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Helping veterans build civilian careers

LINDA WHITE

Transitioning from military service to civilian employment presents unique obstacles, including translating military skills, adapting to new workplace cultures, overcoming misconceptions and building professional networks.

And though the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) is moving toward a culture in which transition planning begins on the first day in uniform, career coaches, human resources professionals and hiring managers may find it challenging to meet the unique employment-related needs of former and current military members.

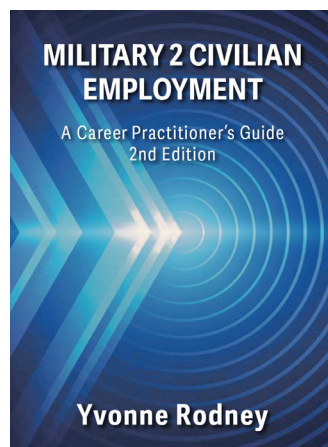
To address those challenges, CERIC, a national charitable organization that supports the development of resources to enhance the work of Canadian career professionals, has released *Military 2 Civilian Employment: A Career Practitioner's Guide, 2nd Edition* (2025 by CERIC).

The guide offers strategies designed to help veterans build fulfilling, post-service careers.

"It's a great resource for career services providers of all stripes and it will educate them about military language, culture, transition challenges and what they can do to help our transitioning military members or veterans," says career consultant and author Yvonne Rodney.

The guide follows the federal government's launch of its first-ever National Veterans Employment Strategy last year, aimed at improving employment opportunities for veterans.

A key message in the guide: the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) instills in members many skills that civilian employers need, such as loyalty, dedication and a sense of



duty; teamwork/cooperation; leadership; problem solving; discipline; and responsibility.

Still, many military members and veterans struggle to adjust to civilian life because they've been living in a completely different culture. "A military member's priority is first the mission, then the team and finally the self. In civilian work culture, this is reversed," Rodney says in the guide. "The civilian job seeker must point out to the prospective employer how he himself can help the organization achieve its mission or how she herself will add value to the organization. This requires a completely opposite mindset."

Not only is there a difference in work cultures, but there can also be a language barrier. "Military speech can be hard to understand for those not used to it. Moreover, acronyms and initialisms abound in military language," says Rodney.

She advises career practitioners to let clients using a lot of military acronyms know that most of the civilian working world won't understand them and to instead use simple, non-military words. "It's our job to


 Career consultant and author Yvonne Rodney. **SUPPLIED**

help our clients readjust their thinking so they can confidently describe, in language that's clear, how the culture and experiences of the military equipped them to be solid contributors to any organization."

Career practitioners can also help translate military skills into civilian language to build stronger, more competitive resumes and cover letters by asking questions such as 'What skills did you use in your military job?' It also lists resources available to identify civilian equivalents to military jobs.

Rodney challenges career practitioners to set aside any biases they may have. "Regardless of our position on warfare, our primary responsibility is to serve our clients well. Part of that means owning that we may have biases and, having identified them, being prepared to put them aside or refer elsewhere if we cannot do so."

In addition to job search tips like networking, securing informational interviews and attending job fairs, Rodney reminds career practitioners that some clients may plan to pursue further education or training and may need help navigating civilian education: applications, credit transfers, course selection, financial aid and so on.

The 240-page guide is written in a way that allows readers to start at any chapter that catches their attention. It includes the experiences of CAF service personnel who've transitioned to civilian employment and spouses/partners. Many military spouses have "patchwork careers" and gaps in their resumes because their partners are often regularly relocated.

Career practitioners learn how to help the military spouse whose opportunity to earn a living has been severely impacted by the military lifestyle. For example, it identifies and offers advice to career practitioners on how to coach spouses, so they address potential employer biases. One bias: that a candidate is unambitious, lazy, an underperformer or unreliable because they've held many short-term jobs, jobs unrelated to education or training, or entry-level jobs.

The guide dedicates a chapter to the unique employment needs of reservists, who are primarily part-time service positions and have more latitude than regular CAF members to volunteer for deployments or training. It offers a sample resume of both a military spouse and a veteran. It's available for purchase on Amazon and is also available for free download at ceric.ca/military. It's available in both English and French.

By the numbers

- There are more than 450,000 veterans in Canada between the ages of 17 and 59.
- Each year across the country, about 8,200 military members are released from Regular Force and Reserve Force and increasingly at a younger age.

Source: *Military 2 Civilian Employment: A Career Practitioner's Guide, 2nd Edition* (2025 by CERIC)

Workers feel confident

LINDA WHITE

Seventy-eight per cent of Canadian workers feel confident in taking time off this year, while 76 per cent feel confident effectively managing their workload and responsibilities.

Also, according to the January edition of the ADP Canada monthly Happiness@Work Index, 63 per cent feel optimistic when it comes to meeting career goals and 57 feel optimistic about getting a salary increase.

"Ensuring employees have access to adequate resources such as financial literacy education and career development opportunities can help employees achieve their goals," says Heather Haslam, vice president of marketing at ADP Canada.

"Keeping a pulse on the market and remaining competitive in salary adjustments can also help alleviate long-term financial stress, support professional growth and sustain workplace satisfaction beyond 2025."

Boomers continued to lead as the happiest generation for two consecutive years and Gen-Z workers hold onto second place, tied with millennials, the Index finds.

Creating skilled trades jobs

The federal and provincial governments and City of Toronto have announced \$975 million to accelerate the delivery of Waterfront Toronto's revitalization plan which, once complete, will create an estimated 100,000 skilled trades jobs on Toronto's waterfront and add \$13.2 billion to the economy.

The plan will help create more than 14,000 new homes, including affordable rental housing, along Toronto's Waterfront at Quayside and Ookwemin Minising (formerly Villiers Island). To prepare for the construction of the new homes beginning in 2026, site servicing work will begin shortly with the goal of first occupancy in 2031.