

★★ *Hire a* ★★
SOLDIER

FALL 2018

**SOLDIER
MENTORSHIP:
SMA DAILEY'S
ADVICE FOR
TRANSITIONERS**

**FINDING
TRANSITION
SUCCESS**

**PERSONAL
BRANDING**

**HASHTAGS
FOR MILITARY
TRANSITION
AND HIRING
VETERANS**

THE OFFICIAL
MAGAZINE
OF SFL-TAP

20



Letter from the Director

When I was on Army active duty, I attended a retirement ceremony for one of my Soldiers. As I shook his hand, I asked him what he planned to do next. He didn't have an answer for me.

To this day, I hold that moment in the back of my mind when I speak with transitioning Soldiers and Commanders. I should have asked sooner. I should have taken an interest. I could have mentored and guided him into this next stage in life.

Life can sometimes be full of "should haves," but I vowed that day to never make the transition process a "should have" again.

When I started as the director of the Army's transition program, I wanted to make changes. Newer initiatives include a pilot program with the goal of changing transition from a "one-size-fits-all" approach, a Virtual Center available online and by phone for transitioning Soldiers to access support from live counselors 24/7, and starting efforts to better connect Soldiers to employment in the civilian sector.

The first edition of the Soldier for Life – Transition Assistance Program's (SFL-TAP) Hire a Soldier magazine features articles and content to prepare you for life after active duty.

Go early to SFL-TAP, starting 18 months prior to transition or 24 months prior to retirement, and spread your requirements out over the course of those months. The earlier you start and the more time you take to process and act on the information, the better off you'll be for the next phase of your life.

Remember, we are all Soldiers for Life. Transition is the next step, but life is just getting started.

Walter Herd, Retired Colonel
SFL-TAP Director

★★ Hire a ★★ **SOLDIER**

Editor

Jenny Hale

Publisher

Walter Herd

Photography

Courtesy of DVIDS

Editorial Staff

Rex Harrison

John Snyder

Rose Marie Tinker

Staff Writers

Julia Park

Samantha Langevin

Design Team

Samantha Langevin

Carrie Plemmons

Hire a Soldier is published by the Army Transition Division.

Human Resources Command
Army Transition Division
1600 Spearhead Division Ave
Fort Knox, Kentucky 40122

usarmy.knox.hrc.mbx.tagd-sfl-tap-comm@mail.mil

SFL-TAP and the U.S. Army are not responsible for the individual opinions expressed within Hire a Soldier. All content is copyright of the respective creators. Content can be reproduced with credit given to the author and Hire a Soldier magazine.

ON THE COVER

SMA Dailey's Advice
for Transitioners **34**



Photo courtesy of Nell King

- 4** The Army Transition Process is Key in Future Recruiting of Young Soldiers
- 6** The Distributive Model
- 9** Finding Transition Success
- 13** Go Early Go Often
- 15** Soft Skills
- 16** Increase Employment Opportunities during Transition
- 19** Finding References for a Job Search
- 21** Getting Ready for "Getting Out"
- 23** From Networking to New Job
- 25** 20 Hashtags to use Online for Military Transition and Hiring Veterans
- 27** Preparing for Hiring Events
- 30** Lessons for Transition
- 31** Creating a Personal Brand during Army Transition
- 34** Soldier Mentorship: SMA Dailey's Advice for Transitioners
- 37** Reenlistment Options during Army Transition

Editor's Note

Want to Hire a Soldier?

1. Use #HireaSoldier on social media to tag your job openings and transition advice.
2. Post your job openings in the SFL-TAP LinkedIn Connection Group (www.linkedin.com/groups/7063275).
3. Contact your local SFL-TAP Center for regional events, opportunities to get your openings posted on social media, and to meet transitioning Soldiers. Learn more at www.sfl-tap.army.mil.
4. Create a training or internship program for Soldiers through the Career Skills Program (see page 8).

Want to be Hired?

1. Use #HireaSoldier on social media when posting about your job search. Search the hashtag to find opportunities.
2. Join the SFL-TAP LinkedIn Connection Group (www.linkedin.com/groups/7063275) and get active!
3. Contact your local SFL-TAP Center for classes and events at www.sfl-tap.army.mil.
4. Start transition early - 18 months prior to transition or 24 months prior to retirement.
5. Network with employers! Be active in-person and online!
6. Join SFL-TAP campaigns and connect with the companies that participate!



There's something about working in Army transition that's inspiring.

At the Soldier for Life – Transition Assistance Program, hearing Soldiers find civilian success is the ultimate reason to wake up every morning. We read every social media comment, email, article written, and status sent our way from Soldiers. We hear you and we aim every day to produce content and information

valuable to your transition.

That's where Hire a Soldier was born.

In summer 2017, SFL-TAP hosted a social media campaign using the hashtag, #HireaSoldier. The hashtag reached almost 4 million Twitter users in a single day, trending on the sidebar of the platform. The overall campaign led to Soldiers gaining employment leads, submitting resumes, getting interviews, and more, as reported by the companies participating.

Beyond Twitter, #HireaSoldier became a campaign that resonated with audiences and is still used today to connect Soldiers and companies.

Now, SFL-TAP encourages businesses looking to hire transitioning Soldiers to use the hashtag in their job opening posts and career tips. Soldiers are encouraged to use the hashtag when posting the opportunities they are looking for or when writing about transition online.

#HireaSoldier connects the Army transition community to companies looking to hire Veterans. You are part of that effort today by reading this magazine and using the hashtag online. You too can help transitioning Soldiers find employment and connect with the community by using #HireaSoldier.

SFL-TAP encourages you to share this magazine link with others and tag it with #HireaSoldier. To pay it forward, connect a transitioning Soldier with the hashtag or share a job post you see with the hashtag.

Together, let's Hire a Soldier.

Jenny Hale
Editor



Photo courtesy of Sgt. Heather Doppke

The Army Transition Process is Key in Future Recruiting of Young Soldiers

■ Colonel Walter Herd (R), SFL-TAP Director

Civilians can become Soldiers and Soldiers eventually transition back to communities as Veterans. Service life changes an individual, with Army Veterans having greater experience, knowledge, and skills than when they entered service.

Making these skills and abilities align with the modern career world is important during the transition process. The Soldier for Life – Transition Assistance

Program (SFL-TAP) provides critical information and skills training during transition, but it is only one part of the process.

Preparing for transition should start the day a Soldier joins the Army. There are several personal development requirements completed throughout a Soldier's military career. The Soldier Life Cycle is the basis of a military career, with SFL-TAP requirements culminating the preparation and process of

career development that has occurred throughout time in service.

SFL-TAP is a Commander's Program. A recent Onward and Upward study by the Center for New American Security found that, "...the successful transition of Veterans after service is imperative not just for their own well-being, but for the viability of the All-Volunteer Force, to the extent that this success influences the propensity of

future generations to serve in the military.”

In short, future recruits talk to Veterans about their experience, so transition is important to the future of the All-Volunteer Force and to the individual Soldier.

Below are transition realities:

- Every Soldier will eventually transition – prepare for that day.
- A Soldier’s transition mission is to determine what they want to do and then execute their Individual Development Plan (IDP) to their Individual Transition Plan (ITP).
- SFL-TAP is only one part of the transition process – transition done right is a multi-year progression and starts the day a Soldier joins the Army.
- Soldiers need to take time to develop an IDP, then an ITP, and explore what they want to do (and not do). Plans can change over time. Go early to SFL-TAP and go often. This is not a one-week process.
- Reenlistment may be a part of the transition plan and SFL-TAP supports this. It is important to take the time to explore the following opportunities before deciding if transition is right for you:
 - Look at tuition assistance options and discover what educational requirements you need to find your target career in the civilian sector.

- Review and obtain certifications needed.

- Attend/research Career Skills Programs (apprenticeships, internships, on-the-job training, job shadowing, and other employment skills training).

- Take time to research potential careers.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the average college student changes majors at least three times over the course of their college career. Pursuing a degree and changing majors is part of figuring out what a student wants to do in the future. A Soldier’s self-discovery process is comparable during transition and they need time to try new things to discover their hidden interests.

For example, a SFL-TAP Facebook follower stated that if they could transition all over again, they would have started the day after they enlisted. One of the factors was networking.



Photo courtesy of Master Sgt. Thomas Kielbasa

Soldiers often state more time is needed to network and find un-posted jobs.

Leaving active duty service is not a job change for most Soldiers. It is a career change, as many transitioning Soldiers do not wish to pursue a career or education in their MOS field, according to SFL-TAP questionnaires. A career change may mean that they are “starting over.”

Leadership must afford time and opportunities to help their Soldiers fully prepare for transition. Those who leave active duty service without job prospects, a plan for the future, and little direction are more likely to apply for unemployment compensation, become homeless, and may speak negatively of the Army’s support of them.

Army leaders can gain quality recruits in the future by supporting current transitioning Soldiers. Some Soldiers leave active duty to join the Army National Guard and Army Reserve, in part due to aspiring to still be a part of the military community. Veterans go on to the civilian sector to start companies, form non-profits, as well as become high-level leaders and employees. The pride behind being a “Soldier for Life” is only evident if they find success beyond their installation’s gate and makes Soldiers more likely to share that pride with younger generations.

To fully support a transitioning Soldier, take a direct interest in their transition by:

(Article continued on page 39)

The Distributive Model

Creating Optimal Transition Success

The Soldier for Life – Transition Assistance Program (SFL-TAP) offers career planning, strategy, and training to Soldiers during their transition from active duty. The program’s motto is “Go Early. Go Often,” encouraging Soldiers to start the transition process earlier and returning to their local SFL-TAP Center frequently for classes, scheduling, and counseling. Soldiers are encouraged to start SFL-TAP 18 months prior to their

transition date or 24 months prior to their retirement.

According to a Hiring Our Heroes / U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation study, Veteran respondents “who started their job search at least six months prior to leaving military service were twice as likely to have a job before leaving active duty.” In addition, “Service members starting [preparation] after transition are more likely to

make less than \$50k.”

As a result, Soldiers should complete as many SFL-TAP requirements as possible prior to these timeframes to better prepare for job seeking.

One of the biggest concerns Soldiers provide SFL-TAP for lack of career readiness is due to Commanders not giving them enough time to attend the program or prepare for transition. The military is one of

Army Distributed Transition Timeline Recommended transition timeline to receive maximum benefits from program



* Continuum of Military Service Opportunity counseling will be conducted IAW AR 601-280

* Transition Career Tracks (Accessing Higher Education, Career Exploration Planning Track, and Entrepreneurship) will be completed throughout the transition period, IAW a Soldier's ITP.

* Acronyms: Dept. of Labor Employment Workshop (DOLEW), Dept. of Veterans Affairs (VA), Individual Transition Plan (ITP), In Accordance With (IAW)

the few employers in the world that helps their employees find their next career. However, a Soldier is still on duty until the date on their DD Form 214.

The distributive model for SFL-TAP is outlined in AR 600-81. It is the preferred method for SFL-TAP attendance, with classes, counseling, and trainings spread out over the course of the 18 or 24 months allotted to transitioning Soldiers. Soldiers should consider using this method for transition, as it allows them to complete requirements at timeframes intended to offer the most success for the Soldier. Soldiers using this method are encouraged to “go often” to their SFL-TAP Center every few months to complete requirements and to schedule future transition services. The schedule looks like this:

- If a Soldier is retiring, they should start SFL-TAP 24 months prior to their retirement date. All other Soldiers should begin 18 months prior to transition. Soldiers will complete Preseparation Counseling and Initial Counseling (two-part requirement, with one part as an online video and the second part as a face-to-face counseling, unless virtual services are offered), along with DD Form 2648 (eForm). By policy, Soldiers complete these requirements no later than 12 months prior to transition.

However, many Soldiers on SFL-TAP social media who have started SFL-TAP at 12 months comment that they needed more time to prepare.

- After Initial Counseling, but prior to attending other SFL-TAP courses, Soldiers attend the Transition Overview, which includes information on a resilient transition.
- No later than 10 months prior to transition, Soldiers attend their Financial Planning Seminar and begin their Army Transition Spending Plan.
- No later than nine months prior to transition, Soldiers complete MOS Crosswalk, with the Assessment Tool and Gap Analysis. This must be completed prior to attending the Department of Labor Employment Workshop (DOLEW), which is also recommended to take during this time range. These requirements help Soldiers understand how to translate their military skills to careers in the civilian sector, as well as determine where they may need to fill any skills gaps to meet their career goals. The DOLEW teaches resume writing, interview skills, and other vital job search tactics.
- No later than six months prior to transition, Soldiers attend Veterans Affairs Briefings I and II to learn what benefits they have earned for their service.

- No later than five months prior to transition, Soldiers complete their resume of choice with a completed Job Application Package, which includes submitted job applications and resumes.

- No later than three months prior to transition, Soldiers complete Capstone, which is the final review phase, the DD Form 2648, and their Individual Transition Plan (ITP).

The distributive model spreads out these requirements over set date ranges to allow Soldiers to act on the information they have learned in each class, offer time to prepare, and minimize consecutive time away from duty.

SFL-TAP has a consecutive model that offers all these requirements in one week. However, the Army Regulation states that the consecutive model is only offered for rapid-notice separations, as outlined below:

“Exceptions granted by the Commander to the distributed model are only authorized if a Soldier qualifies as a rapid separation, is on an order of less than 12 months, or is a deploying RC Soldier without access to a SFL-TAP Center who will complete transition requirements at a demobilization platform.”

To increase success post transit-

(Article continued on pg 39)

CSPs ARE AVAILABLE TO ELIGIBLE SOLDIERS DURING THEIR FINAL 180 DAYS ON ACTIVE DUTY



Apprenticeships
Internships
On-the-Job Training
Employment Skills Training



TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
Start Strong • Serve Strong • Reintegrate Strong • Remain Strong

U.S. Army Career Skills Program (CSP)

<https://home.army.mil/imcom/index.php/customers/career-skills-program>



CONTACT YOUR LOCAL SFL-TAP CENTER FOR UPCOMING CSP OPPORTUNITIES

A close-up portrait of a man with short brown hair, wearing black-rimmed glasses and a blue and purple plaid button-down shirt. He is smiling and looking directly at the camera. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Finding Transition Success

■ *Jenny Hale*

After serving more than 20 years in the Army, Ed Foulks was unfamiliar with how to search and apply for work in the civilian sector.

Photo courtesy of Ed Foulks



Photo courtesy of Ed Foulks

“The challenge of transitioning is knowing where and how to [begin] preparation,” he said.

At Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, Foulks participated in the Hiring Our Heroes Corporate Fellowship Program through the Army’s Career Skills Program (CSP). He was selected by Hallmark Cards as an intern to gain experience in project management for the supply chain industry and help build his corporate career skills. CSPs offer selected Soldiers the opportunity to participate in various internships, apprenticeships, on-the-job training, and employment skills training during a Soldier’s final 180 days on active duty.

During the 12-week fellowship, Foulks, a former Army Aviator, learned to demonstrate how skills acquired in the Army, like

critical thinking, planning, project management, and leadership, could translate to the civilian sector.

“As the weeks progressed through the 12-week fellowship, I think both my supervisor and I were pleasantly surprised at how well military skills could translate and support the ongoing work in the corporate headquarters,” Foulks said.

Foulks learned about CSPs through the Soldier for Life - Transition Assistance Program (SFL-TAP), which assists transitioning Soldiers 18 months prior to their transition or 24 months prior to retirement with career training and connection to civilian sector opportunities.

Career training, like Foulks experienced, is just one of the opportunities offered to transitioning Soldiers when attending SFL-TAP to help prepare them to find success in the civilian sector. Through SFL-TAP, Soldiers learn how to build a resume, network, and interview for jobs in the civilian sector. The program also offers additional career tracks that are tailored to a Soldier’s interest, including entrepreneurship, higher education, and technical training.

In the past, some Veterans have struggled to find jobs in the civilian sector and there were high unemployment rates. However, these statistics are improving. In fiscal year 2017, the Army spent the lowest amount on Unemployment

Compensation for Ex-Service Members (UCX) in 14 years, with a \$47 million decrease from fiscal year 2016 and rounding the year out at \$126.9M. Many factors contribute to lower UCX, including the state of the economy, civilian industry knowledge of valuable Veteran skill sets, dispelling myths about Veterans, and more. Lower UCX may be an indication that unemployment insurance is being withdrawn less for Army Veterans and employment is on the rise.

The Veteran unemployment rate hit a record low of 2.7 percent in October 2017, according to the Department of Labor. The Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that this is a long-term decrease trend in the Veteran unemployment rate, as it was recorded at almost 10 percent in January 2010.

A Veterans in the Workplace study by Hiring Our Heroes / U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, found that 53 percent of Veteran respondents found jobs within three months or less after transition.

In fiscal year 2017, SFL-TAP’s exit questionnaires found that 57 percent of transitioning Soldiers looking for employment found a job prior to leaving active duty service.

Foulks is part of that success rate, as his CSP fellowship led to a job offer from the company.

“Success for me was being open to opportunities that I initially



John - Anthony DeMaio | Photo courtesy of Michael Kiese

thought were outside my skill set," he said.

Foulks' advice to other Soldiers is to begin the transition process early.

"The earlier you can begin creating resumes, networking, researching potential careers and understanding the job market, the more advantages you will create for yourself," Foulks said.

Other SFL-TAP alumni have had similar successes after transitioning from Army active duty.

When former U.S. Army band member, John-Anthony DeMaio, decided to start a live music event business while still in service, he reached out to SFL-TAP to help him get started.

DeMaio transitioned through the Fort Lee SFL-TAP center in Virginia, attending SFL-TAP not once, but twice with the support of his Command for increased preparation. Counselors recommended a number of career track programs, including the Entrepreneurial Career Track (Boots to Business), hosted by the Small Business Administration (SBA).

The track is available to transitioning Soldiers and their Family members during the SFL-TAP process to provide an overview of entrepreneurship as a career option in the civilian sector.

DeMaio encourages transitioning Soldiers to take advantage of SFL-TAP resources, which led him to learning about local organizations that could further his knowledge about business and entrepreneurship.

"Take advantage of the resources that SFL-TAP provides and the time that your Command team gives you to



Photo courtesy of John-Anthony DeMaio



Photo courtesy of Qi Liu

transition," DeMaio said.

SFL-TAP also offers guidance to Soldiers seeking advanced education. Accessing Higher Education (AHE) is the top attended optional career track for the Army, providing no-cost assistance to transitioning Soldiers looking for college or educational opportunities, as well as information on how to apply to schools and meet with representatives. Education is noted as the second highest transition goal behind finding a career, according to fiscal year 2017 program exit questionnaires.

Qi Liu, a former Automated Logistical Specialist, attended AHE during his transition from the Fort Carson, Colorado SFL-TAP Center. A year after transition, Liu is now studying economics as a graduate student. During AHE, Liu learned about the GI Bill, FAFSA applications, and how to apply for scholarships.

"My...Higher Education class guaranteed me sufficient funds so I could focus on my graduate study after [transition]," Liu said.

SFL-TAP is growing even more with their program offerings.

Walter Herd, the SFL-TAP director, says SFL-TAP is developing new initiatives to better connect transitioning Soldiers to civilian career opportunities.

"SFL-TAP is always evolving to modernize the way the Army does transition and to truly support Soldiers during their transition journey," Herd said.

SFL-TAP is available to Soldiers 18 months prior to their transition date or 24 months prior to retirement at more than 50 installations worldwide, as well as online and by phone 24/7. ■



Photo courtesy of Qi Liu

T

he Soldier Life Cycle (SLC) starts at the beginning of a Soldier's career, continuing throughout transition and beyond. It is broken down into three phases, including the Initial Phase, Service Phase, and the Transition Phase. The phases assist Soldiers in determining what path they follow during their time in service and prepare them for a career after active duty.

The Soldier for Life – Transition Assistance Program (SFL-TAP) is the final phase of the life cycle, but Soldiers use all phases to determine their future career success. Some of the most successful Soldiers prepare for transition and a future civilian career starting at the beginning of their military career.

In many ways, the SLC looks the same at the end of an active duty career as it does in the beginning, as multiple requirements during SFL-TAP actually begin at a Soldier's first duty station. During the Initial Phase, a Soldier learns the specific skills required for their MOS and receives Financial Readiness Training at Advanced Individual Training (AIT). During this time, a Soldier also registers for eBenefits through Veterans Affairs and develops their Individual Development Plan (IDP) to mold their future plans in the Army. Some of these same tasks are also required in the transition phase during SFL-TAP, like registering for eBenefits. When a Soldier begins their career in the Army, they're already starting to lay the foundation for their future transition to the civilian sector.

During the Service Phase, which is after the first year of service, Soldiers are required to update their IDP yearly, as well as assess their finances. During re-enlistment and promotion periods, Soldiers complete an MOS analysis to bridge the gap between military and civilian career skills, as well as an Occupation Interest Self-Assessment. All of these efforts help build career success.

Soldiers work towards their education or technical training goals through traditional education, technical training, MOS credentials, and military experience. Soldiers will also receive credentialing information during their Professional Military Education (PME) courses.

All of these preparations play a key role in the transition process later in a military career, as SFL-TAP offers additional education on certifications to meet skills gaps as well. As a Soldier continues their career in the Army, it is important to complete

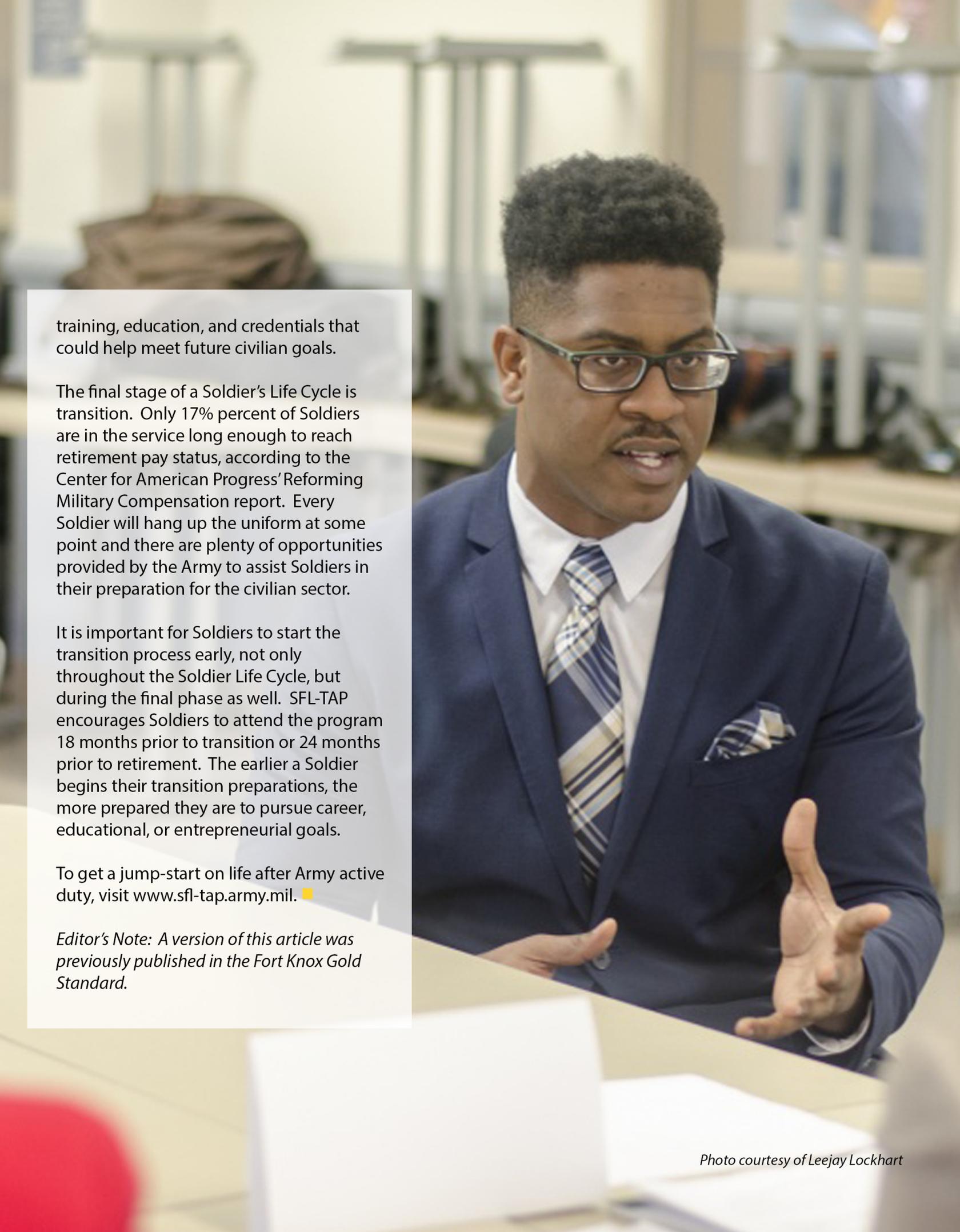
Go Early Go Often

Start SFL-TAP 18 months
prior to transition or 24
months prior to retirement



TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Start Strong • Serve Strong • Reintegrate Strong • Remain Strong

A man with short dark hair and glasses, wearing a dark blue suit, white shirt, and a blue and white striped tie, is speaking at a podium. He is gesturing with his hands as he speaks. The background is a blurred office or conference room setting.

training, education, and credentials that could help meet future civilian goals.

The final stage of a Soldier's Life Cycle is transition. Only 17% percent of Soldiers are in the service long enough to reach retirement pay status, according to the Center for American Progress' Reforming Military Compensation report. Every Soldier will hang up the uniform at some point and there are plenty of opportunities provided by the Army to assist Soldiers in their preparation for the civilian sector.

It is important for Soldiers to start the transition process early, not only throughout the Soldier Life Cycle, but during the final phase as well. SFL-TAP encourages Soldiers to attend the program 18 months prior to transition or 24 months prior to retirement. The earlier a Soldier begins their transition preparations, the more prepared they are to pursue career, educational, or entrepreneurial goals.

To get a jump-start on life after Army active duty, visit www.sfl-tap.army.mil. ■

Editor's Note: A version of this article was previously published in the Fort Knox Gold Standard.

Soft Skills

Capitalizing on Skills during Army Transition

■ Samantha Langevin, SFL-TAP Training and Jenny Hale, SFL-TAP Marketing

Many transitioning Soldiers do not understand how the soft skills they learned during their time in the service translate to the civilian workforce. Soft skills are personal character traits or qualities that define who we are and how we interact with others. These skills are not learned through training, but developed through experiences at work or in life.

According to fiscal year 2017 SFL-TAP exit questionnaire data, 44% of Soldiers were unaware that the soft skills they learned in the Army provide them an advantage over civilian job seekers.

Military service gives transitioning Soldiers opportunities to learn, develop, and grow these skills throughout their Army career. When Soldiers transition, soft skills need to be communicated effectively to civilian organizations. Effective oral communication, listening, leadership, organizational skills, and time management are just a few soft skills that employers look for in current and future employees.

Military culture is different from the civilian workforce, but soft skills can translate across industries, roles, and positions. In fact, data from the Center for Creative Leadership suggests that many industries may enhance their employee leadership strength by recruiting and hiring Veterans for key leadership

roles. According to their leadership study on the on the Army and civilian sector, there are six soft skills that Army Veterans have that outrank average civilian industry leaders, including building collaborative relationships, leading employees, having strategic perspective, taking initiative, using participative management, and implementing change management.

As a transitioning Soldier, soft skills can be included in resumes, mentioned during job interviews, and expanded upon during networking conversations. Soldiers demonstrate soft skills on a daily basis, both in service and in their future civilian career roles. By ensuring they are highlighted throughout the job search, a transitioning Soldier will be able to translate their skills better to civilian employers.

To learn more about translating military skills, visit the Soldier for Life - Transition Assistance Program (SFL-TAP). The program assists transitioning Soldiers, Family members, retired Soldiers, and Department of the Army Civilians with their transition career goals.

SFL-TAP Centers are located worldwide and through the 24/7 online Virtual Center, offering resume writing assistance, information about Veteran benefits, and helping to connect Soldiers with companies looking to hire Veterans. ■

Increase

Employment Opportunities during transition

Jenny Hale, SFL-TAP Marketing

Transitioning Soldiers are mandated to attend the Soldier for Life - Transition Assistance Program (SFL-TAP) prior to leaving Army active duty. The program offers career counseling for transitioning Soldiers to better prepare them for the civilian sector. Transitioning Army spouses are also welcome to participate in SFL-TAP.

According to SFL-TAP exit questionnaire data from fiscal year 2017, 57% of Soldiers who were seeking employment reported that they had found a job prior to transitioning from active duty. SFL-TAP encourages Soldiers to prepare

for their transition and maximize preparation opportunities during their time on active duty.

SFL-TAP is constantly evolving to better prepare Soldiers for life after active duty service. In the past few years, SFL-TAP added additional requirements and resources for transitioning Soldiers, which included robust career counseling and classes. In November 2016, the program introduced a pilot program at six installations, focused on tailoring resources to individual Soldier needs, with the goal of eliminating the "one size fits all" approach to transition. In 2018 and beyond, SFL-TAP will be working to expand connections

by better linking transitioning Soldiers with career opportunities.

While the program is always changing to help Soldiers improve their transition to civilian life, transition is an individual journey and it is up to the Soldier to make the most of it. Here are five ways transitioning Soldiers can increase their chances of finding civilian employment after active duty.

1 Go Early and Often to SFL-TAP

Soldiers should begin SFL-TAP 18 months prior to transition or 24 months prior to retirement. Soldiers who attend at the 12-month mark often report on social media and in exit questionnaires that they wish they had more time to prepare for their transition. Transition is a big change and requires strategic planning, as well as significant effort in order to find success.

Soldiers should also spread program requirements out over time and not complete SFL-TAP in a single week. SFL-TAP uses a distributive model, with each course recommended at specific timeframes during transition for maximum success.

Soldiers also have the opportunity to attend SFL-TAP classes with their spouse and attend additional supplementary classes the

5 WAYS SOLDIERS CAN INCREASE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES AFTER ARMY ACTIVE DUTY

#1

Go Early and Often to SFL-TAP



- Transitioning Soldiers should begin SFL-TAP 18 months prior to transition or 24 months prior to retirement, spreading requirements out over the course of several months.

#2

Soldiers should research hiring events at their installation and in their region. Attend networking events throughout the community and use LinkedIn to build connections, especially if relocation is a priority.

Attend Hiring and Networking Events



#3



Attend Career Tracks and Optional Classes

- SFL-TAP offers optional career tracks, including Higher Education, Entrepreneurial, and Career Exploration and Planning.
- SFL-TAP also offers classes on salary negotiation, interviewing, and others.

#4

CSPs include internships, apprenticeships, on-the-job training, and other career skills training during a Soldier's last 180 days on active duty. In FY17, CSPs had a 92% job placement rate, as reported by Installation Management Command, making them one of the most sought-after Army transition opportunities.

Apply for a Career Skills Program (CSP)



#5



Engage Online

- According to the DOL, 2013 statistics showed that 70% of all jobs were found through networking. According to JobVite, 96% of recruiters used social media during the recruiting process, with 87% using LinkedIn.

The Soldier for Life - Transition Assistance Program (SFL-TAP) offers career counseling for transitioning Soldiers to better prepare and connect them to the civilian sector.

www.sfl-tap.army.mil



TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

[@SFLTAP](https://twitter.com/SFLTAP) [@ArmySFLTAP](https://www.facebook.com/ArmySFLTAP) [/groups/7063275](https://www.linkedin.com/groups/7063275) [/SFLTAPtelevision](https://www.youtube.com/SFLTAPtelevision)

2 Attend hiring and networking events

SFL-TAP Centers offer various events throughout the year at installations worldwide. Soldiers are encouraged to research hiring events at their installation and attend networking events throughout the community. If a transitioning Soldier plans to relocate, using LinkedIn or another professional networking platform to build connections online early is vital.

Soldiers should research companies, organizations, and individuals attending these events and find what positions are open with them. Bring a resume and prepare a 30-second introduction speech to begin conversations with employers. SFL-TAP counselors can help prepare both of these items with Soldiers prior to the event for better preparation.

3 Attend career tracks and optional classes

SFL-TAP offers optional two-day workshop tracks which support a Soldier's Individual Transition Plan (ITP). These include the Entrepreneurial Track Workshop, taught by the Small Business Administration (SBA), for those looking to start businesses; the Career Exploration and Planning Track, taught by the Department of Labor (DOL), for those looking for vocational careers; and the Accessing Higher Education Track, taught by the Army, for those looking to go to school.

SFL-TAP also offers optional courses at the center and online, including Federal Resume Writing, Advanced Resume Writing, Dress for Success, Individual Transition Plan Review, Skills Development, as well as Interview Techniques and Salary Negotiations. Soldiers can attend additional courses to better

prepare themselves and go more in-depth on topics discussed during classes.

resources tend to be more successful during their transition. It's important to be active online with civilian employers in the regions you are interested in moving to after transition. Be sure to follow and engage with the social media accounts of the SFL-TAP Centers near those locations too, as they often post open opportunities.

In addition, reach out professionally to recruiters and others in the industries you are targeting through LinkedIn. According to the article "Survey: 92% of Recruiters Use Social Media to Find High-Quality Candidates," 87% of recruiters use LinkedIn, 55% use Facebook, and 47% use Twitter. Be open to asking for help from your followers, friends, and family. Since a majority of jobs are not posted online, it is important to use your network to help you connect to un-posted opportunities.

Last, the Army is the only service branch with a 24/7 online simulation portal, called the Virtual Center, which has live counselors inside as virtual avatars with the ability to instant message and speak through a microphone with transitioning Soldiers. It is fully accessible by a computer with a strong internet connection. In addition, you can contact SFL-TAP 24/7 via phone at 1-800-325-4715.

Transitioning from Army active duty isn't always easy, but SFL-TAP counselors are determined to make things easier for you and your family. By getting involved with SFL-TAP, you can become better prepared for life after transition. ■

4 Apply for a CSP

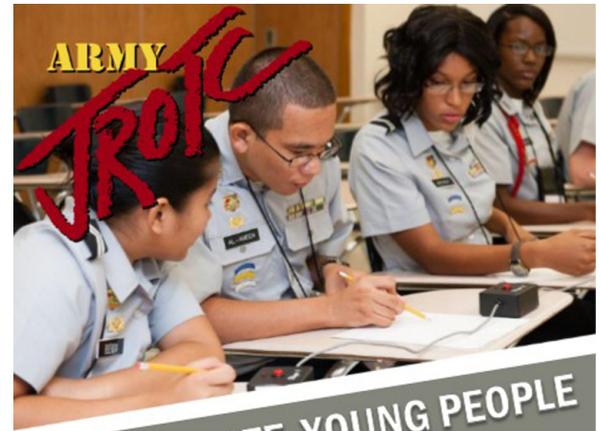
The Army's Career Skills Program (CSP) offers transitioning Soldiers the opportunity to apply for internships, apprenticeships, on-the-job training, and other employment skills training during their last 180 days on active duty. In fiscal year 2017, over 3,600 Soldiers received job placement because of a CSP, a 92% success rate, according to Installation Management Command's tracking system.

There are CSPs in a multitude of occupational areas, such as pipe fitting, construction, solar energy, auto maintenance, information technology, and more. Additional opportunities are offered in corporate management and local internships.

CSPs are high-demand programs that Soldiers can apply to, interview for, and if selected, use permissive temporary duty (PTDY) to attend at a location other than their duty station. CSPs increase a Soldier's likelihood of employment, as participating companies often hire the Soldiers upon completion. Contact your local SFL-TAP Center to learn about available opportunities.

5 Become active online

Soldiers who utilize all their



**"TO MOTIVATE YOUNG PEOPLE
TO BE BETTER CITIZENS"**

**NOW HIRING
JROTC INSTRUCTORS**

REQUIREMENTS:

**Retired from the Army
no longer than 3 years.
Grades of E-6 to E-9,
W-1 to W-5, or O-3 to O-6.**

**Minimum Instructor Pay
is the difference between official
retired pay and the active duty pay
and allowances that a JROTC
Instructor would receive if
ordered to active duty.**

HOW TO APPLY

**Search JROTC Instructor vacancies
and download the Application
Certification Packet at**

www.usarmyjrotc.com

1-800-347-6641

Finding **References** for a **Job Search**

(And Getting Them to
Say What You Want!)

 Jenny Hale



While you're transitioning from Army active duty, you're most likely in the process of compiling a resume and references to apply to open positions. If you've applied to jobs online, you've probably seen numerous forms asking you to submit a reference list and reference contact information.

Many companies use these references during the hiring process to either make a decision or eliminate a potential candidate. In addition, they may also check social media profiles. To avoid any application reference list issues, do your due diligence when collecting references for your upcoming job search.

WHAT IS A REFERENCE LIST?

A reference list includes compiled names that you submit to a company during the job search process. The company is then able to contact these individuals and speak to them about your performance and character in past positions.

WHO SHOULD BE INCLUDED?

Reference lists are not a list of relatives. It is a list of personal references, such as mentors and those who can speak to your character. It should also include professional references, like co-workers, supervisors, and others who can speak to your work ethic and performance.

WHAT INFORMATION SHOULD BE PUT ON A REFERENCE LIST?

It is important to collect updated contact information for the person, including their name, city/state, phone number, relationship to you, and email. Some or all of these questions may be asked for when filling out a reference list online.

HOW SHOULD JOB APPLICANTS INFORM POTENTIAL REFERENCES ABOUT BEING ADDED TO A REFERENCE LIST?

First, it's important to make sure that you've selected the best references possible. Be sure to include only references that will speak highly of you. Once you feel you have selected the best people, contact your potential references and ask them if they are willing to speak on your behalf before submitting a job application.

WHAT SHOULD JOB APPLICANTS TELL POTENTIAL REFERENCES?

Explain how many months you have left until you transition from active duty and share your career goals. If there is potential for a call from a particular company, be sure to give the reference background information on the opening you applied for and information that they can

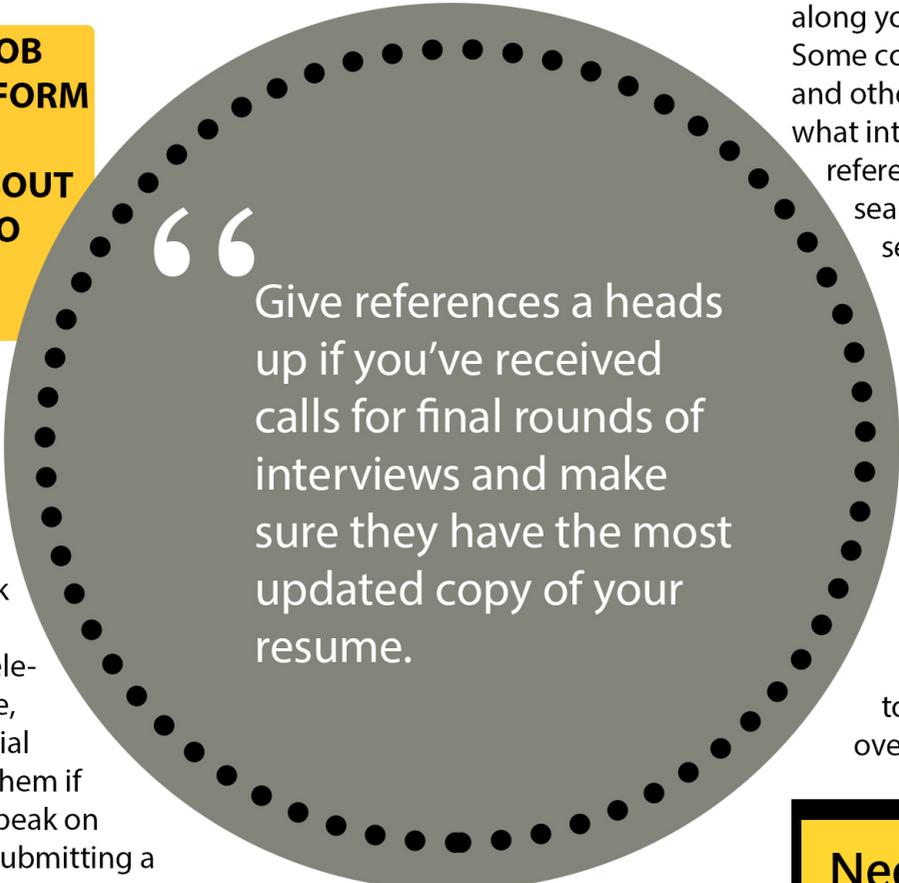
tell the company about you. If you have several points you'd like to cover, feel free to tell your reference that you will send them an email highlighting your experience. Share your updated resume and explain details on how you meet the job poster's qualifications with your reference.

interviews and make sure they have the most updated copy of your resume.

BONUS: WHAT SHOULD JOB APPLICANTS DO ONCE THEY RECEIVE AN OFFER?

If you accept a position with a company, be sure to thank your references for supporting you along your job search journey. Some companies call references and others do not. No matter what interaction your

reference has during the job search process, be sure to send a thank you note for their time. Also ask to see if they wouldn't mind being a reference for you again in the future. Be sure to return the favor to another job applicant someday and continue to grow your networking circle to spread out references over the years. ■



“ Give references a heads up if you've received calls for final rounds of interviews and make sure they have the most updated copy of your resume. ”

WHAT ELSE SHOULD JOB APPLICANTS DO TO HELP POTENTIAL REFERENCES PREPARE FOR UPCOMING PHONE CALLS?

Once individuals agree to be put on a reference list, be sure to stay in touch with them throughout the job search process. Give references a heads up if you've received calls for final rounds of

Need assistance building your resume and brainstorming a reference list?

Contact your local SFL-TAP Center and speak with a transition counselor!

WWW.SFL-TAP.ARMY.MIL



Photo courtesy of Amanda Derrico

among so many other things, self-awareness. I learned that being self-aware makes you a better leader, follower, and professional in any situation.

So while sitting in the mandatory SFL-TAP classes, I made the conscious decision to retain as much information as possible and use as many tools as I could. SFL-TAP covers a number of topics, such as applying for jobs, proper private sector etiquette, Veteran benefits, and Reserve or National Guard opportunities. In a way, my fear of the unknown and my inability to let anything fail (thanks, Army), was the only reason I was successful.

When we started to input our interests and experiences into career databases in order to find fitting jobs, I was significantly relieved to find that my ideal job - the one I had in my mind to make a career - showed up on my list.

Writing resumes for

Sitting down for the first time in the SFL-TAP classrooms of the Soldier Support Center at Fort Bragg, I realized

it was getting real. Despite all the jokes about how I couldn't get out soon enough, the comments from subordinates, peers, and seni-

ors about how they can't wait to do the same, and the couple honest conversations about how I should reconsider, I was now actually starting my transition into "civilian life."

I am not a Soldier who hates the Army and can't wait to leave. I am not "broken," or "in trouble," or retiring. Honestly, I have never experienced adult life without an Army uniform and I

wouldn't change that for anything. My decision to leave the Army was for my own reasons. It was obvious that everyone in the classroom had also weighed the infinite possibilities and situations to stay in the Army or go.

Even though I will no longer be on active duty, I will always keep the lessons the Army has taught me. I have learned discipline, respect, organization, and,

Getting Ready for "Getting Out"

Amanda Derrico, SFL-TAP Alumna

that career, however, is where I hit my wall. The class was carefully taught and executed.

The program understands how significant resumes and first impressions are to hiring representatives.

In my case, I have been in the Corps of Engineers for five years and managed numerous construction and infrastructure repair projects. However, when applying to a project manager position at a commercial construction company, I might as well have been just graduating high school with a summer job working on houses - or so I felt. I found it very difficult to translate my military education and experience into relatable civilian jargon.

I worked many hours on my resume with the help of friends, parents, and highly knowledgeable SFL-TAP instructors. I created a resume I was proud of. The Army made me a professional and I knew all I had to do was get my foot in the door, present myself well, explain my experiences, and I would be good to go.

At one point during my classes, my instructor mentioned the Career Skills Program (CSP), which was created to set up internships and career training for Soldiers while they're on active duty. The goal of

CSPs nationwide provide career training to Soldiers in their final 180 days on active duty.

CSPs are to create training opportunities that allow Soldiers to be offered a job with the company that trained them at the conclusion of the program. A list of companies that guaranteed jobs following a successful internship were given to us. The Career Skills Program was my foot in the door.

I applied to companies with internship programs and included an explanation of CSPs in my resume cover letter. I called to make sure companies received them and asked if they had any questions. One day I got a phone call. The talent acquisition representative from a company saw my resume and was intrigued.

After finding a company that was military friendly and willing to take

a chance on me, the process was simple. I received permission to go on permissive temporary duty (PTDY) to spend time in another location and complete the internship. I had an incredible opportunity to work in the private sector and show what I offer as an employee.

That's all I needed. I was offered a full-time position with the company by the end of my internship.

Every Soldier will eventually become a civilian again. The Army is doing their part to help with transition by offering amazing programs like CSPs. Leaders should make sure Soldiers take every advantage they are given to make the process easier. It is a huge change in someone's life and it needs to be taken seriously - it's not just a check-the-block situation. The opportunities available to Veterans in the civilian sector are expansive, but the work has to be done up-front to find those opportunities by transitioning Soldiers. ■

CSPs provide opportunities for job shadowing, internships, apprenticeships, on-the-job training, and other career skills training to eligible transitioning Soldiers.

Learn more at

<https://home.army.mil/imcom/index.php/customers/career-skills-program>

Editor's Note: A version of this article was previously published by the Fort Bragg Paraglide

FROM *NETWORKING* TO *NEW JOB*

■ **Jenny Hale**

According to the Forbes article “80% of Jobs are Not on Job Boards,” most job postings never make it online. Companies often hire from within or are given outside recommendations for interviews. Many of these positions are found through networking.

Transitioning Soldiers know that networking for a civilian opportunity is important, but many are unsure of where to start or miscalculate the amount of time it takes before networking can lead to a future job.

STARTING EARLY

Networking takes time and patience, but is worth it. Along the way, networking provides individuals with lifelong professional connections, mentors, and even friends. The earlier a transitioning Soldier starts networking with civilian organizations, employees, recruiters, and other individuals, the better chance they have of finding civilian opportunities sooner.

The Soldier for Life - Transition Assistance Program (SFL-TAP) is required for transitioning Soldiers. Soldiers should start SFL-TAP 18 months prior to transition or 24 months prior to retirement. However, networking should start the day Army service starts and should continue throughout a professional career. The sooner a transitioning Soldier can start networking with the civilian sector the better.

WHO TO NETWORK WITH

Networking can be hard, but taking the process one step at a time can help alleviate becoming overwhelmed. Start by reaching out to family

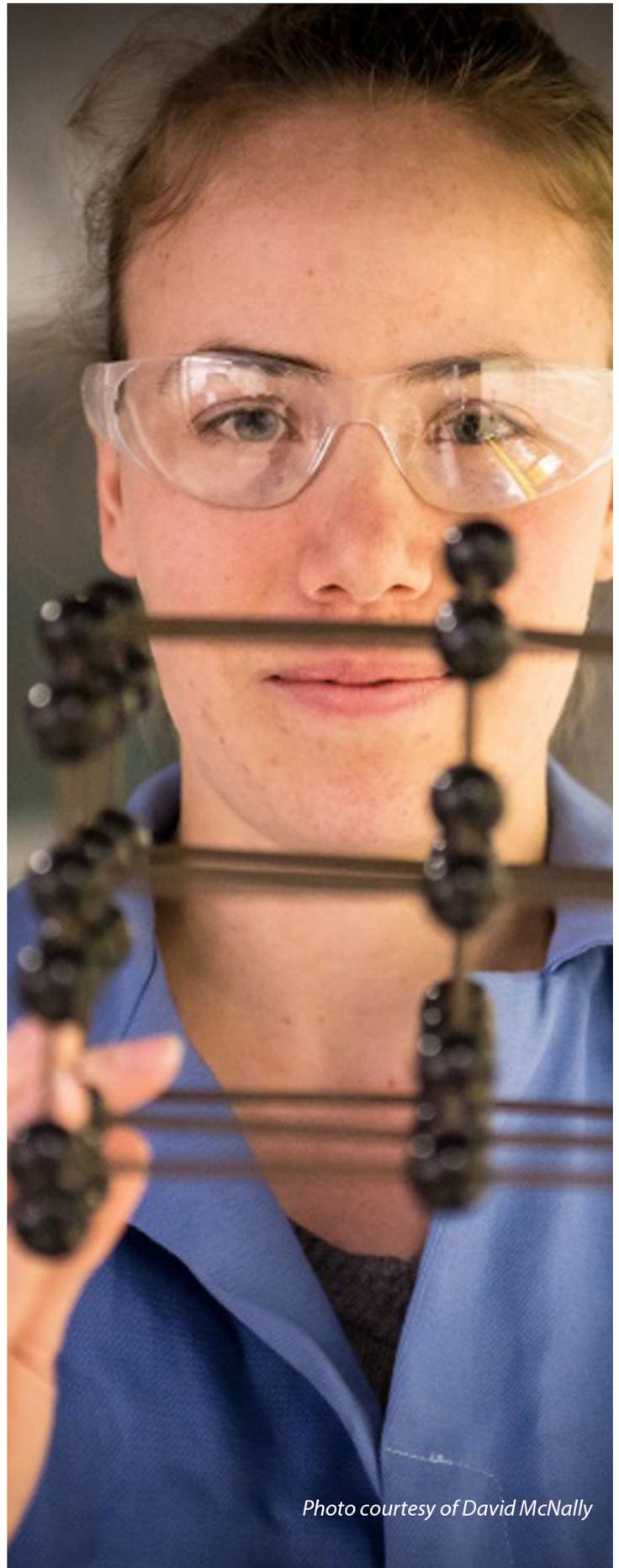


Photo courtesy of David McNally

members and friends. Let them know your transition timeframe and employment goals. Ask if they have any friends or contacts at targeted companies.

From there, join networking sites, like LinkedIn, as well as network in-person locally. Even if moving after transition is likely, networking locally may supply additional leads in other regions. Local Meetup groups, professional groups, and community clubs are options for those looking to meet new people in civilian industries.

OFFERING HELP FIRST

The Golden Rule of networking is to offer to assist others before asking for assistance. Networking is all about providing mutually beneficial relationships. Ask if providing expertise on a particular subject would be helpful, for a discovery call to learn about their career, or start a conversation about a mutual problem in their industry. Start a conversation and build from there.

ASKING FOR RECOMMENDATIONS TO FURTHER KNOWLEDGE

Once a connection has been made, ask if they know of anyone else in the industry that they recommend speaking with. This can help grow a network drastically over time and also shows interest in their field. Continue this request until a strong network of business professionals from multiple positions, fields, and locations has occurred. It will take a significant amount of time to set up phone calls and gather contact information. Prepare to spend time learning about the industry and who is admired in the field.

NURTURING CONNECTION LEADS

Once a networking connection is made, stay in touch. This can be as simple as commenting on a LinkedIn post, sending a private message, or writing an email every few months to share an interesting article. Over time, staying in touch with networking connections will foster your community of experts and contacts.

GAINING MENTORS

Over time, this network of contacts may lead to mentorship. This can go both ways, as a professional's expertise may be vital to a transitioning Soldier, but a transitioning Soldier can also provide mentorship back to their network. Good mentors can vouch for a transitioning Soldier's efforts, put them in touch with additional people, and push their resume out to their contacts. In addition, they can provide vital career skills expertise, civilian job knowledge, and information on a smooth transition. There are also organizations that provide mentors to transitioning Soldiers.

ASKING FOR ASSISTANCE

Once a network of contacts has been created, asking for job opportunity leads should line up a few months away from a Soldier's transition date. Begin to ask for job opening leads or career advice from this network of professionals and continue to follow up, while also reaching out to new individuals who work at companies where you are sending resumes.

FINDING AN OPPORTUNITY

Once an opportunity has been found or a recommendation has been made in the transitioning Soldier's favor, it is important to properly thank individuals for their help, keep them up-to-date on the transition progress, and encourage them to stay in touch. Again, continue to offer support and help in areas they need, as well as continue networking beyond accepting a job. In the future, be sure to provide the same level of networking and mentorship advice to others in a similar position.

Do you have a successful networking story? Send it to SFL-TAP and you may get it published on our various platforms at usarmy.knox.hrc.mbx.tagd-sfl-tap-comm@mail.mil. ■

During Army transition, Soldiers can use social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn for job searching. Social media is also a great way to share information, ask questions, and learn from the military transition community.

Since transition is often a new experience for many Soldiers, it is never too late to build professional profile accounts on social media and join in the conversation outside of Soldier for Life – Transition Assistance Program (SFL-TAP) courses.

On the far column are 20 social media hashtags the military transition community and civilian companies sometimes use to connect with transitioning Soldiers, military, and Veterans. Hashtags are the pound symbol on a keyboard and are used to categorize social media posts.

How can you use these hashtags to your advantage? Search for them on social media platforms to connect with others sharing information on transition. Some hashtags are more popular than others, but the more targeted the hashtags used are, the more relevant the information may be to you.

For companies looking to hire Veterans, military transition hashtags can help pinpoint those who are looking for jobs. For example, SFL-TAP uses **#HireaSoldier** on social media to share content and transition advice.

20 Hashtags to use Online for Military Transition & Hiring Veterans

Jenny Hale

Employers are encouraged to tag their job openings, career advice, and event information using the hashtag too. Transitioning Soldiers and Army Veterans are encouraged to post the hashtag online when searching for job leads or openings, as well as to share advice or success stories.

For those posting content online about military transition or Veteran hiring, mixing transition-specific hashtags in with general hashtags, like **#veterans**, **#military**, or **#Army**, can help find targeted conversations.

Want to learn more about how to network on social media? SFL-TAP Centers are located around the world with one-on-one support from a transition counselor available. Transitioning Soldiers can learn more and find contact information at www.sfl-tap.army.mil.

#VeteranTransition
#MilitaryTransition
#VeteranHiring
#VeteranRecruiting
#HireVets
#HireaVet
#HireaVeteran
#HireVeterans
#HireaSoldier
#HireMilitary
#DD214
#SoldierforLife
#MilitarytoCivilian
#MyTransitionSuccess
#MilitaryHiring
#TransitioningVeterans
#HiringOurHeroes
#HireOurHeroes
#HireHeroes
#SFLTAP

Optional Workshops at SFL-TAP

Accessing Higher Education Track

The AHE track teaches transitioning Soldiers how to pursue a college education and prepare for the college application process.

Entrepreneurial Track

The Boots to Business workshop is taught by the Small Business Administration (SBA), helping transitioning Soldiers learn what it means to be an entrepreneur and how to translate military skills and attributes to become a business owner.

Career Exploration Planning Track

The CEPT Workshop helps Soldiers explore training opportunities, types of credentials, and qualifications needed for specific occupations of interest. The track is taught by the Department of Labor (DOL).

Contact your local SFL-TAP Center to sign up for an upcoming workshop!



TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
Start Strong • Serve Strong • Reintegrate Strong • Remain Strong

preparing for

HIRING

One of the key components of the Soldier for Life – Transition Assistance Program (SFL-TAP) for Soldiers is meeting employers with job vacancies. This can be accomplished through attending SFL-TAP hiring events at local military installations. However, every Soldier needs a plan before attending one.

Creating a plan when transitioning from active duty ensures a Soldier will have a successful start to civilian life. Soldiers are required to attend SFL-TAP and are encouraged to start 18 months prior to transition or 24 months prior to retirement, which can help

accomplish future civilian goals. Hiring events should be part of these goals and are scattered throughout the year on and off at installations worldwide to help connect Soldiers to employment opportunities.

These events bring employers and job seekers together. Companies, both local and national, attend to meet qualified candidates. Job seekers are able to network with hiring managers while attending. Job seekers not only benefit from having the opportunity to connect with numerous companies at one time, but they are often interviewed or hired on the spot.

Here are ways to get prepared for an upcoming event:

BEFORE EVENT

Search for information about upcoming hiring events through state employment agencies, local Chamber of Commerce programs, local Veteran agencies, SFL-TAP Centers, and other organizations. Find the date, time, location, and a point of contact for upcoming hiring events. Then, ask for a list of scheduled employers and the positions to be filled. If a job seeker finds something that matches their interests, research the company and find information about what they

EVENTS

■ Julia Park, SFL-TAP Training and Jenny Hale, SFL-TAP Marketing

do. Learn as much as possible about the organization before attending the event.

Job seekers should refine their resume before the hiring event. Targeted resumes should be created for specific positions the employers at the event have open or for the particular organization a job seeker would like to speak with. Attendees may also want to create a more generalized resume that focuses on their past work history and achievements too. Before attending, job seekers should ensure the resume is reviewed multiple times, including with a SFL-TAP counselor. Counselors at the SFL-TAP Center can help

transitioning Soldiers modify their resumes to meet career goals. Before the event, print several copies to hand out to the companies and organizations met.

Practice answering basic questions, such as “tell me about yourself.” SFL-TAP encourages transitioning Soldiers to create and practice their 30-second introduction, sometimes referred to as a commercial or elevator speech. An elevator speech is used to tell someone the job seeker’s career summary in the time it takes an elevator to go from the bottom to the top floor of a building in a hypothetical situation. The short

statement should include two to three skills or strengths that the job seeker would bring to a company, any applicable training or education completed, and prior work experience that pertains to the organization.

In addition to practicing the speech, job seekers should also prepare a list of questions to ask an employer. Asking questions about the position, the company, and future duties shows interest.

DURING EVENT

Job seekers should approach companies they are interested in at the event. If there is time,

it is encouraged to visit with other companies present as well. As a job seeker, it's important to keep options open during the job search. Hiring events can be busy. Be sure to allocate enough time to talk with employers.

Attendees should bring a portfolio of prior work, pens, a note pad, several copies of their resume, a general cover letter, a list of references, and wear proper attire.

First impressions are lasting ones. Attendees must be dressed professionally. It is important to dress as though the hiring event is a job interview, which it may be at some SFL-TAP events that hire on the spot. This is the first impression a job seeker may have with a hiring manager and it needs to be the right one.

Present a firm handshake, look confident, and show enthusiasm.

During the discussion, avoid military jargon, translate military experience into relatable civilian skills, and ask questions. Do not discuss salary or benefits at this time. At the end of the discussion, shake their hand again, leave a resume with the employer or if applicable, ask for the website link to apply online, as well as ask for their business card to follow-up.

AFTER EVENT

Although job seekers may feel that preparing for the hiring event was the most important part, do not let the job hunt focus lessen afterwards. Take a moment to analyze the experience and use this information to prepare for future hiring events, as well as

future networking contacts.

After the event, send a short thank you note to each person spoken to at the event. Do this within a few short days of the conversation. To make the note stand out, mention something memorable that was said during the discussion. In the letter, job seekers should continue to reinforce how well suited they are for the position and show enthusiasm in the organization. Job seekers are encouraged to send another copy of their resume along with the note.

Be patient, but don't be inactive. Hiring managers are busy. The hiring process varies for each company and it may take a few days or longer to hear back from an employer. In the meantime, attendees should continue their job search, attend other hiring events, make networking contacts, and continue to follow-up with companies they have previously contacted.

SFL-TAP can help transitioning Soldiers prepare for their job search with courses that discuss how to create a resume, apply to jobs, translate their military experience, and more. By using available resources to create a career transition plan, transitioning Soldiers can increase their chance of finding civilian success. ■



Photo courtesy of Traci Boutwell

Editor's Note: A version of this article was previously published in the Fort Knox Gold Standard.

Lessons for Transition

Sean O'loughin, SFL-TAP Alumnus

I always said I would stay in the Army until I knew what I wanted my career to be outside the Army.

By early 2017, I knew what that would be and I committed to leaving the military. Over the next year, I learned important lessons.

One very important lesson is to not be afraid to pick up the phone. The key is that, especially if you are changing career fields as I was, you will never get a job by searching job listings and submitting your resume alone, since networking is important.

So, network! Go on LinkedIn, find a company you would want to work for, find a Veteran (preferably Army) who works there, send them a short message describing who you are, and ask if you can borrow 30 minutes of their time for a phone call.

Through this process, you will learn about your new industry and make yourself infinitely more

competitive for when you eventually do interview.

Another lesson I learned is that being upfront with your Command is far better than the alternative. It is an immutable fact of life that everyone will take off the uniform at some point, with the only variable being when.

During my transition, I was taking an industry exam to improve my competitiveness and studying was making my hours brutal. I was upfront with my superiors, describing what I was doing and how it was going to help me. We worked out plan so I could find balance for transition. There is little to be gained by trying to do it all — though, if you're like me, that will be your first instinct.

These lessons are not comprehensive. There are entire books of information on what you need to do to make a transition successful. It is not foolproof.

The SFL-TAP program, especially the classes from the Department of Labor, definitely help, but they are not comprehensive either. Transition takes time and work. Only you can put in that work.

Be upfront with your Command, pick up the phone, make sure you're making your transition a priority, and set yourself up well for a successful transition. ■

Editor's Note: A version of this article was previously published in the Fort Bragg Paraglide.

Creating a
Personal Brand
during Army
Transition

■ *Jenny Hale*

123 MILITARY TRANSITION AVE
FORT KNOX, KY 12345
EMAIL: JOHNDOE@XYZ.COM
PHONE: 555-123-4567

JOHN DOE
LOGISTICS MANAGER
www.XYZ.com

When transitioning Soldiers think of branding, they may think of a logo or colors on a website and how that is associated with a company. The concept of branding is much more, including characteristics that make a person remember a business' products or services and most importantly, the quality of them. Remember, people most often buy from brands they know and trust. Therefore, when you think of a job seeker's personal brand, does an employer feel that trust and professionalism from their first impression of you?

Personal branding is different than a logo and involves ensuring that your professionalism is known and trusted. As a job seeker and transitioning Soldier, it's important to understand personal branding, as those that focus on it stand out to employers and those they network with.

Here's how you can represent your personal brand during Army transition:

Imagery

SFL-TAP classes often mention using LinkedIn as a networking tool and job search platform. If you choose to participate on LinkedIn or any social media platform, you need to represent your personal brand or you risk being turned down by recruiters. Imagery is most important, as a picture is worth 1,000 words and your LinkedIn is one of the easiest ways to find a person in a search on the

Internet. Recruiters will most likely be looking up your Facebook account (no matter how private you think it is) and other platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and others that might link to your name during a search too.

Are your photos and cover pictures up to par?

If you're using LinkedIn, your profile picture should be professional, with business attire, and in head shot form. It's preferred to have a professional image and a selfie is not encouraged. Those that really want to stand out amongst the competition should upload a cover photo. Both of these images should represent you and your career moving forward. Cover photos could feature an industry, skill, or career-focused image.

“Those that really want to stand out amongst the competition should upload a cover photo.”

For other platforms, ensure all your private, non-professional images are deleted and that the public ones are professional in nature. To step up your game across social media, consider making all your profile pictures and cover photos representative of your professionalism and personal brand. You never know what platform you could use to find jobs or who will be searching for you.

Being You

A brand is not just pictures, logos, colors, or a website. A brand is about the association someone has

with a product or service. In regards to a personal brand, it's about how you treat others and represent yourself in relation to how you are viewed and remembered.

Are you writing negative comments on LinkedIn, Facebook pages, Twitter, etc.? Have you created an incomplete, half-done LinkedIn profile? Are there typos on your resume? Have you picked up a phone and rudely said "hello" only to find out it was a recruiter on the other end? Are you spamming people on social media with "I need help" posts without providing value or building a relationship with them first? Are you arriving at a hiring event or interview in unprofessional attire for that work environment?

If any of this sounds familiar, you're hurting your personal brand and your reputation. How you act, what you say, and how you represent yourself is a reflection of you and what you will be like as an employee. Employers are watching. Are you using your online image to your advantage?

Stand Out

One of the most important parts of personal branding is standing out and being different than other job seekers. To start, think about what soft skills, work experiences, and stories you can share. How are they different than a civilian's? A peer's?

Fill out your profiles on social media with professional career goals and keywords. Share stories, data improvements, and be "real" online! Provide value, advice, your experiences, encouragement, and be



Photo courtesy of Ichiro Tokashiki

company. By understanding yourself and your personal brand, you'll be able to better identify the best opportunities for you and your family post-Army active duty.

The Soldier for Life – Transition Assistance Program (SFL-TAP) can help you along the way. Transitioning Soldiers should start the program 18 months prior to transition or 24 months prior to retirement to receive transition services and classes to better prepare for life after Army active duty. You can learn more by visiting your local SFL-TAP Center. ■

social. More employers will find you on sites like LinkedIn when you're active in the community and engaging online.

Network often and get to know the companies you're interested in. Be clear about what you want to do for them. Tell them how you can be an asset and show them through your past experiences. Employers want quantifiable examples and soft skills. Go beyond the application and contact those in positions to hire.

On applications, stand out by using numbers and percentages to show increases, use key-

words, and make your resume easy to read in seconds. Tailor every resume to the job and attach a customized cover letter that has the name of the person in charge of recruiting for the position.

During your transition, it's important to build the image of who you want to be in civilian life, what kind of employer you want to work for, and what type of employee you will be. Build this professional image of yourself, providing value and positivity to the community. Employers want to bring team members on that will fit into the culture of their

“ More employers will find you on sites like LinkedIn when you're active in the community and engaging online. ”

Personal Branding Advice for Soldiers

“ Building your brand is a slow and steady process. Each interaction you have with someone is a piece of the brand. Work to make your various social media platforms reflect the brand you wish to convey...build a brand that is authentic to you. ”

-SFL-TAP LinkedIn Comment

Soldier Mentorship: SMA DAILEY'S ADVICE for Transitioners

 SFL-TAP Strategic Communications

The Soldier for Life – Transition Assistance Program (SFL-TAP) spoke with Sergeant Major of the Army Daniel Dailey on his advice for transitioning Soldiers.

As an advocate of the Soldier for Life philosophy – once a Soldier, always a Soldier, a Soldier for life – and preparing properly for military transition, Dailey is no stranger to speaking on the SFL-TAP and transition process.

One of his Army priorities, as SMA, has been to expand Transition Assistance for credentialing opportunities, which would allow Soldiers to become certified for their Army skills, as well as those same skills in the civilian sector. As a result, Soldiers would be more competitive for civilian careers after transition.

“I’ve had first-hand experience seeing what the Soldier for Life – Transition Assistance Program can do for Soldiers and their families,” Dailey said. “Transition isn’t always as simple as it seems. I hear that a lot from transitioning Soldiers – many wishing they had started the transition process sooner or taken better advantage of transition resources.”

SFL-TAP offers opportunities to explore future civilian opportunities such as finding a civilian job, obtaining higher education, exploring technical training, and starting entrepreneurial ventures. The program also gives transitioning Soldiers a bigger picture of the career opportunities available to them during their transition time period, including reenlisting in the Army, joining the National Guard, or joining the Army Reserve.

SFL-TAP spoke with SMA Dailey to learn more about his advice for transitioners and

Sergeant Major of the Army Daniel Dailey speaks to Soldier for Life - Transition Assistance Program staff at a training symposium in Louisville, Kentucky in March 2017.

Photo courtesy of Master Sgt. Brian Hamilton



how Soldiers can become more prepared for life after active duty.

SFL-TAP: Thanks for speaking with the SFL-TAP team today. You are a great supporter of helping transitioning Soldiers properly prepare for their transition from active duty and connecting them to employers. Why are these types of efforts important?

SMA: We want employers knocking down our doors to hire our Soldiers because they are highly qualified and have the desired skillsets to contribute to their organizations. We want Soldiers to be properly prepared for this moment and ready for transition.

SFL-TAP: It's great to see Soldiers become empowered to take control of their future and personal career goals during transition.

SMA: At the end of the day, transition is a process and it's something every Soldier will go through. We all must transition at some point and from every rank in the Army. There are a lot of resources out there and starting early is key to properly preparing.

SFL-TAP: SFL-TAP encourages transitioning Soldiers to start the program 18 months prior to transition or 24 months prior to retirement. What do you think are the benefits to starting early?

SMA: Your future is yours - not a check in another box as you are on your way off of active

duty - and taking transition seriously and starting early could be the difference between success and failure. That choice and responsibility is yours. Don't cram transition into a week, but spread your transition process out over the course of several months to maximize your resources and take some time to really consider what you want to do next.

SFL-TAP: Transition requires planning and Soldiers have a lot of options. SFL-TAP works to educate Soldiers on all the possibilities available to them so they can be successful.

SMA: It's a program for the Care of the Soldier – something we embody in our leaders as they mentor and develop the future ranks. The Army also cares about what happens to Soldiers when they transition to Veterans. That is part of our pact with the American Soldier and his family – once they have honorably served, we will help them prepare for the next phase of their lives.

SFL-TAP: That's a great message for Commanders and leaders. What would you want Commanders to know about SFL-TAP and how they can support Soldiers going through the transition process?

SMA: It's imperative that leaders ensure they are providing Soldiers the opportunity to transition properly. I understand it's hard to let people go, but just like we have to get them to schools for promotion, we have to get them to SFL-TAP, and all the other great resources out there, to help them. It doesn't matter how great our programs are if we don't allow our Soldiers and their families to take

advantage of them. But I think our Commanders and leaders out there are very aware of that, and do their best to support Soldiers during the transition process.

SFL-TAP: Supporting Soldiers is important in helping them find discover their version of success post-transition. The Career Skills Program is another avenue for post-transition success that Commanders can encourage Soldiers to apply for.

SMA: Yes, CSPs have grown a lot over the last few years and have expanded to include many more internship, apprentice, and on-the-job training programs for Soldiers. With such a high job placement for transitioning Soldiers, I encourage Soldiers to look into CSP opportunities early and communicate desired goals with Commanders for civilian career training while still on active duty.

SFL-TAP: What is something you encourage transitioning Soldiers to do once they hit their transition window?

SMA: I would encourage Soldiers to go to learn as much as they can about the transition resources available to them. We have a tremendous amount of services to assist Soldiers and their spouses. Don't miss out on opportunities like credentialing and CSPs. And most importantly, they should remember transition is a process, not an event. It will take them setting the conditions 18 to 24 months – at a minimum – from the date they will leave Army active duty to best position themselves for success. I think SFL-TAP has done an amazing job of helping with that. ■



REENLISTMENT OPTIONS DURING ARMY TRANSITION

■ Colonel Walter Herd (R), SFL-TAP Director

Photo courtesy of Sgt. 1st Class Ashleigh Torres

“ 20% of Soldiers that start SFL-TAP stay in uniform, either through reenlistment, demobilization, or by transitioning to the Army National Guard or Army Reserve. ”

Source: SFL-TAP Data

Soldiers are trained to prepare for every conceivable contingency and then adapt, improvise and overcome as the situation unfolds. I learned long ago that a gallon of sweat in training may save a pint of blood in combat. As the transition process approaches, the mission may differ, but the idea is the same.

The expectation of a professional Soldier is to incorporate military values into

all aspects of their life. As a result, the same expectation for professionalism continues through their transition into the civilian sector.

Every Soldier will transition. Preparation for transition begins the day a Soldier joins the Army. As a Soldier gains skills during their military career, those skills will be applied in their future as a Veteran.

Many Soldiers work on

education and certifications while in service, making them more valuable to the Army, while also preparing them for their life after active duty. The Army improves as Soldiers improve.

For some Soldiers, the Army's Soldier for Life – Transition Assistance Program, or SFL-TAP, becomes just another requirement before transition. However, the program provides a foundation for success in the future for those that take advantage of it.

During SFL-TAP, active duty Soldiers that are not retiring are required to attend a Continuum of Military Service class to learn about options in the National Guard and Army Reserve. Soldiers also have the opportunity to reenlist starting 15 months from their contract end date. 20% of Soldiers that start SFL-TAP stay in uniform, either through reenlistment, demobilization, or by transitioning to the Army National Guard or Army Reserve, according to SFL-TAP data.

Some Soldiers and leaders feel that those caught between different regulations, the reenlistment window and SFL-TAP, do not need to go to the transition center when they know they plan to reenlist.

However, attending SFL-TAP can often be a motivator to encourage a transitioning Soldier to reenlist. The Soldier loses out when he or she does not fully understand the value of the opportunity afforded to them by the Army.

Beginning SFL-TAP at the 18-month mark can teach a Soldier that reenlistment is the right decision. Trans-

A Soldier who spoke with our SFL-TAP Policy Office recently completed SFL-TAP. He had taken a “check-the-box” approach to transition and after seeing all of his options, asked his leadership for an extension on his contract in order to have more time to prepare for civilian goals.

ition is daunting to many Soldiers, as some may realize they are not competitive enough to reach their own individual goals in the civilian sector without additional education, credentials, civilian work experience, and more. This “wake-up call” can encourage Soldiers to reenlist in order to build up time to gain these civilian qualifications.

For example, an Army Veteran from SFL-TAP's social media pages reenlisted because he knew his after-service goals and realized he needed more time to prepare for them. He used the time to finish his bachelor's and master's degree, as well as receive the numerous certifications he needed. After he transitioned from active duty, he was employed. Within a year, he had

enough experience to apply to, and receive, his dream job.

A Soldier who spoke with our SFL-TAP Policy Office recently completed SFL-TAP. He had taken a “check-the-box” approach to transition and after seeing all of his options, asked his leadership for an extension on his contract in order to have more time to prepare for civilian goals.

Getting the process started is often the hardest thing to do and the easiest thing to avoid. Leadership can support Soldiers by encouraging them to attend SFL-TAP, even if the Soldier thinks they

may reenlist. Even if Soldiers do not plan to reenlist, they may decide to after attending the program.

If a Soldier intends to reenlist, take the opportunity to remind them to start SFL-TAP in order to create a long-term plan. If a Soldier decides to transition, give them the same opportunity to learn about all of

(Article continued on page 39)

(Continued from page 5)

- Asking what a Soldier wants to do after active duty and offering support to get there.
- Encouraging them to attend SFL-TAP 18 months prior to transition or 24 months prior to retirement.
- Encouraging them to attend optional transition classes and events, like hiring events, networking opportunities, additional transition classes, etc.
- Encouraging them to apply for Career Skills Programs.

Commanders should tell Soldiers to plan ahead, go early and often to SFL-TAP, spreading out the program requirements over the course of 18 months for those transitioning or 24 months for those retiring. The Army can increase future recruitment by supporting current transitioning Soldiers. ■

(Continued from page 7)

ion, start SFL-TAP early. When attending SFL-TAP, Soldiers should spread scheduled classes out over the preferred and recommended timeframe. Stay in touch with your counselor to achieve maximum success and to ensure scheduling efficiency. It is in the Soldier's best interest to prepare over time. ■

(Continued from page 38)

their options, as they may not be fully prepared. Being prepared is what being a Soldier is about – as an individual and as a unit. SFL-TAP is about being prepared for life after active duty. Training, degrees, and certifications are things that need to be completed over a period of time and throughout a Soldier's career. Transition is not something you can complete in a week and SFL-TAP can present Soldiers all their options the earlier they start.

SFL-TAP encourages Soldiers to attend the program 24 months prior to retirement or 18 months prior to transition. The program focuses on resume development, career skills training, interview techniques, Veterans Affairs benefits, budgeting, and other skills needed to be successful in the civilian sector. To learn more about SFL-TAP, visit www.sfl-tap.army.mil. ■

CONTINUE YOUR SERVICE!

*Join the Army National
Guard or Army Reserve*

Contact your local
Reserve Component
Career Counselor
(RCCC) office for more
information!





Where's Your Nearest SFL-TAP Center?

UNITED STATES:

Fort Belvoir, VA 703-805-9247	Fort Polk, LA 337-531-1591
Fort Benning, GA 706-545-2308	Fort Riley, KS 785-239-2278
Fort Bliss, TX 915-568-7996	Fort Rucker, AL 334-255-2558
Fort Bragg, NC 910-396-2227	Fort Sill, OK 580-442-2222
Fort Campbell, KY 270-798-5000	Fort Stewart, GA 912-767-2234
Fort Carson, CO 719-526-1002	Fort Wainwright, AK 907-353-2113
Fort Drum, NY 315-772-3434	Hunter Army Airfield, GA 912-767-2234
Fort Gordon, GA 706-791-7333	JBER, AK 907-384-3501
Fort Hood, TX 254-288-2227	JBLE, VA 757-878-4955
Fort Huachuca, AZ 520-533-5764	JBLM, WA 253-967-3258
Fort Irwin, CA 760-380-5644	JBMDL, NJ 703-696-0973
Fort Jackson, SC 803-751-4109	JBMHH, VA 609-562-1756
Fort Knox, KY 502-624-2227	JBSA, TX 210-221-1213
Fort Leavenworth, KS 913-684-2227	Redstone, AL 256-876-6481
Fort Lee, VA 804-734-6612	Schofield Barracks, HI 808-655-1028
Fort Leonard Wood, MO 573-596-0175	Walter Reed, MD 301-400-0317
Fort Meade, MD 301-677-9871	West Point, NY 609-562-1756

OVERSEAS:

Ansbach, GE
+49-902-83-3312

Baumholder, GE
+49-631-411-7089

Camp Arifjan, Kuwait
+965-2221-6340
Code: 430-3471

Camp Casey, KR
+82-31-869-4033

Camp Henry, KR
+82-5033-387600

Camp Humphrey's, KR
+82-5033-387600

Camp Zama, Japan
+81-46-407-3940

Kaiserslautern, GE
+49-631-411-7089

Stuttgart, GE
+49-7031-15-2191

Torii Station, Japan
+6117-44-4195

USAG Bavaria, GE
+49-9662-83-2055

Vicenza, IT
+39-0444-61-8153

Weisbaden, GE
+0611-143548-1319

Yongsan, KR
+82-5033-387600

Virtual Center 24/7 Line: 1-800-325-4715

Forward Transition Support Teams:
Fort Bliss FTST: 915-568-6047
Fort Dix FTST: 609-562-1756
Fort Hood FTST: 254-553-7057

Soldier for Life - Transition Assistance Program



TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Start Strong • Serve Strong • Reintegrate Strong • Remain Strong



@SFLTAP



@ArmySFLTAP



[LinkedIn.com/groups/7063275](https://www.linkedin.com/groups/7063275)
[Linkedin.com/in/SFL-TAPHQ](https://www.linkedin.com/in/SFL-TAPHQ)



SFL-TAP Television

www.sfl-tap.army.mil
#HireaSoldier