

Best Practices in Manufacturing for Military Veteran Hiring

Military Talent Acquisition at Amazon

amazon

› Company Overview

Amazon.com, Inc., is an American multinational technology company focusing on e-commerce, cloud computing, digital streaming and artificial intelligence. Amazon has more than 1.4 million employees globally with more than 50,000 American veterans and military spouses working for the company.

Amazon partnered with the Manufacturing Institute's Heroes MAKE America initiative to improve their efforts in attracting, hiring and retaining veterans. The Heroes program provides Amazon with access to talented individuals in reliability, maintenance and engineering roles who can contribute immediately based on their training. Without this support, these roles can be challenging to fill. While the scale of hiring may not be huge, it is a pipeline of veterans and an invaluable partnership.

› Program Summary

Amazon offers a number of program opportunities for veterans and military spouses to gain work experience outside of their military service. Their programs allow candidates to apply the skills gained through their service to a career, as well as acquire new skills. There are four key pillars for the attraction and hiring of veterans and military spouses at Amazon: The apprenticeship program, the SkillBridge program, the direct hiring efforts and the utilization of Oplign.

Amazon's **apprenticeship** program works to fill technical roles by utilizing resources and tools through the Department of Labor. Within the company, there is a great need for technical talent. Veterans and military spouses, especially those with a demonstrated aptitude in technology, are recruited to participate in the apprenticeship program where they cultivate their skills in technology and learn how to apply this to a career within the organization.



Veteran and Military Spouse Hiring is an Amazon priority; we need to invest resources to make it happen. Unless it's a priority for the company, then it's never going to happen."

Project Title



Military Talent Acquisition at Amazon

Tags



Recruitment, Hiring

Complexity



2 out of 3 light bulbs

Budget



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Location



Nationwide

Point of Contact



Beau Higgins
Senior Manager, Military Talent Acquisition

› Program Summary Continued

The Amazon **SkillBridge** program provides military members who are within 180 days of separating from service, with fellowship and apprenticeship opportunities in a variety of different roles at Amazon. The goal of the SkillBridge program is to train and extend full-time positions to SkillBridge participants, just in time for their military transition into the civilian sector. This program is utilized to bring in nontraditional talent, or talent whose resumes may not necessarily fit a job description.

Amazon also utilizes **direct hiring** efforts to recruit and hire veterans and military spouses. Program managers as well as recruiters provide outreach to military bases—in person and virtually—to engage with the military community. During these events, participants are given the opportunity to talk directly with company recruiters who share the hiring and interview process.

Oplign is an artificial intelligence tool utilized by Amazon to match talent with available company positions. The AI tool analyzes characteristics such as rank, military occupation specialty and security clearance level to match the veteran or military spouse to an open job within the company based on their skillset.

Amazon is committed to hiring veterans and military spouses who exemplify their leadership principles. Because Amazon's core principals align with the values of veterans and military spouses, they have invested heavily in the apprenticeship, SkillBridge, direct hiring and Oplign strategies outlined above as a part of their attraction and hiring program for veterans and military spouses.

› Program Impact

In May 2016, Amazon announced that the company will hire 25,000 veterans and military spouses over the next five years. Through program initiatives in this area, Amazon has surpassed this goal. Amazon employs more than 50,000 veterans and military spouses across the U.S. and received the Lee Anderson Veteran and Military Spouse Employment Award for excellence in hiring, training and retaining veterans, transitioning service members and military spouses. The company announced their goal in 2021 of hiring 100,000 additional U.S. veteran and military spouses by 2024.

Not only have Amazon's initiatives to hire veterans and military spouses expanded the company's nontraditional talent pool, but they have also improved the diversification of the workforce more broadly. In recent years, nearly one-third of veteran hires came from minority groups, allowing the company to diversify their workforce in multiple ways through one initiative.

› Lessons Learned

- ✓ **Executive Sponsorship:** Leadership is critical to help formalize and firmly establish your company's veteran focus both internally and externally and helps ensure long-term success.
- ✓ **Set a Goal:** The company must select a few clear priorities that everyone can grasp. Some recommendations for goals include developing targets for hiring veterans and military spouses or setting veteran retention targets.
- ✓ **Dedicating Resources:** Resources dedicated to veteran recruitment and retention may range from a portion of one person's workload to dozens of staff dedicated to this effort full time.