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Five reasons you should join an online Veteran network

Networking, while not a new concept, has become a significant component of modern life. Commonly associated with career advancement, the evolution of online social platforms has extended networking far beyond just opportunities to further one's career.

While networking can be important and beneficial to anyone, it may be even more so for military members, Veterans and their spouses.

Former service members are aware of the difficulties that can come from adjusting to life outside of the military. Whether it's acclimating to a new job title and company or understanding the inner workings of today's corporate culture, Veterans often face obstacles not well-understood by those without similar experiences.

Given this reality, it makes sense for any Veteran to start forming connections and building relationships with those who understand their unique point of view.

Here are several ways joining a Veteran network can help a service member, Veteran or their spouses.

Why You Should Join an Online Veteran Network

1. It's where your battle buddies hang out.

Every service member knows that there will be a transition to civilian life, but it impacts everyone differently. Your experiences while in the military, how long you served, where you served, your circumstance upon returning to civilian life – these all come together to form a unique set of circumstances.

For some Veterans, leaving the military means leaving a way of life and community behind. Their housing or homes may have been on base or provided by the military. Their food, alcohol, home furnishings, jewelry, or even their car shopping might have

been on base, as well as their place of work, socializing and recreational events. The support network is built into each military installation.

There's also a substantial difference in which attitudes and behaviors are appreciated and sought after in the military versus in the civilian community. The more conversations a member can have with those who have been through or are going through a similar situation, the more they can learn what behaviors from the military should be kept and what should be shed, what's to be amplified and what's to be silenced.

Humans are social, relational creatures, meaning the friendships and personal connections we create and foster matter. The difficulty transitioning to civilian life is an all-too-common story. But through the empathy and shared experiences of other Veterans in your network, this challenging transition can be made smoother.

2. You'll get a better understanding of the civilian work culture.

There aren't any first shirts, no XO's, no squad leaders, no platoon guides, or section chiefs outside the military. The daily language is practically a foreign language in corporate America and one that's not easily understood. No one's reporting at o'dark thirty for required PT, let alone in cadence while double timing. Instead, there's an entire new lexicon and lingo in the civilian workplace, and mastering it soonest means connecting with new colleagues, with your new tribe, in valuable ways.

Trying to make the switch from the military to a role in a company can be one of the greatest and most critical challenges a Veteran will face. With a network of fellow Vets who have been through comparable situations, it's likely someone has directly applicable words of wisdom or experiences to offer.

3. You'll find a place to build your community and network.

Many service members spend years training and mastering their skills, and even longer using them throughout the world. Their next job and career might not take advantage of those skills. The earlier a member can connect with their future community and learn the culture, terminology and ways of dress and business practice, the better.

Within a wide network, there will be plenty of firsthand advice specific to your new role. Beyond the commonalities of military service and transition, a refined network of individuals in the same position and industry offers a valuable resource that you likely won't find on the job.

4. They have access to resources and information.

Where a military member is from, where they served, and where they're going after the military may all be different places. Building an online network means developing real relationships and local knowledge for your next chapter of life – wherever it may take you.

Having a vast network of peers available to connect with makes it easier to gain firsthand knowledge about a community that might be a potential next home. It can also provide you with actual connections in that very community, offering an invaluable support system upon arrival.

5. You get the opportunity to make an impact.

Joining a [Veteran's network](#) isn't only about gaining advice and knowledge. It's also about giving it. You never know how your experiences might be helpful to someone else. As an advisor or mentor, or potentially even as just an acquaintance or connection, you could be an excellent guide for how someone can best succeed within a new company, school district, soccer league, church, or even a homeowner's association.

The bonds you make during military service are unique. The unity, camaraderie and shared experience can extend beyond your service and play a role in helping yourself and fellow Veterans make the most of life outside of military duty. It just takes a little networking.

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