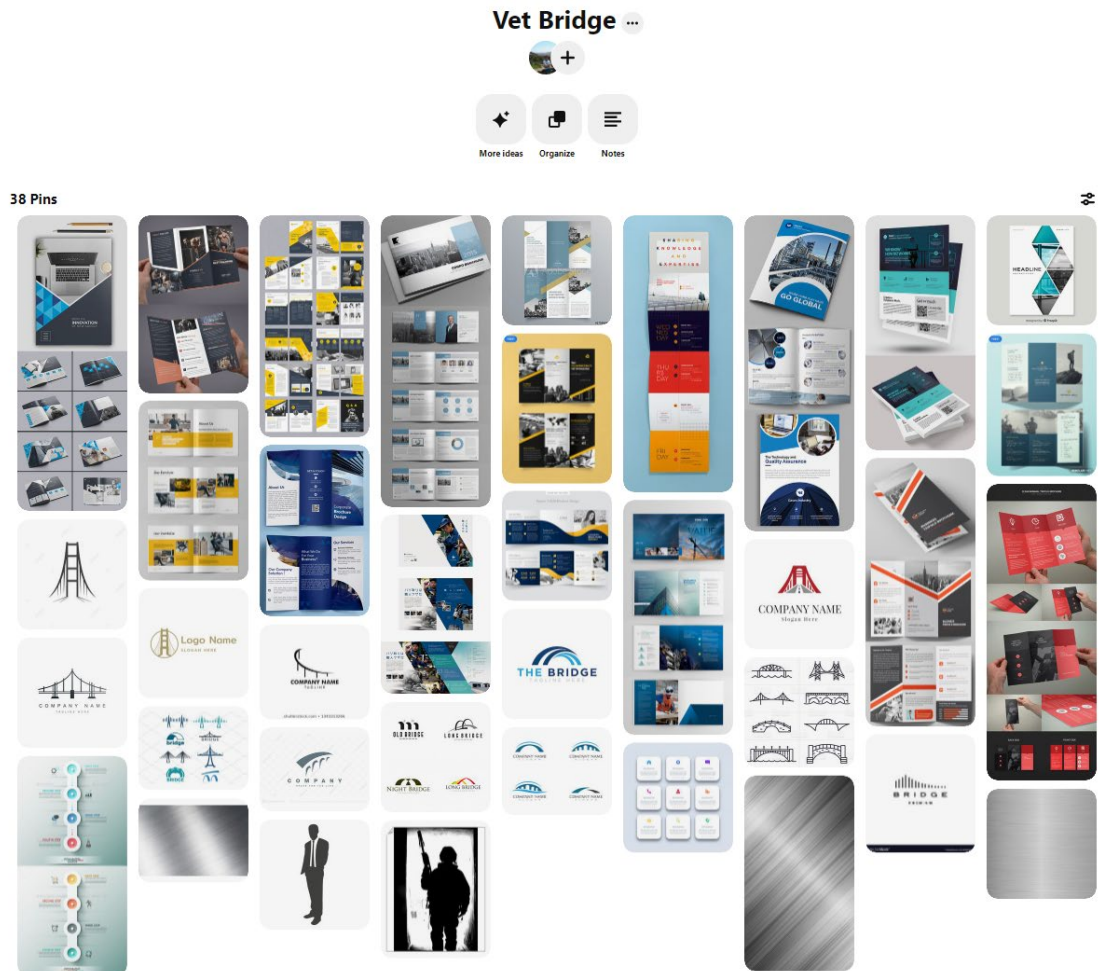
LITERATURE REVIEW

leads to high numbers of veteran unemployment. Veteran transition services need to stop telling veterans that they are what every civilian employer is looking for and prepare them for the real and ugly truth that it will be difficult to find the right employment for them after their transition from the service. The best that can be done for our veterans is to provide them with a proper methodology for bridging the gap between themselves and potential employers by breaking the language barrier.

Chapter 3: Design Process

MOOD BOARD

This mood board was compiled with various visual elements to inform the entire graphic solution. Elements were chosen from a professional business perspective and with layouts and color palettes that would resonate with the intended audience. Industrial bridge logo images are meant to both provide a starting point in the logo design and to ensure that the final logo did not incidentally mirror a preexisting logo.



VISUAL RESEARCH

The final graphic solution combines a military themed color palette, call to action graphics to generate audience buy-in, a demonstrative infographic which provides both program information with the step-based developmental model used by the program, and an extensive reference guide teaming with translated vernacular. When used in combination, these elements capture the eye, inform the audience of the elements and purpose of the program, and provide a pathway to successfully execute the intent.

Maximizing visual hierarchy throughout the compositions was essential in grasping and maintaining the attention of the audience. Research indicates that audiences often only review a new graphic for a few seconds before deciding whether or not to continue reviewing the composition. Therefore, strong typographical elements were employed emphasizing the 'so-what' factor for the program.

VISUAL RESEARCH

Problem Statement

Existing resources assist veterans in the process of writing resumes, understanding the civilian workforce, and setting up potential job interviews. However, little exists for employers to use to understand the comparable skillset and experience a veteran has acquired over the course of their service compared to a civilian competitor in the job market. This makes it increasingly difficult for veterans to be considered for the initial interview simply due to the civilian counterpart being the easier choice. Personal experience with this process, the review of the Department of Veteran's Affairs (VA) separation training materials, and veteran forums all conclude that there exists a large gap between the veteran and employers. While the VA provides ample services to assist service members with employment services during and after their transition from service, this does not assist them in landing an interview if the employer remains uneducated on what being a veteran means and what they bring to the table.

To combat this, veterans must be better prepared to translate their hard-earned skillsets into vernacular that civilian employers can understand. Equipping veterans with the right combination of tools will empower them to confidently build effective resumes which truly outline their skillsets and attributes that they can offer employers. Deliverables for this thesis will act as a roadmap allowing veterans to use their proven track records in the form of evaluation and award write-ups to curate the perfect combination of experience, education, and attributes landing them more interviews and eventually the post-military career they deserve.

Target Audience. Stakeholders for this thesis exist from the military services branch wide transition assistance programs, all

VISUAL RESEARCH

Problem Statement

the way down to the individual service member. At the service level, all veterans are required to attend a 1-2 week transition assistance program to afford them all of the information they need in preparation for their transition from the service, whether they served for only 6 months or made it all the way to 32 years of distinguished service. These program would be a very effective timeframe to embed the resulting resource from this thesis in order to ensure the widest dissemination possible for all veterans.

The next affected party would consist of potential employers from major corporations hiring veterans all the way to individual hiring managers for small companies. This resource could give them a better understanding of how veterans work and the benefits associated with hiring veterans. It also provides a much clearer understanding of the veteran's skillset which can be mostly comparable to positions they may be hiring for.

The individual veteran would be the most important stakeholder for this thesis as they exist as part of every stakeholder element. The veteran can gain a better understanding of what employers need from them, learn a functional way to translate their skills into vernacular that civilian hiring managers can utilize in their search for employees, and gain confidence in their abilities to properly present themselves to the hiring managers effectively bridging the existing gap between them.

With the stakeholders in mind elements will be designed targeted for each depending on where they fall into the program process as defined in the deliverables section of this brief.

VISUAL RESEARCH

Comparables

Stars and Stripes skills translator: This tool allows users to select their military service and then their military occupational specialty. It proceeds to list possible jobs the veteran may/may not qualify for based on algorithms that search key words and phrases in their field descriptions. I was an Army 35N (Signals Intelligence Analyst). The Goarmy.com description of my job is

As a Signals Intelligence Analyst, you'll examine and analyze foreign communications and activity to find intelligence, and you'll relay this critical information to senior leaders by producing strategic and tactical reports based on your analysis. You'll help place, camouflage, and recover surveillance equipment and identify, track, and analyze a target's operational patterns to assist leaders to formulate an attack plan. View yourself as a detective as you collect intelligence to help determine what the enemy is doing.

When compared to the highly varied job list below, it is easy to determine that the tool is highly inaccurate.

The screenshot displays the 'Veteran Job Center' Skills Translator interface. It shows the process of translating a military MOS code (35N) into civilian occupations. The interface includes a search bar, a 'Translate' button, and a list of 20 matching civilian occupations with their respective MOS codes and titles. The list is as follows:

Code	Title	Select
49-3011.00	Aircraft Mechanics and Service Technicians	<input type="checkbox"/>
49-2097.00	Audiovisual Equipment Installers and Repairers	<input type="checkbox"/>
17-3027.01	Automotive Engineering Technicians	<input type="checkbox"/>
49-2091.00	Avionics Technicians	<input type="checkbox"/>
43-2099.00	Communications Equipment Operators, All Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
49-2011.00	Computer, Automated Teller, and Office Machine Repairers	<input type="checkbox"/>
49-9012.00	Control and Valve Installers and Repairers, Except Mechanical Doo...	<input type="checkbox"/>
17-3023.00	Electrical and Electronic Engineering Technologists and Technica...	<input type="checkbox"/>
49-2094.00	Electrical and Electronics Repairers, Commercial and Industrial E...	<input type="checkbox"/>
49-2095.00	Electrical and Electronics Repairers, Powerhouse, Substation, and...	<input type="checkbox"/>
47-2111.00	Electricians	<input type="checkbox"/>
49-2096.00	Electronic Equipment Installers and Repairers, Motor Vehicles	<input type="checkbox"/>
49-9021.00	Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Instal...	<input type="checkbox"/>
17-3026.00	Industrial Engineering Technologists and Technicians	<input type="checkbox"/>
17-3027.00	Mechanical Engineering Technologists and Technicians	<input type="checkbox"/>
17-3026.01	Nanotechnology Engineering Technologists and Technicians	<input type="checkbox"/>
49-2021.00	Radio, Cellular, and Tower Equipment Installers and Repairers	<input type="checkbox"/>
49-2098.00	Security and Fire Alarm Systems Installers	<input type="checkbox"/>
49-2022.00	Telecommunications Equipment Installers and Repairers, Except Lin...	<input type="checkbox"/>
49-9052.00	Telecommunications Line Installers and Repairers	<input type="checkbox"/>

VISUAL RESEARCH

Comparables

Military.com skills translator: In the same way that the Stars and Stripes skills translator obviously works with a search algorithm so does this tool. I highly doubt that a Signals Intelligence Analyst would easily be able to transition into a job for Yamaha corporation as a plastics supervisor or for Takasago International as a fragrance safety coordinator. While such terms/phrases as writing reports, maintaining equipment, and analyzing information may seem interchangeable in any field, they certainly are not.

The site also does not maintain a strong visual hierarchy between elements and its typographic treatment is lacking. This results in a diminished credibility for the professionalism and content of the site.

Military.com Benefits News Veteran Jobs Military Life Spouse & Family Videos Discounts [Login](#)

Military Skills Translator

Match Military Experience to Civilian Jobs

Search Criteria

Service

Military Job Title

Keyword

Location

Subspecialties

Trainings & Schools

Civilian Skills (8)

Search Results: 2516 Equivalent Civilian Jobs

- [Sr Intelligence Analyst](#)
Honeywell Overland Park, KS
- [Intelligence Analyst - Mid/Experienced Level \(Multiple Locations\)](#)
National Security Agency (NSA) Fort Meade, MD
- [Sr. Development Manager](#)
WINE TO WATER Boone, NC, 28607
- [Performing Arts Technical Director](#)
Westminster College New Wilmington, PA, 16142
- [Trust and Financial Center Assistant Manager](#)
Community Bank and Trust NEOSHO, MO, 64850
- [Copy Manager](#)
Careismatic Brands, Inc. Chatsworth, CA, 91311
- [Branch Manager - Troy](#)
Trustco Bank Troy, NY
- [Service Coordinator](#)
Confidential Miami, NH, 03063

VISUAL RESEARCH

Comparables

Onetonline.com Military Crosswalk: Again this is another tool which must be using algorithms to find connections between military occupational specialties and job descriptions. While it does seem to have more similar options to the other two examples, it still misses the mark. Some of the jobs in the results also seem to be broad themselves or do not make sense such as first line supervisor for police and detectives. I believe that would just be a more senior police or detective which also requires a lot more training and cannot be easily transitioned into by a veteran. The site also follows the same very basic graphic elements as military.com, minimizing interest and credibility.

The analysis of these tools proves that an accurate, all-encompassing tool for veterans does not seem to exist. In time it would not be difficult to surpass the minimal use these 'fire and forget' solutions receive.

The screenshot shows the O*NET OnLine Military Crosswalk Search interface. The search results for '35N' are as follows:

Code	Occupation
35N	Signals Intelligence Analyst (Army - Enlisted)
11-9161.00	Emergency Management Directors
13-1111.00	Management Analysts
13-1151.00	Training and Development Specialists
15-2031.00	Operations Research Analysts
27-3042.00	Technical Writers
27-3091.00	Interpreters and Translators
33-1012.00	First-Line Supervisors of Police and Detectives
33-3021.00	Detectives and Criminal Investigators
33-3021.06	Intelligence Analysts
43-2099.00	Communications Equipment Operators, All Other
49-2094.00	Electrical and Electronics Repairers, Commercial and Industrial Equipment

The following military titles are no longer in active use:

35N	Wire Systems Equipment Repairer (Army - Enlisted)
49-2022.00	Telecommunications Equipment Installers and Repairers, Except Line Installers
35N	Avionic Flight Control Equipment Repairman (Army - Enlisted)
49-2091.00	Avionics Technicians

VISUAL RESEARCH

Design Considerations

Function – The functionality of the program depends on several factors: audience exposure, veteran buy-in, usability, effectiveness, and continued support from successful veterans and employers. This means that the program will have several action arms using different forms of media to reach each action arms target audience.

Purpose – The purpose of this program is to train separating service members and veterans to ensure they are competitive in the job market by teaching them to translate their broad and field specific military skillsets into civilian vernacular making them an easy choice for employers.

Environment – The intended environment for the Bridging the Gap program is two pronged. Initial Intent is for transitioning service member to be introduced to the toolset during their mandatory pre-separation training. This will ensure the widest dissemination possible. At first, it would likely only be introduced as a resource, however, the final goal is to have the program be a part of the pre-separation training as a block of instruction during resume week. The second environment is the veterans own home environment where they will complete the bulk of the program after being introduced to it at pre-separation. This means that a combination of print and digital media is necessary to ensure complete audience exposure and tool accessibility.

Distribution – In its initial stages the program will be digitally based with the only print media being the brochures used by the marketing arm for veteran buy-in and successful veterans and employer support. Eventually the program will shift to digital and print media to include printed guides and reference booklets as part of the move into the pre-separation training curriculum.

VISUAL RESEARCH

Design Constraints

Due to any program needing funding to flourish and move to physical media the program will start digitally in order to keep production costs down as the creation of and distribution of digital media to veterans is relatively costless. Upon the receipt of funding from either charitable donations or a Department of Defense contract print media will become part of the solution.

VISUAL RESEARCH

Proposed Visual Solution

A combined deliverable approach to build buy-in, receive support, and allow veterans to navigate the program is the best approach to solving this problem. Deliverables are:

A Style Sheet which will include Vet Bridge Logo, template, color, and typeface requirements for entire package.

A Brochure aimed at employed veterans and employers to request their assistance in providing recurring updates to the program data ensuring it remains relevant and in-line with what veterans are doing and what employers are seeking.

A Brochure encompassing the entire program and explaining why military skills translation is necessary to ensure veterans are competitive in the job market.

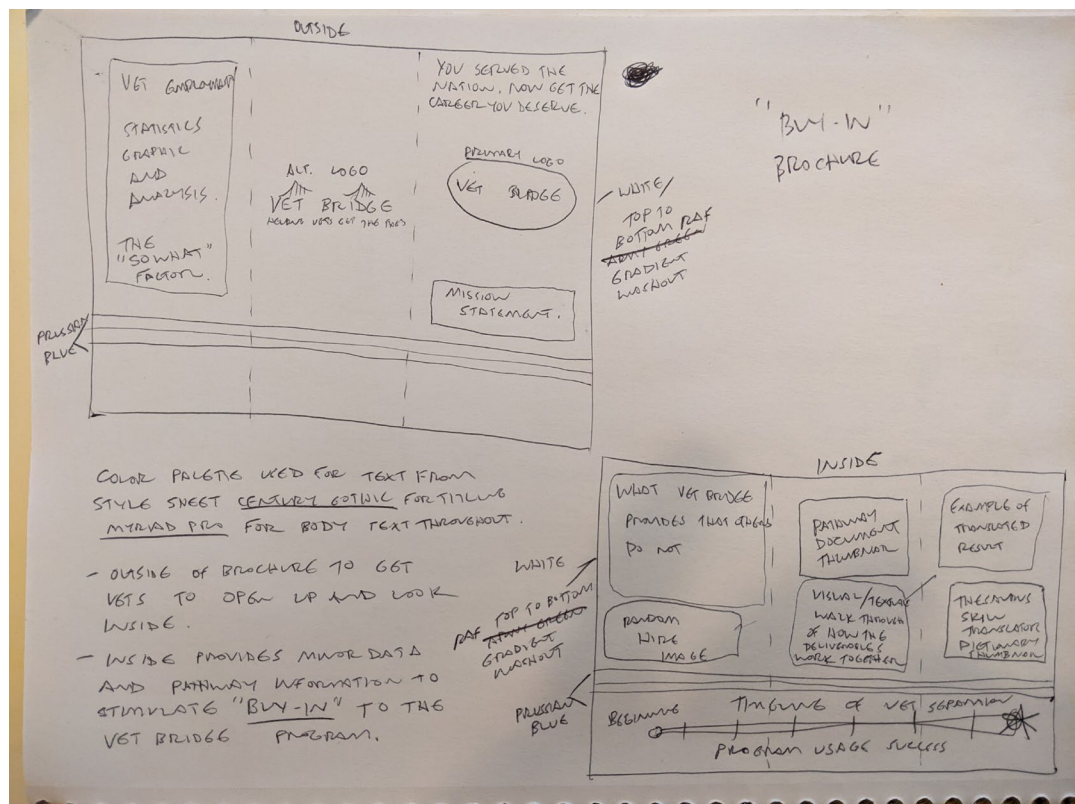
An Infographic explaining how the skills translation works from a broad perspective giving the veteran buy-in to how the program will effectively give them tools they need to succeed.

Guide to serve as a map to walk the veteran through the skills translation process.

A Reference Booklet (like a thesaurus) which would contain the definition meat of the skills translation. This publication may or may not be interactive depending on how it functions alongside of the guide. This would be the brain that provides the overall “from this to that” translation of different services occupational specialties as well as more general leader and managerial translations. This document would be a proof of concept and not be all encompassing for all services and fields for the purposes of this thesis. This intent would be that over time and with other veterans support the document can be completed.

SKETCHES

Many artists create sketch after sketch in order to cycle through logos, layouts, characters, icons, etc. during their creative process. I have never been one to do that. The initial stages of my creative process have always taken course in my mind and it is always difficult to try and capture it all on paper. In fact, when I sketched out the below layout potentialities for my brochure composition, I quickly realized that since I had already determined that the layout would be the final version there was no sense in using valuable time sketching it out on paper when it would be much more beneficial to begin creation. Other than a few pieces of scratch paper the below sketch was the only one created for this thesis as I had already determined how everything would look.



ITERATIONS

Initial Logo Design

This logo design was intended to be the finished main logo for Vet Bridge. The newly dubbed name for the bridging the gap program. However, feedback from the thesis chair would push me in a new direction resulting in the final logo design.



ITERATIONS

Additional Logo Design Concepts



ITERATIONS

Final Logo Design

This final logo is designed to capture the eye of the veteran. Modeled after the prestigious Congressional Medal of Honor, the medal has familiarity across all of the military branches. Its basic design implies that awards are not over after military service, but can come in other forms such as finding the perfect post military career. The seemingly never ending bridge implies the endless journey of success that can be achieved.



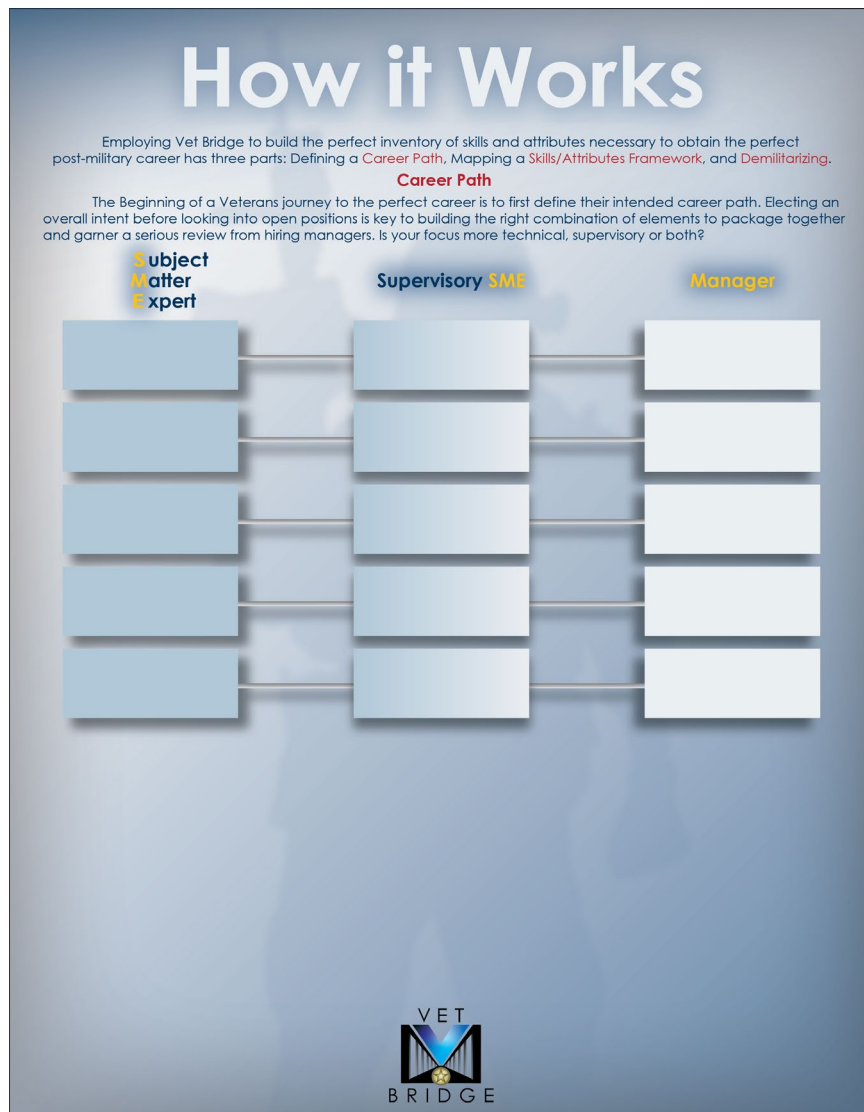
VET BRIDGE
HELPING VETERANS GET THE CAREERS THEY DESERVE

VET BRIDGE
HELPING VETERANS GET THE CAREERS THEY DESERVE

ITERATIONS

Infographic Design

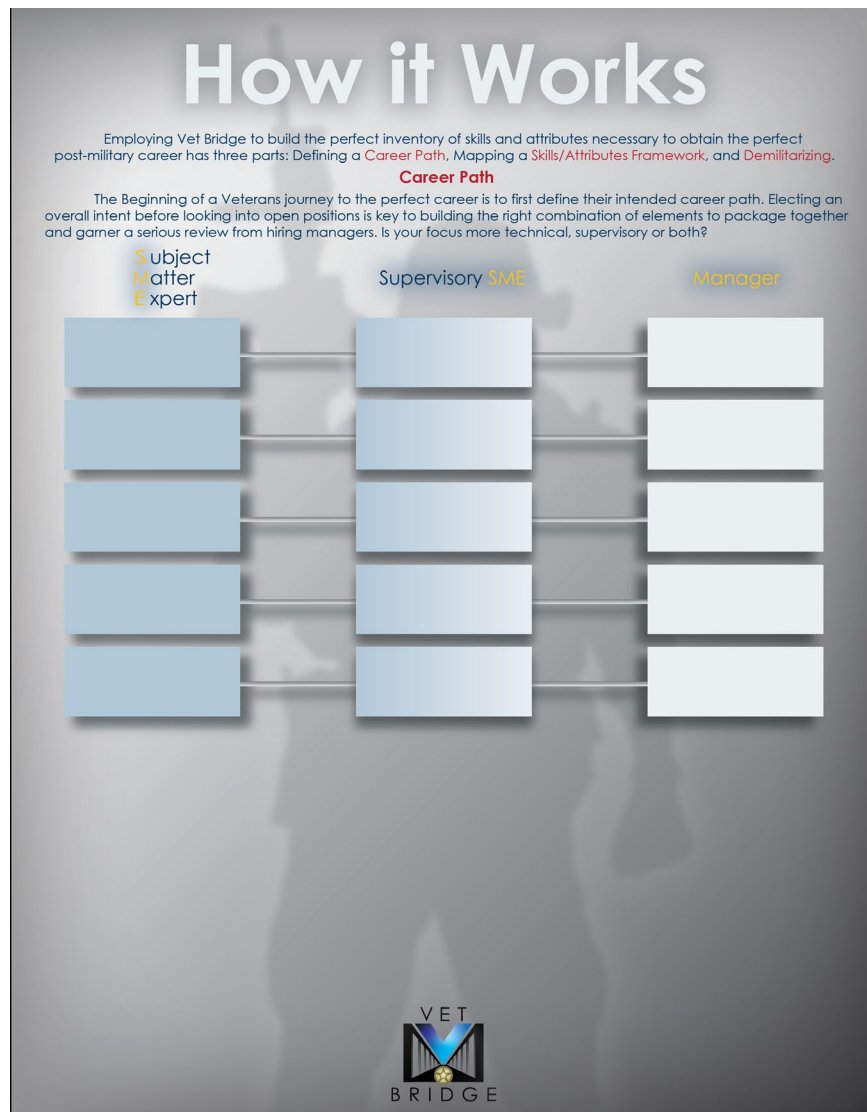
This initial iteration for the instructional infographic was sent to the thesis chair for review. The overall look was given positive feedback with a few minor changes, namely to the typographic treatment on the career path titles.



ITERATIONS

Infographic Design

This final layout for the infographic addresses the typography feedback from the thesis chair and changes the background color to the general background used throughout the Vet Bridge graphic deliverables. The industrial gray look was more conducive to representing the entire Department of Defense than the blue one.



ITERATIONS

Brochure Design

As with most of the design elements for the Vet Bridge package the brochure design must appeal to the military eye. The design needs to be official, crisp, and not too busy. A straight to the point or in military terms Bottom Line Up Front (BLUF) methodology is always the best to use when addressing veterans as they typically do not have time to waste on fruitless endeavors.



ITERATIONS

Typography Design

Several typographic treatments were developed and used for various deliverables in the Vet Bridge program package. The intent was to maintain an official and pseudo industrial feel as veterans are used to the colder more metallic side of design. Providing visuals in methods they are used to allows for a greater element of comfort for them, inspiring trust that the program is for them.

How it Works
Reference Guide
REFERENCE GUIDE
REFERENCE GUIDE

ITERATIONS

Reference Guide Design

The reference guide containing the Vet Bridge thesaurus is the most essential part of the program. It contains the dictionary of translated terminology that veterans will reference when demilitarizing their resumes. Even as a veteran myself I can make mistakes. In this version I listed the United States Coast Guard as a part of the Department of Defense when in fact they are a part of the Department of Homeland Security and have now been removed from the reference guide.



Chapter 4: Final Work

LOGO

The Vet Bridge primary logo was designed with veterans from all across each service in mind. The center element is made up of a military style medal with a resemblance to the Congressional Medal of Honor (MOH), a nation's highest medal that is recognized across all services. The medal's neck ribbon is colored using a varying blue gradient with the most prominent color matching the MOH neck ribbon. The medal itself is colored in a tarnished gold color used in the majority of military medals. The outer design of the logo is a modern bridge with fading supports and looks unending, indicating that a veteran's journey is never complete. The name 'Vet Bridge' in Century Gothic typeface appears to frame the logo and drive the connection to the bridge.



The secondary wordmark logo uses the same typeface and gradient used in the MOH medal. Underneath the wordmark logo the words 'Helping Veterans Get the Careers They Deserve' highlights the Vet Bridge programs mission. An all-black version of the logo is also available for use.

VET BRIDGE
HELPING VETERANS GET THE CAREERS THEY DESERVE

VET BRIDGE
HELPING VETERANS GET THE CAREERS THEY DESERVE












STYLE SHEET

The Vet Bridge style sheet contains basic branding requirements for all Vet Bridge digital and print media. The color palette uses common colors used throughout the Department of Defense. It also includes a blue color from the British Royal Air Force as it contrasts well with the Navy Prussian Blue color. A metallic silver pattern is also included for use in backgrounds, providing an industrial and strong look to the compositions.

Century Gothic and Myriad Pro are the primary typefaces used throughout the Vet Bridge deliverables. These typefaces are common use and sync well with applications for digital reproduction and printer technology for print reproduction. Century Gothic is used in most titling and header formatting and myriad pro for copy text and smaller headers. These sans-serif typefaces work well at all zoom levels and provide a clean professional look and quick legibility across all media. In order to minimize size and redundancy the guide contains a Department of Defense (DoD) wide reference section that displays common use items across the DoD. Then serviced specific sections cover terminology used only in specific services or displays difference in vernacular for the same elements.

STYLE SHEET

Vet Bridge Style Sheet

<p>Primary Logo</p> 	<p>Alternate Logos</p>  										
<p>Color Palette</p> <table style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Prussian blue Hex #003153 RGB 0, 49, 83 CMYK 100, 41, 0, 67</td> <td>U.S. Flag Red Hex #BF0A30 RGB 191, 10, 48 CMYK 0, 95, 75, 25</td> <td>Army Green Hex #4B5320 RGB 75, 83, 32 CMYK 64, 47, 100, 40</td> <td>Air Force Blue (RAF) Hex #5D8AA8 RGB 93, 138, 168 CMYK 45, 18, 0, 34</td> <td>Golden Poppy Hex #FCC200 RGB 252, 194, 0 CMYK 2, 24, 100, 0</td> </tr> </table>							Prussian blue Hex #003153 RGB 0, 49, 83 CMYK 100, 41, 0, 67	U.S. Flag Red Hex #BF0A30 RGB 191, 10, 48 CMYK 0, 95, 75, 25	Army Green Hex #4B5320 RGB 75, 83, 32 CMYK 64, 47, 100, 40	Air Force Blue (RAF) Hex #5D8AA8 RGB 93, 138, 168 CMYK 45, 18, 0, 34	Golden Poppy Hex #FCC200 RGB 252, 194, 0 CMYK 2, 24, 100, 0
											
Prussian blue Hex #003153 RGB 0, 49, 83 CMYK 100, 41, 0, 67	U.S. Flag Red Hex #BF0A30 RGB 191, 10, 48 CMYK 0, 95, 75, 25	Army Green Hex #4B5320 RGB 75, 83, 32 CMYK 64, 47, 100, 40	Air Force Blue (RAF) Hex #5D8AA8 RGB 93, 138, 168 CMYK 45, 18, 0, 34	Golden Poppy Hex #FCC200 RGB 252, 194, 0 CMYK 2, 24, 100, 0							
 <p>Metallic Look Industrial Background Pattern</p>	<p>Basic Design Strategy</p> <p>The Foundational design of the entire product will be based off of a flowchart/process strategy. Visual comparisons, graphic lists, map based, text based, and statistical elements will all fall subordinate to the procedural design. This will allow veterans the ability to easily flow through the toolset, gaining their own base knowledge of the program, maximizing workflow and ensuring their best outcome. All deliverables will follow the same design elements as provided in this style sheet to ensure a complete package.</p>										
<p>Typefaces</p> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Century Gothic</p> <p>ABDCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ</p> <p>abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz</p> <p>0123456789</p> </div> <hr/> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Myriad Pro</p> <p>ABDCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ</p> <p>abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz</p> <p>0123456789</p> </div>											

BROCHURES

The Vet Bridge brochures were designed with the veteran in mind. Using colors from the style sheet and using a basic grid layout the brochures follow a common design pattern that veterans are used to seeing across their careers such as professional and educational entities serving veterans before and after their military service.

The first brochure is targeted towards the end-user, veterans searching for their next career. It identifies reasons to use the program to create buy-in and acts as a call to action to review the more in-depth program material. Silhouettes of a service member flanked by a civilian in a suit are a subtle reminder that transitioning from the service is a major move requiring a certain mindset, but it is possible.



BROCHURES

The second brochure is targeted towards a different audience, the successful veteran. It identifies reasons to go back and help other veterans by providing their knowledge and expanding the program limits. A silhouette of two civilians in business attire shaking hands promotes the idea of veterans helping veterans even after their service has ended.



How it Works

Explaining the bridge from military to civilian careers, the program provides a clear path for veterans to find their next career path. The program is designed to help veterans find their next career path by providing them with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the civilian workforce.

Step	Summary	Details
1. Assessment	Assess your skills and experience.	Take a career assessment to identify your strengths and weaknesses.
2. Education	Gain the skills and knowledge you need.	Attend workshops, seminars, and courses to learn new skills and knowledge.
3. Job Search	Find the right job for you.	Use our job search tools and network to find the right job for you.
4. Interview	Prepare for the interview.	Attend interview preparation workshops and practice your interview skills.
5. Job Offer	Accept the job offer.	Review the job offer and accept the position.

As a veteran you likely struggled through a difficult transition from your military service. Whether or not Vet Bridge was an available resource during that difficult time, you can help fellow veterans make the transition to civilian life. By investing your personal knowledge into the program, you can not only be proud for having helped fellow veterans, but also contribute to the workforce and society by helping provide capable workers and minimizing the unemployment rate. Veterans helping veterans...because we can.

REFERENCE GUIDE

Manual Veterans' Contributions to the Job Market

Why Give Back?

- Skills Translation and Skills Mismatch** are two of the **TOP 3** reasons why employers are not hiring veterans...
- Because it will always be one team, one fight.
- Even if you were unable to use Vet Bridge when you transitioned you can still be valuable to the program.

...when I was told that I would easily meet the needs of the workforce and that veterans were in high demand, I thought that finding my next career would be easy.
- a retired veteran

WHY GIVE BACK?

For more information:
www.vetbridge.org
Phone: 1 (800) 000-0000
Email: support@vetbridge.org

INFOGRAPHIC

Serving as both additional buy-in and a guiding document, the infographic is the single most important element in forming the basis of the Vet Bridge program. It lays out the main three steps in using the program. While eye-tracking may be considered difficult due to the design elements in the lower half of the composition, the 'How it Works' typographical treatment commands the beginning of eye tracking, leading the veteran throughout the document in the intended order of the steps. Each section starts with a description of purpose and use followed by the graphically depicted steps.

The career path section is columnar in its framework. It allows veterans to easily move adown and across the various sections without losing their place when determining their career path. The connection of rows allows veterans to move across matching sections and review their similarities/differences before moving to the next area.

The Skills/Attributes Framework section utilizes a layer mapping technique that allows the veteran an easy template to use when laying out and validating their skills. This allows them to group skills by relevance and facilitates where emphasis should be place and the hierarchy of skills based on specific job types. Working much like a color wheel for primary and secondary colors it is a format that most people will find familiar.

The Demilitarizing section is a basic graphic flow of the three steps model. It breaks down the final important step into three easy to follow instructional phrases, maximizing usability.

INFOGRAPHIC

How it Works

Employing Vet Bridge to build the perfect inventory of skills and attributes necessary to obtain the perfect post-military career has three parts: Defining a **Career Path**, Mapping a **Skills/Attributes Framework**, and **Demilitarizing**.

Career Path

The Beginning of a Veterans journey to the perfect career is to first define their intended career path. Electing an overall intent before looking into open positions is key to building the right combination of elements to package together and garner a serious review from hiring managers. Is your focus more technical, supervisory or both?

Subject Matter Expert	Supervisory SME	Manager
Definition - refers to a person who has a deep knowledge of machinery, processes, material, functions, and equipment.	Definition - refers to a person who has experience as a SME and has developed leadership traits of a manager to lead a team.	Definition - refers to a person who provides guidance, direction, and instructions to impact productivity.
Expertise - requires the highest level of technical expertise and drive to stay abreast of emerging technology in the field.	Expertise - requires a broad level of technical expertise and drive to stay abreast of emerging leadership techniques.	Expertise - requires strong leadership attributes and expertise and a base knowledge of the functions of subordinates.
Education - depending on the field may require specific degree, testing, certification, and/or licensing. State or country rules may apply.	Education - depending on the field may require specific degree, testing, certification, and/or licensing. State or country rules may apply.	Education - usually requires previous experience and/or a management/business degree. State or country rules may apply.
Experience - enlisted typically have more to offer in this experience area. Amount required depends on position.	Experience - warrant officers and NCOs typically have more to offer in this area. Amount required depends on position.	Experience - officers and senior NCOs have more to offer in this experience area. Amount required depends on position.
Role - provision of technical expertise in functional areas of a discipline in regards to operation and maintenance of equipment.	Role - supervisory function ensuring functional aspects of a team are met and that SMEs are properly managed at the operational level.	Role - provision of guidance, direction, and instruction to ensure overall success of the team while managing pay, manning, and oversight.

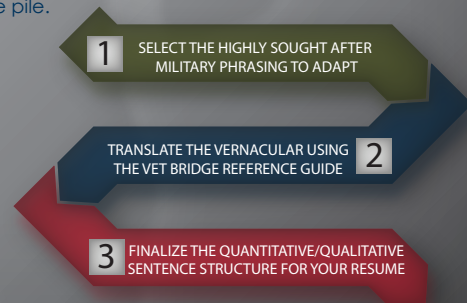
Skills/Attributes Framework

The key to building a solid skills/attributes framework is to determine each of yours with relevance to your chosen career path and then rank them in order of strength that you offer. Create a list based off of this chart to determine where each attribute should rank in your individual framework. This will inform your decision of which type of resume to choose to highlight your strongest attributes.



Demilitarizing

The difficult part will be helping potential employers understand how valuable you can be to their team. It is important to articulate your skillset to employers WITHOUT using of military vernacular. Your established skills/attributes framework and the Vet Bridge Reference Guide will provide the necessary verbiage to translate your military resume that employers overlook to one that they place at the top of the pile.



REFERENCE BOOKLET

The main data source for the Vet Bridge program, the reference guide booklet contains the ever-expanding thesaurus of translated military terms. A living document, the guide will continue to grow based on knowledge passed on from successful veterans who contribute to the program either as a charitable contribution or to give back to the very program that helped them find their way.

The reference guide serves as the brain of the Vet Bridge program. Following a basic two column layout, it mimics standard use dictionaries/thesaurus' in a format easily managed by veterans. As the copy in the reference guide is the most important element, little past the basic requirements form the style sheet is employed to ensure usability. As the program expands and the reference guide grows in scale, this will result in ease of use and minimal printing/bandwidth costs.

REFERENCE BOOKLET

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Foreword

SECTION 1: DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE WIDE TERMS

SECTION 2: DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY TERMS

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REFERENCE GUIDE

MAKING VETERANS COMPETITIVE IN THE JOB MARKET

VET BRIDGE
HELPING VETERANS GET THE CAREERS THEY DESERVE

REFERENCE BOOKLET

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE WIDE TERMS

Administrative

Enlistment - contract

ETS - resign

Leave - Paid Time Off (PTO)

Medal - award, recognition

Military Personnel Office - human resources, personnel office

PCS - relocate

Regulation/Pamphlet/Manual - policy, guideline, rule

TAD/TDY - business trip/travel

UCMJ - legal action

Mission-related

Briefing - team meeting

Combat - hazardous condition, fast-paced environment, conflict

Combat Zone - hazardous area/location

High Value Target - key organizational objective/goal

Led - managed, supervised

Mission - task, function, objective, goal, obligation, priority, initiative

Objective - milestone, goal

OPTEMPO - work pace

Order - requirement, task, goal

Reconnaissance - data collection, surveying, research

Successful Mission - met organizational goal

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE WIDE TERMS

Senior Field Grade Officer - chief executing officer, director, chief operating officer, program director, senior executive, senior administrator

Senior NCO - supervisor, coordinator, director

Sergeant Major/Master Chief Petty Officer/Command

Chief Master Sergeant - senior advisor

Service Member - employee

Subordinate - employee

Superior - supervisor, manager, superintendent

Warrant Officer - department manager/head, technical manager, specialist

Equipment/Facility

Commissary - Grocery store

Commo - communications equipment

DFAC/Chow Hall - cafeteria

Hand Receipt Holder - equipment manager, logistics manager

Headquarters - corporate office

Motor pool - vehicle fleet, transportation services, car service

Supply - logistics, receiving, warehouse

Weapon System - industrial equipment/tool

Training

Basic Training - Basic Skills Course, introductory military training

Combat Training - survival skills training, emergency training, emergency instruction

Correspondence Course - distance learning, extension course, professional development

Deactivation - closure, terminated operations

Deployment - temporary assignment, placement

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For more information:
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Chapter 5: Defense of Work

THE PROBLEM

Military veterans struggle to communicate their extensible skill sets to potential civilian employers as a result of their highly specialized vocational language leading to inequitable employment opportunities.

It is relevant to solve this recurring issue with graphic design using a highly effective solution that can serve as a roadmap for veterans when learning how to translate their highly sought after skills into well received, industry standard vernacular to assist in bridging the gap between the terminology used for their military skills and their civilian counterparts.

THE SOLUTION

The three stage Vet Bridge skills translation program is of immediate benefit to first term veterans who use the program as the initial sample. While not all encompassing as of yet the program will still better facilitate veteran's employment opportunities by maximizing their resume potential assisting them in moving past the initial resume review phase of the hiring process and into the interview phase. Most veterans can better articulate their attributes verbally, but getting into the interview remains, for most, the difficult part. The first veterans to use the program will have the luxury of being the initial focus and the proof of concept for the Vet Bridge team. This means that special efforts will be made to ensure their success.

After the initial wave of veterans move through the Vet Bridge pilot program, processes can be refined and the reference guide can be expanded from gleaning the knowledge from the initial wave of veterans. Every veteran that uses the program allow for an opportunity for expansion of the processes that assist themselves and future veterans alike. The beauty of the program is that it will always be relevant and can always stay current as veterans will always be separating from their time in service and seeking careers.

The final opportunity for success in the program is the request made to successful veterans, some that may have not even used the program, to assist in expanding the reference guide and knowledge base of the Vet Bridge support team. The mid point of the program would be to expand to an extensive wiki database that veterans can add information to ensuring current information is always available. A social media aspect would be added to allow

THE SOLUTION

veterans to use one another as resources in their quest to find the perfect solution. The eventual goal would be for the Vet Bridge program to become a resource as part of the required transition assistance package that veterans receive prior to exiting the military. Many veterans will not even realize the positive effect such a resource could have on their employability...until they do.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Lessons learned. Throughout this thesis process I have learned several lessons that I will carry into every project I work on in the future. The main lesson I learned was to not bring preconceived notions into the research process. One must go into any research process with an open objective mindset and let the data drive your conclusions. As an intelligence analyst I know to allow collected information to drive the final analytic picture rather than believe a certain thing and search for data that corroborates it. I also learned to conclude visual research prior to the design process. While research can be tedious and boring it is important not to move into the design process early to take a break from research as it will likely result in additional revisions.

Growth as a graphic designer. In my schooling I had yet to create a product larger than 30 pages in InDesign. This thesis project has forced me to become more in tune with the assistive technology embedded in the InDesign application. I have also expanded my skillset in overall branding and product packages going from mostly one or two sided projects to a massive undertaking.

A view changed. In the beginning of the thesis process I believed that the veteran unemployment rate was still low knowing that skills translation was very difficult. However, I quickly learned that the veteran employment rate is actually slightly higher than the general population. The difference I found was that although employed, a vast majority of veterans are employed in positions below their skillset. While veterans will take available jobs in order to ensure their families welfare, they are not necessarily satisfied with their level of employment.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The future of Vet Bridge. I had not intended to continue my work with the Vet Bridge concept after my thesis and degree were conferred. This changed when speaking to numerous veterans about my intent with the thesis. The popular opinion was that if I did not intend to continue development of the program that I had better pass everything I researched and created onto someone who would. I realized that this may be a part of my calling as a designer. Now I intend to continue my research and development of the program elements and connect with transition office personnel on how to implement the program into their organizations. As a past instructor I intend on developing a curriculum based on my findings and build a course around veteran skills translation.

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