

SKILLS-BASED HIRING & VETERAN SKILLS TRANSLATION GUIDE

Understand How Military Experience Aligns with Workforce Skills



HIRE HEROES USA

UNDERSTANDING SKILLS-BASED HIRING

Skills-based hiring focuses on identifying candidates based on their **ability to perform the work**, rather than relying primarily on traditional credentials such as degrees, job titles, or years of experience.

Instead of asking:

- What degree does the candidate have?
- What job titles have they held?

Skills-based hiring asks:

- What skills and competencies does the candidate possess?
- How have they demonstrated those capabilities through training, work experience, or other pathways?

This approach allows employers to evaluate talent more accurately and identify qualified candidates whose experience may come from nontraditional pathways, including military service.

WHY EMPLOYERS ARE RECONSIDERING TRADITIONAL HIRING FILTERS

Many organizations are rethinking traditional hiring practices because they can unintentionally exclude capable candidates.

Research from Opportunity@Work and Harvard Business School estimates that more than **70 million workers in the United States are “Skilled Through Alternative Routes” (STARs)**—individuals who have developed valuable skills through work experience, military service, training programs, or community college rather than a traditional four-year degree.

At the same time, employers continue to face challenges:

- 80% of businesses report critical skill shortages (McKinsey Global Institute)
- 70% report difficulty filling open roles (LinkedIn Talent Trends)

These trends highlight a growing mismatch between how employers hire and how talent develops skills.

The Execution Gap

While many organizations express interest in skills-based hiring, few have fully implemented it.

The challenge is what workforce research describes as the “execution gap”:

Employers remove degree requirements from job postings but do not change how candidates are evaluated.

This gap typically exists because:

- hiring systems continue to prioritize degree-based filters
- recruiters are not trained to evaluate nontraditional experience or credentials
- organizations lack clear frameworks for assessing skills and competencies

As a result, hiring outcomes often remain unchanged—even when hiring policies evolve.



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WHY THIS MATTERS FOR VETERAN HIRING

Veterans represent one of the most highly-trained and experienced talent pools in the workforce.

Military service develops a wide range of transferable capabilities through structured training, operational experience, and leadership responsibilities.

These capabilities include:

- **Leadership and team coordination**
- **Operational and technical expertise**
- **Problem solving in complex environments**
- **Accountability and performance under pressure**

However, military job titles and terminology do not always translate clearly into civilian language. This can make candidates' capabilities harder for employers to recognize through traditional hiring processes.

Skills-based hiring helps employers identify the capabilities behind that experience.



TRANSLATING MILITARY EXPERIENCE INTO WORKFORCE SKILLS

The examples below demonstrate how military experience translate into practical, job-relevant capabilities across industries.

Military Experience	Workplace Skill	Example Civilian Roles
Squad Leader	Team leadership and supervision	Team supervisor, operations manager
Logistics Specialist	Supply chain and inventory management	Logistics coordinator, warehouse manager
Maintenance Technician	Equipment maintenance and repair	Manufacturing technician, field service technician
Operations Planner	Project planning and coordination	Project coordinator, operations analyst
Communications Specialist	Technical communications and systems management	IT support specialist, network technician



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THE ROLE OF DIGITAL CREDENTIALS

As organizations adopt skills-based hiring, many employers are using digital credentials and badges to help verify workforce skills.

Digital credentials are verified records of skills and competencies, helping translate training and experience into standardized skill language that employers can interpret more consistently.

Not all credentials carry equal weight. Research from the Brookings Institution and Burning Glass Institute highlights the importance of distinguishing between credentials that demonstrate validated competencies and those that primarily indicate exposure or familiarity.

Understanding this distinction helps employers evaluate candidates more effectively and consistently.

THE HIRE HEROES USA VETERAN CREDENTIAL ADVANTAGE

Veterans often bring one of the most underrecognized and credential-rich profiles in the workforce.

Military service develops and validates capabilities through structured training, real-world performance, and formal systems that translate directly into civilian workforce needs.

Examples include:

- **Security Credentials:** Many veterans hold active or prior security clearances, representing years of federal vetting—one of the most rigorous background verification processes available.
- **Technical Competencies:** Military Occupational Specialties (MOS) develop skills that map directly to civilian roles in logistics, cybersecurity, healthcare, operations, and project management.
- **Leadership at Scale:** Veterans routinely manage teams, budgets, and high-stakes operations at ages and career stages where civilian peers are still in entry-level roles.
- **Transition Credentials:** Many veterans earn stackable credentials through programs such as IBM Skillsbuild, Map My Future, and XCredit, designed to translate military training into civilian-recognized competencies.

Organizations that develop credential fluency—the ability to interpret and evaluate these signals—often see a measurable increase in identifying qualified veteran candidates, because they are better equipped to recognize what these credentials represent in practice.

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR EMPLOYERS

Using a skills-based approach allows organizations to:

- Expand access to qualified talent
- Better align hiring practices with job requirements
- Identify candidates with demonstrated capabilities from multiple pathways

Veterans bring a combination of leadership, operational expertise, and technical skills that support organizations across industries.

PARTNERING WITH HIRE HEROES USA

Hire Heroes USA works with employers to help bridge the gap between military experience and civilian workforce needs. To learn more, complete the [Let's Connect Form](#).