

# The Military Spouse's Toolkit For Getting Hired

PRESENTED BY MILITARY FAMILIES MAGAZINE

DOZENS OF EMPLOYMENT RESOURCES



**5** Tricks to Applying Online

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# Go for it

The MilSpouse Coders help military spouses grow careers in tech. Learn more about the organizations supporting employment and entrepreneurship on pgs. 13-14.



Dear fellow military spouse,

**I**t has been an incredible experience to watch the evolution of our community since moving to my first duty station some 19 years ago. I have watched as advocates from within and outside of our demographic raised their voice to demand national recognition of the vital role we play in the nation's defense. Individuals bearing the title of "dependent" proved to be anything but as they managed to attain a degree, grow a business, launch a nonprofit organization, climb the corporate ladder or run for elected office all while carrying the heavy burden of having a loved one deployed. In fact, I have personally watched as men and women turned the impossible into possible with the sheer grit that is embedded within every military spouse.

And as much as things have changed, they have also stayed the same. The spirit of our predecessors still very much exists as our progressive goals marry with our traditions of running the local spouses club or family readiness group or feeding a fellow family celebrating life or mourning death. You do not have to look far to find a role model among us, next to us or within yourself.

At the same time, it is no secret that our pursuit of a dream career sometimes evades us. We can spend so much time on the reasons why, but hard has never been a deterrent for this community. It is my hope that within these pages you will find the resource or information needed to keep your ambitious spirit going.

The Military Spouse's Toolkit For Getting Hired is based on the concept that there are so many programs vying to support us, but awareness is an ongoing challenge for this transient group.

Whatever it is that you aspire to do today or in a future season of your life, we believe in you.

I believe in you.

Yours in writing,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Bianca Strzalkowski'.

**Bianca Strzalkowski**

Managing Editor

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**Mandy Baker** is a Coast Guard spouse and author. She has spent many years writing for blogs and websites, and has self-published two novels. Mandy is currently working on her third. She has a BA in English and Master's in Psychology.

## On the Cover



Military spouses and veterans gather at Revolutionary Coworking in Fayetteville, N.C.  
Photo by GTC Photography.

# JOB SEEKER



# CHECKLIST

## ✓ Do you have a clear vision of what you want to do?

- What field(s) are you interested in?
- Are you seeking a full-time or part-time schedule?
- Remote or in-person obligation?
- Are you open to contract work?

## ✓ What compensation base are you looking for?

- Factor in your desired base salary including additional costs, such as childcare, clothing, fuel, etc. If working from home, calculate the cost of a home computer, internet service, cell phone.
- Research salaries within your desired fields to know what others with similar experience and duties are requiring.

## ✓ Craft or update your resume.

- BEFORE: List out all volunteer activities, work experiences, awards, education certificates and degrees.
- DURING: Decide which of the above are relevant to what you are applying for.
- AFTER: Enlist a trusted person or organization to review the document for accuracy, grammar and effectiveness.

## ✓ Start your job search.

## ✓ Draft a cover letter adapted to the specific job description of what you are applying for.

- Use keywords from the job description,
- Explain gaps in your resume, and
- Connect the dots from your qualifications to the desired position.

## ✓ Create a professional email address for all communication.

## ✓ Take stock of your social media accounts.

- Are they professional?
- Consider the privacy of your accounts because some hiring managers do research online.
- If you haven't already, create a LinkedIn account and ensure it matches the information on your resume.

## ✓ Get a professional headshot taken.

## ✓ Keep track of the jobs you apply for, where you found them, any notes that are relevant to your search and communication with the company.



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# Build a PCS-proof career

By Rebecca Alwine

**All eyes have been on military spouse careers in recent years, with efforts by both the private and public sectors to do their part in supporting employment in the community.** And it should come as no surprise as survey after survey reveals that those married to the military are accomplished in education and experience, but still face an uphill battle when trying to establish and keep a career in their desired field. So the question remains, how can ambition-driven candidates build a portfolio that defies the inevitable permanent change of station move? Lindsay Bradford, manager of the military spouse program for Hiring Our Heroes, offers some ideas using her own resume as an example.

Bradford, a Navy wife, outlined clear goals for herself long before she added “military spouse” to her resume. She graduated from Arizona State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in justice studies/pre-law and international relations with a focus on national security and terrorism. She positioned herself for a job with one of the three-letter agencies and started an internship with the local police department as a tactical crime analyst.

With large government budget cuts in 2009, Bradford learned just how hard the General Schedule system was to break into and started looking at alternative options. At that point, she didn’t realize just how vital that skill would be to her future.

## Reevaluate career goals

With her first career pivot, Bradford



Bradford speaks during a career event for military spouses.

started working for Target’s corporate investigations team leading to a headquarters promotion in Minneapolis, Minnesota. It was then that she joined the company’s Military Business Council and met her future husband.

“I was on an incredible team who allowed me to work remotely and

travel to see him when he was home. I thought joining this council and being on this particular team was wonderful and would help PCS my career,” she explained.

After becoming engaged, Bradford realized she’d be moving to California and wasn’t phased in the least. “I thought, no problem, if I can oversee

(From left to right) Suzie Schwartz, Brittany Boccher, Lori Simmons, Lindsay Bradford and Verenice Castillo.





Bradford (right) with members of the Hiring Our Heroes' team.



After utilizing career resources, Bradford was hired to be the program manager of the Military Spouse of the Year award.

Egypt from Minnesota, I can oversee it in California.”

Despite the support of her leadership and advocating for military spouse employment, human resources refused.

By 2013, Bradford found the focus on employment to be limited to veterans with little understanding of the hardships military spouses faced. She was also looking at a career change by this time as she was in the interview process with the FBI. After telling the bureau about the upcoming move and asking if she could request to be assigned to the San Francisco, California, office, she was met with another closed door.

“I will never forget their response,” she said. “They told me, ‘We will station you on the opposite side of the country to make sure you are committed to the Bureau,’ and I withdrew my application package.”

Target, however, was still an option and Bradford found herself on the retail side of the house working as an executive team leader and district trainer for the assets protection team.

“It felt like starting over, but I was doing whatever it took to keep my career,” she remembered.

Another PCS approached and

Bradford was encouraged by the prospect of moving her career. But another door slammed shut, as the only store that could accommodate her position was almost a two hour commute – one way. She left Target and began job hunting.

“I lost count of the job applications around 115,” she said.

### Networking is effective

Bradford asked herself, ‘How was I – a spouse with almost 10 years of specialized experience – not able to even get an interview for an entry level management position?’ It was then that she utilized some of the resources available to military spouses, most notably the Hiring Our Heroes’ Military Spouse Program’s virtual tools – like [Career Spark](#) and [Facebook groups](#).

“These connections helped me find the opportunity to begin working as a program manager for the Military Spouse of the Year Program,” she said. And while she was concerned about how she would translate her previous experience into running an award program, she knew she would be able to overcome the odds.

“Using the professional networks, I was able to take a higher look at my career history and realize I was in fact a program manager in all of my roles, it

was only the topic that was changing.”

And then her story came full circle. She had been keeping an eye on openings with Hiring Our Heroes when an opportunity presented itself. During a networking event she was connected with Elizabeth O’Brien, senior director of military spouse programs for Hiring Our Heroes, who mentored and guided Bradford to secure her current position.

In reflecting back on her experiences, Bradford says she learned to view her career from the 1,000-foot lens.

“Your career doesn’t have to stay in the same topic or field, but you can continue to progress as a professional based on your skills and utilizing your network to do so,” she said.

Hiring Our Heroes has grown its network to include locations within the U.S. and overseas: <https://www.hiringourheroes.org/military-spouse-professional-network/military-spouse-professional-network-locations>. The organization also offers AMPLIFY, an exclusive two-day event that leads spouses through intensive career preparation, professional development and networking, according to its [website](#). Attendees will leave with an improved resume, professional photos, a polished LinkedIn profile and a professional network of fellow military spouses and employers. ●





# Boldly taps military spouses for leadership roles

By Sandra Lewis

**Five years ago, Audrey Fairbrother was a newly-married Army spouse. Like so many others, she had just left behind everything she knew, including a great career, to move halfway across the country and live close to Fort Carson, Colorado, with her husband.**

New home, new job; everything unfamiliar. To complicate matters, shortly after settling into their new lifestyle, her husband Jon was deployed. Just like that, Audrey was alone.

For military spouses, this is the norm: constant deployments, relocations, and unfamiliar faces. Thankfully, Audrey's situation was different. Just before landing in Colorado, she joined the team at Boldly as a marketing specialist.

And because the company is fully remote, she had the flexibility to stay with her family during Jon's combat deployments without missing a beat — something that became increasingly important to her when her daughter, Addie, was born.

Audrey's story opened my eyes to a reality I didn't know existed, and deeply moved me.

You see, seven years ago, I started Boldly with a simple, yet slightly selfish, goal: I wanted to live and work in the middle of nowhere with my husband, our dogs and our sheep! Boldly was born as a remote-only company as the perfect solution to the 9-to-5, chained-to-an-office problem, that so many other professionals — myself included — faced.

Finally, we could work from anywhere, at any time. It was a dream come true.

## A BIGGER VISION

Working closely with Audrey and learning her story, though, made our vision a whole lot bigger than freedom and flexibility. It became about real life and real people for whom remote work isn't just a 'nice to have,' it's a necessity.

Audrey's experience and skill allowed her to quickly advance to become our marketing manager, and with our wholehearted support, she became the cheerleader and advocate for military spouse employment.

Today, half of our company's leadership and 30% of our entire

team is comprised of military spouses. Why? Because after hiring dozens and dozens in the last five years, we're spellbound by their talent, grit, and wide-ranging experience.

### HIGH PERFORMERS

The truth is, if you didn't have a behind-the-scenes view, you'd never know the challenges military spouses face. All you would see are great-performing employees who don't bring what they're going through to work.

Take Stephanie Johnson, an Air Force spouse and one of our team leaders, as an example. In a recent PCS, she was without furniture for almost a month, basically camping in their new house! Yet, she carried on and was a complete professional.

### MEANINGFUL WORK, MEANINGFUL LIFE

As a mom and Marine spouse, Devin Drake, a multi-talented executive assistant and project manager, felt like work was taking over. In her old job, she was constantly working and had no control over her time.

"I would get up early, drop my 7-year-old son off at school, then get him at 5 p.m. for a few hours of chaos before bedtime. Everyone was tired and no one wanted to talk to anybody," Devin said. "When we relocated, I felt like I didn't even know him because he spent most of his time away from me."

After transitioning into a fully-remote, part-time position, though, things changed.

"Now, I'm totally available for him. I volunteer at his school and have four different roles. This is something I never could do before," she explained.

### FLEXIBILITY TO CARE

Stacy Baker is a business support specialist with the most charming Virginia drawl you'll ever hear. Recently, she had to make a move away from her successful corporate career, something that leaves many with anxiety.

Her husband, a disabled Marine veteran, was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in the early 2000s. Since then, his health has declined, and Stacy knew it was time to be home with him. Isolation was difficult, and quality of life is tied so closely with personal connectedness — especially to our families.

"At my previous job I worked through lunch, for more than eight hours, every day. And I constantly had email notifications ... and was expected to respond to emails at 8 o'clock at night," Stacy explained.

With the change, though, she's now able to have lunch with her husband every day and has the flexibility with her schedule to take him to every doctor's appointment. However, there has been one change at Boldly she says has been difficult to get used to.

"From day one, my team leader has always asked, 'How can I support you?'" Part of this means she had to gently set some boundaries with her, reminding Stacy, "You don't have to have your notifications on all the time! You're an adult, live your life and enjoy it. Support your clients but also take care of you."

**Honestly, that's one of the traits we see in military spouses: they're always taking care of everyone else first.** In their homes, they're the source of consistency, the glue that keeps



everyone together through all the ups-and-downs of military life. This creates a special character and resilience you don't often find.

### A PROUD PARTNER OF MILITARY SPOUSE INITIATIVES

This is why one of my proudest moments was joining the Military Spouse Employment Partnership. At the end of a very-involved process, we became official partners.

Today, we seek out military spouses who are qualified because they always stand out as incredible candidates. I believe businesses who don't are missing out on some of the most capable talent.

When you weave it all together, military spouses are just wonderful people who make lovely team members. We cannot wait to welcome more rockstars, like Audrey, Stephanie, Devin, and Stacy, to our team. ●

*Sandra Lewis is the founder of Boldly, a premium subscription staffing company connecting demanding founders and executives with ridiculously talented remote staff.*

# COWORKING SPACE offers structure to remote WORKERS

By Andrea Downing Peck

If you build it, they will come. For three military couples from Fort Bragg, their “Field of Dreams” wasn’t a baseball diamond in Iowa but a six-story coworking space in downtown Fayetteville where veterans, military spouses, active duty soldiers and others in the North Carolina community could nurture their entrepreneurial dreams.

In an era when many people can work from anywhere and everywhere, coworking office spaces are multiplying in cities across the country. Targeting the military community presents a new spin.

[Revolutionary Coworking](#) President and Army spouse Hanah Ehrenreich did not have to live in Fayetteville long to realize a coworking space for “broke nonprofits,” work-from-home military spouses, vetpreneurs and milpreneurs was the answer to a quietly simmering problem.

Ehrenreich was serving as executive director of Sustainable Sandhills, a small environmental nonprofit in Fayetteville, so she knew firsthand the challenges paying rent and

utilities put on a nonprofit’s budget. She was propelled into action after noticing friends working remotely felt trapped in their homes when active duty spouses were deployed or working 12-hour days.

Three years ago, Ehrenreich and her husband, Adam Van Treuren, then an active duty soldier, formed Revolutionary Coworking with two other couples: Army veteran Michael Barbera, now Revolutionary Coworking vice-president, and his spouse, Crystal Wambeke-Barbera, and Army veterans Dalton and Patrice Carter.

Their plan to build a coworking space on the doorsteps of the nation’s largest military installation came together when the Self-Help Ventures Fund, part of North Carolina-based Self-Help Credit Union, offered the fledgling group leased space in Fayetteville’s historic First Citizens Bank building. Self-Help Ventures Fund’s Malcom

White said he was impressed by the group’s “compelling narrative” about the need for a coworking space in Fayetteville and their plan to cater to military market segments.

As a nonprofit, Revolutionary Coworking was offered below-market rates for prime real estate, but the capital to get the doors open required a healthy dose of DIY and penny-pinching, with each board member pitching in \$300.

“That was enough to get us going,” Ehrenreich recalls. “We had people donate things and we drove to Ikea and loaded Michael’s trailer with desks and four chairs. We just figured we would figure it out.”

They did. Revolutionary Coworking hit its three-year revenue projection in nine months.

Revolutionary Coworking’s cofounders



Photo: GTC Photography



Photo: GTC Photography

are first to point out their combined talents are greater than the sum of their parts. Together, they bring not only a wealth of entrepreneurial experience but also unique skills: accounting (Wambeke-Barbera), information technology (Van Treuren), economic development (Ehrenreich), cinematography/multimedia consulting (Barbera) and life coaching/public speaking/negotiating (Patrice Carter).

“Our military community always seeks to connect with the local businesses and resources,” Dalton Carter explained. “We wanted RevCo to be a hub where we could bridge the gap between the military and local community while serving the needs of both.”

Because their military target audience mirrored the Revolutionary Coworking board, board members had no doubts about Coworking’s appeal within the Fort Bragg community.

“When people think coworking spaces, they are not necessarily thinking military,” Barbera pointed out. “But there are a significant number of military spouses [and service members] who need a place to work and don’t want to necessarily work in their homes and don’t want to commit to a long-term real estate lease because of the transient lifestyle.”

Revolutionary Coworking members

get more than a place to work, a dedicated desk or an office space. In addition to providing regular networking events and educational programs, Revolutionary Coworking also includes a member-owned, drop-in childcare center onsite.

Army veteran Tiffany Martinez, owner of [Cool Spring Clubhouse](#) learning center, praises her partner-member relationship with Revolutionary Coworking.

“When you are working with a group of people who have so much passion, so much love, there’s never a bad day. I don’t know how else to explain it,” Martinez said. “It’s been a blessing.”

Van Treuren, who as a child grew up in Fayetteville, began dedicating his free time to designing the coworking space’s high-tech features after returning from a deployment to Afghanistan in 2016. He said joining the Revolutionary Coworking team taught him a valuable lesson about military life.

“Having an outlet outside of the military meant so much to me,” he said. “I wanted other soldiers to see that. Don’t make military life harder on yourself. Go and find friends outside of it. Find something else to do and give back.”

Military moves and separations have spread Revolutionary Coworking’s cofounders across the country, but



Photo: GTC Photography

Hiring managers may not yet have fully caught on, but military spouses are an elite remote workforce.

Army spouse Erica McMannes, co-founder and COO of [Instant Teams](#), a remote-talent teambuilding company,

“By nature, military spouses are self-starters and very autonomous,” McMannes pointed out. “We’re very multitasking and purpose driven. Those are skills and assets that make remote workers great because naturally we know how to keep ourselves on track.”

When working from home, McMannes recommends finding a designating spot to work, even if it’s a kitchen table. Use virtual calendars, direct messaging apps and project management tools to stay on task. Block scheduling can allow remote workers to plan around school activities or household obligations, she adds.

McMannes said joining a coworking space if – one is available in your community – also can pay dividends.

“We encourage people to go to a coworking space,” she said. “You are going to have the energy of the people working around you and coworking spaces have a really cool vibe.”

Meanwhile, all signs indicate the number of companies offering flexible working policies and work-from-home opportunities will continue to accelerate.

“Awareness of family-needs dynamics and gender equality are driving the concept that people can do their best work from wherever they are,” McMannes said. “Companies understanding that are ahead of the curve.”

their member-owned-and-operated business continues to flourish, with most board members working remotely on its behalf.

“The time commitment from day one to now has significantly decreased,” Wambeke-Barbera noted. “We’re not perfect, but we’re a well-oiled machine.” ●

# DIRECTORY

## OF EMPLOYMENT RESOURCES



By Bianca M. Strzalkowski

**There are an estimated 40,000-plus organizations in the U.S. including military or veteran in a mission statement, according to Charity Watch. And the list is growing as individuals and companies look for a way to step up and lend support to military families, like tech companies who see military spouses as the solution to current staffing shortages across the IT industry.**

Resources are only useful if they are utilized, though, so Military Families Magazine compiled a list of credible organizations offering some form of employment support to military spouses.

### JOB SEARCH



[Instant Teams](#), formerly MadSkills, is the go-to website for remote work options. Founded by two military spouses, the organization vets telecommute opportunities across many different fields and industries.

[Military Spouse Corporate Career Network](#) connects military spouses and caregivers with an employment specialist for job placement services. Since the start of this year, MSCCN has assisted more than 3,000 military-connected applicants get hired.

[Hire Heroes USA](#) pairs spouses with a transition specialist who assists with job search needs.

[Indeed](#) is a job search site with

new postings added every 9.8 seconds, according to its website. The platform also offers tools to view company reviews and research salaries.

[LinkedIn](#) is a leading professional platform that connects employers with job seekers and allows users to grow their network. In 2018, the site's premium membership was extended beyond veterans to eligible military spouses for free, and earlier this year they expanded eligibility to include Coast Guard spouses.

### ENTREPRENEUR SUPPORT



[National Military Spouse Network](#) is the pre-eminent networking, mentoring and professional development organization committed to the education, empowerment and advancement of military spouses.

[The Rosie Network](#) is a network of military family-owned businesses around the U.S. and offers programs for every stage of the business development process. The organization recently added a chapter model which connects veterans and spouses at select locations.

[MilSpo Project](#) is a community of military spouse entrepreneurs meeting in-person, online and in between to level up in business

and life. The organization offers the option of membership, which includes a downloadable business development workbook focused on 12 themes.

[Patriot Boot Camp](#) provides active duty service members, veterans, and their spouses with access to mentors, educational programming, and a robust community of experts and peers to help them innovate and build impactful businesses.

[Institute of Veteran and Military Foundation](#) designs and delivers world class educational and vocational training programs designed to provide service members, veterans and their families with the skills they need to be successful in business ownership, career and life.

[American Dream U](#) is a program that connects current-serving military, veterans and military spouses with coaches and transition support services.

[StreetShares](#) offers zero fee business financing to military-connected entrepreneurs.



### HIRING EVENTS

[Hiring Our Heroes](#) hosts hiring events near installations around the globe, which often include expert panels, free professional headshots and networking receptions.

[NC4ME](#) organizes hiring events in North Carolina, with employers conducting on-site interviews.

## RESUME PREPARATION



[Military Spouse Corporate Career](#)

[Network](#): In addition to the above description of job search services, MSCCN conducts no-cost resume reviews and interview preparation.

Family Member Employment Office: each branch of the military has a version of this office, but what it is called may vary.

Air Force: Installation Airman & Family Readiness Centers

Army: Employment Readiness Program

Coast Guard: Spouse Employment Assistance Program

Marine Corps: Family Member Assistance Program

Navy: Fleet and Family Support Center

[Career Spark](#) allows users to build a resume online and publish it in a database with military friendly employers.

## MENTORSHIP



Military Spouse Advocacy Network's [New Military Spouse Support Program](#) provides spouses, fiancés and significant others with

mentorship. Volunteers strive to educate, empower, and support new military spouses from day one until the time they PCS to their new installation.

[American Corporate Partners](#) connects active duty spouses with one-on-one mentors.

## LICENSING SUPPORT



[MSJDN](#) supports military spouse attorneys by advocating for licensing accommodations, including bar membership without additional examination. The organization, which was founded in 2011, also connects spouses with JDs through a network.

[Mission License](#) was created by two military spouses focused on reducing occupational licensing burdens and support a mobile workforce.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



[Grow with Google](#) includes a host of resources and programs for military spouses interested in remote work opportunities or the information technology sector. The program has partnered with IVMF to train spouses for the [Google IT Support Professional Certificate](#).

Microsoft created the [Military Spouse Technology Academy](#) — a 22-week onsite training program designed to empower military

spouses with in-demand digital skills leading to well-paying and meaningful careers.

[Coursera](#) offers free online courses from colleges and universities across dozens of specializations and disciplines.

## CAREER COACHING



[Military OneSource](#) offers three options for career coaching: Spouse Education and Career Opportunities, Military Spouse Employment Partnership, Installation employment readiness specialists.

USO Pathfinder offers transition support services for service members and military spouses. A list of site locations can be found [here](#).

## NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES



[Milspouse Coders](#) assist military spouses with growing careers in tech through scholarships, chapter support and events.

[Milspousefest](#) brings military spouses together for an in-person event at select locations. The agenda includes networking, education, games and prizes.

[Military Spouse Professional Network](#) provides military spouses with career development and networking opportunities in military communities at more than 40 locations. It is a program of US Chamber of Commerce Foundation.

[RallyPoint](#) is a network of over one million members from the community sharing information, resources and discussions relevant to the military lifestyle. ●



Did we miss something? Contact us now to add your organization or program to the list:

[managing.editor@ameriforcemedia.com](mailto:managing.editor@ameriforcemedia.com)

Amely Castillo and her infantryman husband, Carlos, have been stationed in Germany for over a year. In that time, Amely hasn't been able to find work, so she's returned to school.

## THE BIG REVEAL

# Should you identify yourself as a military spouse?

By Jessica Evans

**Military spouses face a litany of challenges that come with being part of one of the most transient population groups in the United States.**

One of the tests is whether or not to tell a potential employer about the eventual move to another installation. Because of this, military spouses routinely face employment discrimination that often goes unreported and unchallenged.

The soft skills spouses possess — being able to deal with on-the-fly schedule changes, having a keen attention to detail and maintaining clear visions of the future — coupled with their own employment histories and professional experiences, should make military spouses ideal job applicants in any industry.

In fact, a recent Hiring Our Heroes

survey reports that on average, [50%](#) of all military spouses have some college education, many of whom have post-graduate degrees.

Yet sharing the active duty status of a spouse with a potential employer often has negative ramifications. When employers use this potential move as a reason not to hire a military spouse, they exhibit a pattern of routine discrimination.

Tori Tweed has been with her Navy petty officer first class husband for 10 years. During that time, Tweed has sought employment on base at two different installations but has had difficulty getting an interview.

For Tweed, the stigma feels very real. She's learned to refrain from mentioning that her husband is military, especially when she's interviewing with a civilian company.

"I have been passed over for a handful of serious jobs in upper management at large companies because I will eventually be moving and they are looking for someone for the long term," she said. "It has come to a point where I try to not mention my husband is military and that is why I am here until I can get a read or feeling for the company as to what their thoughts on military spouses are."

Most recently, Tweed interviewed for a position at a local casino near the naval base where she lives. The interview went well but she wasn't offered the position.

"They said it came down to the fact that I could not say how long we would be at this port and they did not want to waste their time training someone who was going to leave," she said.

Training someone who might leave is the nature of business. In fact, it's common for a person to job-hop every two or three years in the name of career advancement. If it's permissible for civilian workers to spend five years or less in any given position, as reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics in January 2018, military spouses shouldn't be passed over under the guise of their eventual move.

Yet, the 2017 Blue Star Families "Military Families Lifestyle Survey" reports that military spouse unemployment is four times higher than the rest of the [civilian workforce](#). Many spouses feel that the most demoralizing idea is that a service member's career is somehow tied to the spouse who is seeking work.

As the daughter of a retired military policeman and now wife to an active duty soldier, Amely Castillo is no stranger to the military. After settling with her family in Fort Sill, Okla., Castillo earned an undergraduate degree and began pursuing a career in the education sector. Then she met her to-be husband and became married, all the while applying to positions which were relevant to her experience and education.

However, in an area flush with plenty of potential workers, Castillo never got a call back for an interview.

She's certain that this is because she's an Army wife, and thinks that the civilians who applied for the teaching positions were given preference because they were



Tori Tweed and her active duty Navy husband, Benjamin, have been together for 10 years. Tori has experienced many challenges trying to find work as a military spouse.

"permanent" residents of Fort Sill.

She thinks the employment sector needs to view military spouses as independent workers who shouldn't be discriminated against because of their spouse's career.

"Give us work, and give it to us without so many limitations," Castillo said. "I want an employer to look at me as a human, not just the spouse of an active duty soldier. The discrimination we experience is so real, and it's unfortunate because all we want is to find a job."

While there are companies which laud themselves as being "military-friendly," this effort is less than a fraction of what's needed to eradicate the stigma associated with being a military spouse seeking employment. Some large name businesses do recruit military spouses, but because the number of companies seeking employees versus the number of people seeking jobs is so different, the competition to obtain employment is steep.

**"Give us work,  
and give it to us  
without so many  
limitations."**

This means that even a basic secretarial or data entry job, for which many military spouses are overqualified, is going to be more difficult to get and will require multiple interviews. Just getting a callback for a job can be a huge boon, but then comes the inevitable drop.

This seems at odds with all civilian employment trends which indicate that most don't stick around for the "long term." In the ever changing face of business, and in one that is more mobile and more fluid, it seems remiss that so many civilian employers are missing out on the dynamic and versatile force that are military spouses. ●



# MYTH

VS

# FACT

## Current Resume Trends

By Rebecca Alwine

**Recent findings show hiring managers are finding little to be impressed by in the short window of time they spend reviewing resumes.**

More than half of respondents admit to spending less than a minute looking at a resume, according to a 2018 CareerBuilder survey, adding the documents are often littered with lies, grammar errors and unprofessional email addresses. The [press release](#) states 1100 hiring managers and human resource professionals weighed in

on the topic from across industries and company sizes. Other mistakes include an uncustomized resume, lengthy text, and no cover letter. For those job applicants serious about landing a career, it is a good time to refresh that piece of paper, which 17% of survey takers urge stays to two pages or less.

Resume expert Amy Schofield, an Academy Certified Resume Writer, busted six common myths surrounding what to do when crafting a resume.

### **Myth: You should use a skills-based resume.**

Busted: For years military spouses have been advised to use a skills-based, or functional, resume to skillfully hide gaps in employment and to gloss over all those moves. But Schofield says no.

“Applicant tracking systems are scanning resumes for specific parameters and skills-based resumes aren’t going to pass the cut.”

Yes, the scanning software is looking for keywords, which can be found in any resume format, but it’s also looking for years of experience, which it can easily see on a reverse chronological resume or even a combination resume.

### **Myth: Don’t personalize your resume.**

Busted: Personal branding is a great way to stand out on a resume, according to Schofield.

“If you had an objective statement on your resume years ago, a personal branding statement would fit in that place.” Make sure your statement talks about what you can do for the company, not what you’re looking for.

“Make them want to hire you from the first sentence,” Schofield said.

### **Myth: Colors make you look like Elle Woods.**

Busted: While resumes on printed, pink paper with a spritz of perfume is still too radical for the business world, colors can be used on a resume. Schofield advises that standing out is good, but not too much.

“Adding color on your resume is a ‘yes’

as long as it’s a professional color.”

She recommends different shades of blue or deep reds, while avoiding pink, purple and orange that are hard to read. Use colors in a few different ways: as a section divider or perhaps put section headers like “professional experience” in blue to make it stand out. Creativity is good, but not too much of it on a standard resume.

### **Myth: One page is all you get.**

Busted: Resumes need to be complete, and for some people that is one page and for others that is two. (Note: federal resumes are a whole other ball game and can be upwards of five pages.)

“For entry-level positions, stick to one page,” Schofield suggested, “For mid-level professional through director level, two pages are good.” An executive position could stretch to three pages but doesn’t have to.

Another thing to think about when writing your resume is formatting. If you stretch into the second page by just a few lines, reformat it to fit it all on one.

“Keep it visually appealing by playing with the spacing to fill at least one-half of the second page,” Schofield said.

### **Myth: Volunteer work doesn’t count.**

Busted: Relevant volunteer experiences can accent a resume and help you fill in any gaps. And, so could education.

“There are several ways to minimize a gap on your resume,” she said, such as using years instead of months. For example, instead of leaving a job in June of 2018 and starting the next

one in January of 2019, you simply put 2018 and 2019.

“For a gap of more than three years, strategically using volunteer positions and education is helpful,” she said.

### **Myth: A resume is just a list of jobs.**

Busted: “A resume is not a list, it’s a strategic document,” Schofield said.

Don’t treat it like a list of jobs and job descriptions. Use it to tell the story of your career. Showcase the increase in responsibility as you moved from one position to another. Share the results from projects you worked on.

“And, if using volunteer experiences, make sure they are relevant to the position you are seeking,” Schofield said.

### **A few other things to keep in mind when finalizing your resume:**

1. There’s no reason to include references on your resume. Not even the phrase, “References available upon request.”
2. Another thing that has become more popular is to not include street addresses in the contact information at the top. Instead, add your LinkedIn profile – with a customized URL – so employers can see more about you online.

Resume trends come and go, but these myths can all go. Even for those military spouses not on the job hunt, it is always helpful to revisit a resume every few years to ensure it keeps up with current trends. ●

**Visit Schofield Strategies for more tips on resume building.**



# Tricks for negotiating your salary

By T.T. Robinson

**Congratulations! You landed the job and now comes the fun part: salary negotiation.** For most people, talking about money, and specifically, asking for more, can feel intimidating, ugly and even forbidden. Check out these four tips that will help you view this financial conversation as more of a dance and less of a disaster.

## 1 Know the numbers.

Whenever an applicant heads into a salary negotiation, there are three numbers to focus on: the industry average, the value you bring and your bottom line.

**Industry average:** It's important to have an understanding of what professionals in your field are being paid so that you can form a fact-based argument of what you deserve. Do your homework with resources, like [Glassdoor](#), that factor in job title, location, years of experience and additional skillsets. Source others in your professional network, such as LinkedIn, to find out what you can expect or browse different job postings to see salary ranges.

**Your worth:** Are you just starting out or have you been in your field for a significant amount of time? Your "magic number" should accurately reflect your demonstrated abilities as well as the nature of the job.

**Your threshold:** Of equal importance is knowing what you want, while determining what number you can't or aren't willing to dip below. For example, if you have to make \$30/hour to pay for childcare and still make a profit, then don't accept less than that; you'll resent the employer before you even complete new employee orientation.



## 2 Let them start.

Whether we like it or not, the party that discloses a number first is the one setting the starting point. Ideally, you don't want this to be you. While it seems counterintuitive – you want the ball in your court – by telling them what you're currently making or what you want to make, you might actually be lowballing yourself.

Think about it.

If a company is prepared to pay a candidate up to \$75,000/year and they're going to offer you \$60,000/year, but you say you have to make \$50,000, you might even walk away with an offer for less than what they were prepared to pay you. When asked what you're currently making or desired salary, flip the script and ask what someone of your value and experience would be worth to the company. The sooner you get a starting point from them, the sooner you can start negotiations.

## 3 Leverage your experience.

A great technique for salary negotiation is the term "I get." Any time you can leverage work you've done and what you've been paid to



get a higher rate is a good thing (so long as you're not starting with the number). This is particularly helpful when the company has offered you less than what you can take.

For example, if a company offers you \$50/hour to manage a project, try countering with, "I typically get \$100/hour for a project of that scope. Do you have room in your budget to meet that number?" All it takes is one project at that rate for you to be able to say that's what you've been compensated. Highlighting that someone else has been willing to pay you that figure showcases both worth and experience.

## 4 Look for loopholes.

So you've said you need \$100/hour and they've come back with \$60/hour and "they absolutely can't do more."

This isn't the end quite yet.

This is where you look for perks, accommodations, incentives, bonus opportunities and benefits. Based on the nature of the work, there might be some hidden opportunities that could be priceless to you. A few extra paid days off each year? A work from home day each week? A flexible schedule? If you can make it work for \$60/hour, then you're sitting in the driver's seat now. Go for it.



**The art of salary negotiation doesn't need to be intimidating. Approach the conversation armed with your numbers and the knowledge that you have the skill to do this dance. We know you're worth it. Now it's time you know it, too. ●**

Some of the most important work Elizabeth Graham has ever done was unpaid. As an elementary teacher with volunteer stints in Haiti and Guatemala, the 29-year-old Texas educator knew she had plenty to offer employers: international teaching experience, cross-cultural leadership skills and a demonstrated drive to help children.

Just one small hiccup: how to get that across to a potential boss with just one short section of a resume.

“[My volunteer work] is job-related, so it only makes me a more well-rounded candidate,” Graham said. “Honestly, who cares if you get paid for the work? You just need to show you can do it well.”

But how? Undoubtedly, volunteer work is something at which many military spouses excel. But some might struggle with how to get that volunteer work from the real world to the printed resume.

# From helping to hired

**Translating volunteer work to a resume**

*By Crystal Kupper*

# What kind of volunteering are we talking about? How much might a boss want to know? Is it even helpful to include?

As the careers manager for Blue Star Families based in San Diego, Laura Torres hears these questions frequently. The good news: including volunteer experience on one's resume is not only doable and helpful, but might actually boost one's hiring chances.

"An employer wants to see the skills they're looking for [on a resume], and including volunteer experience is a great way to highlight your specific areas of expertise," Torres said.

"Plus, it's helpful in hiding the gaps" in employment that transient military spouses often accumulate, she added.

But, Torres cautions that there are ways to get it wrong. The number one error to avoid: highlighting volunteer work that has nothing to do with the job you're aiming for.

"So, if I'm applying for an Information Technology [IT] desk support position, sorting clothes for a shelter doesn't apply to IT," she explained. "My employer doesn't want to see that stuff — unless I sorted the clothes through a computer system and applied techniques within the field of IT."

In other words, people need to focus on skills that cater to both their volunteer position and the potential job. In Graham's case,

that meant showcasing all the flexibility and innovation — two attributes any school principal looks for — required while volunteering overseas.

"I think employers are interested in seeing that you have well-rounded skills and are involved with organizations beyond your nine to five," Graham said.

To that end, employers may not want to know about every aspect of your volunteer activities. If you helped with a politician's election campaign, for example, wonderful! But Torres points out that your future boss may be of the opposite political party and therefore develop a hidden bias against you. It's far better, she advises, to feature the skills you demonstrated during the campaign than whether your candidate won.

"You want to highlight your outreach: how many members you could grow or reach, how successful you were in fundraising," she said. "So use terms that are nonpolitical, nonbiased and that focus on the achievements. Highlight the growth and success as a result of your volunteerism," remembering to concentrate on skills that are applicable to the job you're applying for.

There are multiple ways to do

so. A traditional resume includes volunteer work after paid positions in chronological order. But more modern resumes emphasize skills first, then both volunteer experiences and paid positions to "prove" those skills.

In Graham's resume, for instance, she lists skills and leadership attributes like "Dedication" and "Team Player" in the left column, then multiple positions, both paid and not, where she demonstrated those qualities in the right column.

A few hard-and-fast rules, according to Torres: don't use military acronyms unless shooting for an on-base position. Don't spell out every single duty of a volunteer experience — just the parts that intersect with the hoped-for role. And research the company beforehand, zeroing in on the area of social justice they're interested in — the environment, literacy, military support, etc. — so the candidate's experience in that field is shown.

Most importantly, as a military spouse used to playing "second fiddle," Torres advised to not sell oneself short.

"When you don't give yourself enough credit [on a resume], you're cheating yourself out of a great opportunity for your career," she said. ●

A new growth opportunity for career-minded military spouses is now available through **American Corporate Partners**.

# Organization extends mentorship opportunities to *military spouses*

By Maddie Dolan

The nonprofit organization's long-standing, free, veteran mentoring program focuses on pairing established corporate professionals with protégés looking for assistance with finding or growing within their careers. In November 2018, ACP expanded its mentoring program to active duty military spouses.

According to Executive Director Colleen Deere who helped spearhead the program and is also a former military spouse, ACP aims to mentor close to 2,000 active duty spouses within the next two years.

"Mentors can really help with anyone whether they are just starting out in their career, they don't have a career yet, they don't know what they want to do, or they have a good job but want a mentor's help to make sure they continue on a path of upward mobility, and get promoted and pay increases," Deere said.



The program is much needed in the military community, proven by the 2018 Blue Star Families Military Families Lifestyle Survey that states 30% of military spouses are unemployed, in defiance of the 3.8% national average released in February 2019 by Bureau of Labor Statistics. The underemployment statistics are not better.

Leslie Coffey is one woman who understands the struggles of being a professional in a turbulent military setting. It took seven universities to complete her undergraduate, she has eight duty stations under her belt, and her husband's looming retirement is adding urgency to their need of her achieving career stability.

"I think our biggest challenge is that I've never voluntarily resigned from a position," Coffey said. "The Army has always made that choice for me. ... Always having to look for new employment, loss of wages in between while your searching: those are the biggest obstacles. And then starting off at the bottom and working your way up, and then once you gain a certain seniority, it's time to leave again."

When ACP made the mentoring program available to spouses, Coffey was one of the first to jump on the opportunity. As someone who also works in the transitioning veterans' field, she was already aware of the program and how it has helped close to 14,000 veterans.

"Someone with industry insides, someone that can be very honest with you on what you need to work on, can push you, someone to keep you accountable; that's something that we may not get spouse-to-spouse," she said.

Katie Wolf, executive director of Business Operations Partners Digital

Health, is one of those people on the outside who is an ACP mentor. She has worked with three different mentees after finding out about the opportunity through her corporate partners. Despite her only military affiliation being the service of both her grandfathers, she understands the importance of supporting today's military.

"I think spouses all the time get the short shift," Wolf said. "I think that service is really hard but spouses serve, too, and their families serve with them. And anything we can do to support the entire package is important."

Wolf's current mentorship with a spouse trying to enter a niche medical field is gratifying to her because of her mentee's enthusiasm and progress made throughout the relationship. The two have also been able to bond over both being professionals and mothers.

"I think mentoring is just so important," she said. "It's also a really easy thing to do. I've had so many people over the course of my career who have been willing to sit down with me and give me guidance, but it seems like a no brainer for me to provide that for other people."

The range of mentors available are wide, too. Deere claims to have senior executives and alumni from Goldman Sachs, Johnson & Johnson, Pepsi, USAA, the National Association of Women Business Owners, Ellevest Network and LeanIn.Org. ACP is hands-on throughout the entire process,

including carefully handpicking each relationship to make sure it's a perfect match.

"Our mentorships are really high touch, personalized and customized so that we're ideally making a pairing between the mentor and spouse to be really mutually beneficial," Deere said. "It's a pretty labor intensive process for ACP."

The other added benefit of ACP having such a high profile network, Deere says, is that spouses can finish the program feeling like people actually listened, "and that their careers are just as important as their service member's."

Deere continued, "Sometimes it's easy for spouses to get lost in the shuffle or people are not always thinking about the challenges of what these folks are facing. Part of our goal, too, is just to educate the broader population of the American people about the challenges that this group is facing because it is something that we should all care about and try to help with, if we can."

Deere is excited with the success of the program so far, and is optimistic this opportunity will be a lasting one.

Coffey added, "I recommend it to any military spouse, especially those professionally-minded and need just some advice, need some guidance to find a career where they can have progression. I think a professional coach could be thousands of dollars, and this, right here, is an opportunity that we get just for being military spouses. It's a benefit that we definitely need to take advantage of." ●

VISIT

### [American Corporate Partners](#)

to learn about becoming a mentor or connecting with a career coach.



# Understanding recent changes to these military spouse laws

By Lizann Lightfoot

In the past year, legislation has changed two major laws concerning military spouses. Here's what you need to know about the updates to the military spouse hiring preference and the Military Spouse Residency Relief Act.

## **Military spouse hiring preference: What has changed?**

In 1989, President George H.W. Bush signed an executive order authorizing the Department of Defense to designate federal jobs that were eligible first to qualified military spouses. This didn't guarantee jobs for spouses, but it could help them find jobs in the federal government.

Libby Jamison, a military spouse and co-founder of [Mission License](#), explains how this law was updated this year:

"Under the old Preferred Placement Program you had to go on base and contact the local office to learn which jobs you qualified for, which was often frustrating and limiting. In May 2018, President Trump signed Executive Order 13832: Enhancing Non-Competitive Civil

Service Appointment of Military Spouses.

"Applying is now all done online through USAJobs. They have merged the noncompetitive DoD hiring process with the PPP to open it to additional federal jobs and agencies besides the DoD. You can filter and select jobs by those that are hiring military spouses. This gives spouses more control over the process, because now you can decide what you are qualified for and how to best match your qualifications."

The new law removes the former time limits. Spouses used to have only two years after a Permanent Change of Station move to benefit. This often was not enough time, especially for families who joined the service member months after the PCS date.

The only limitation now is that



LIBBY JAMISON

spouses can accept only one offer of permanent federal appointment per duty station.

This means new spouses can use the benefit without PCS orders. To qualify, military spouses in the commuting area of their service member's duty station need proof of marriage, proof of active duty status and proof of residency with the service member.

Jamison reminded spouses, "it may not be enough to just apply through USAJobs. You still need to network. There is still a benefit to going into the local base Family Center and finding those local connections. I think it's great you can do it online, but don't rely on that."

OneSource should be one word: To learn more about the spouse hiring preference program, people should visit [Military OneSource](#) or their base employment office. Hiring Our Heroes also has military spouse professional networks that can be helpful, especially if people talk to someone who went through the process in a specific location.

## **Military spouse tax laws: What do we need to know?**

The Military Spouse Residency Relief Act essentially gives military spouses

the opportunity to choose which state they file taxes in — the state in which they reside with their service member, or the one in which they are legally domiciled.

In December 2018, Section 302 of the Veterans Benefits and Transition Act of 2018 was modified. Candice McPhillips, a military spouse, and founder and attorney of McPhillips Law LLC explained:

“The VBTA eliminates the prior MSRRA requirement that both the military servicemember and the milspouse share the same legal domicile in order to take advantage of the milspouse tax exemption. A military spouse can use the MSRRA every time he/she changes states on PCS orders provided the couple moves to a state that is not already the legal domicile of the military spouse.”

There are restrictions on which types of taxable income are exempt. Rental income from property is generally taxable in the state where it is located. A spouse’s income from self-employment may not qualify for the exemption, depending on the business’s number of employees and partners.

Military spouses will still retain their one state of legal domicile for all purposes other than taxes and voting even if they choose to take advantage of the MSRRA.

Unfortunately, the updates caused confusion this tax season. Each state has different regulations, and the states don’t coordinate with each other. Every state wants to tax their eligible income, based on a family’s federal tax returns. This means it is up to military families to inform all their resident and domicile states where they filed.

One complicating factor is that

states differ on whether you must file as “resident” or “nonresident” status if you are living outside your state of domicile. Some states treat a person as a nonresident if they are living outside the state for a certain number of days — commonly 183 — during the tax year. This affects what income each state considers taxable.

McPhillips explains why this is causing problems.

“The new law has resulted in a lot of confusion even for CPAs, tax preparers and attorneys. States differ in the paperwork they require for an exemption under the new MSRRA. Some require a complete copy of the taxes filed with the other state, along with supporting legal documents. Most states have not updated their websites or information booklets for military personnel at all. Various exemption codes may need to be entered on the state return. These codes are usually not obvious in most tax preparation software, particularly the free software available to taxpayers.”

Military spouses must research their options under the MSRRA. First, military spouses wishing to use the exemption should contact their employer and ensure their withholding certificates show the correct state. The military spouse may also need to submit a new withholding exemption certificate — a form provided by the state — to their employer.

For guidance, begin with the domicile state website. Look at the military personnel page on the site. Read the state instruction booklet for residents and nonresidents. Find a free source online for the state tax statutes, which may be in an administrative article, and look for a military provision.

If anyone is uncertain which state(s)



**CANDICE MCPHILLIPS**

they need to file taxes with, look for a tax preparer or CPA who is familiar with military law. Tax professionals may need to research the state tax statutes and other guidance to give accurate advice. These issues become even more complex when military spouses earn income overseas.

If someone has previously filed with one state, then switched to a new state, it is likely the original state will contact you about unpaid taxes. McPhillips expects that many states will send letters this summer to military families who qualified for the exemption but didn’t properly communicate with each state.

She said, “If you receive a notice, don’t expect it to go away on its own. It’s important to immediately act, contact the state and ask why it was sent. If you didn’t follow instructions correctly, take that problem to a professional to fix it. You probably need to mail documents showing spouse status and taxes from other states.”

The state tax exemption for military spouses may sound complicated, but remember that it is there to protect spouse income from being simultaneously taxed by multiple states. Research and professional advice may save many military families a lot of money. ●



## Is a master's degree worth it?

By Mandy Baker

**As a military spouse, it is easy to put career goals on the back burner to support the military lifestyle. Many forgo their own careers simply because it is too daunting to acquire a new position when another Permanent Change of Station is imminent. Plus, careers that require state licensing can be even more difficult to maintain.**

Therefore, many military spouses set their personal dreams and goals aside and, instead, focus on raising families and standing beside their loved ones as they work toward their own ambitions.

In the face of challenges a military lifestyle presents, that doesn't mean spouses shouldn't take steps to ensure they can achieve their goals. In fact, many of them do. The 2017 "Military Spouses in the Workplace" survey by Hiring Our Heroes shows that 88% of spouses have some post-high school education, 34% have a college degree and 15% have a postgraduate degree. This makes them more highly educated than most working Americans.

No matter the camp a spouse finds themselves presently in, though, questions can still remain. Should they pursue another degree despite the hurdles? And, why?

There are many excuses not to pursue higher education, but there are also many reasons why someone should. Here are a few reasons why a military spouse should chase their educational dreams:

- 1 It's a career requirement.** There are many career fields, especially health-related professions, that call for a graduate degree. Even many entry-level positions demand applicants to have higher education. This is not a requirement that looks to be changing any time soon, either. In fact, Georgetown University's "Recovery: Job Growth and Education Requirements Through 2020" confirms that it is becoming even more common. By 2020, 65% of job openings will require at least a bachelor's degree, some college or an associate degree.
- 2 A weightier paycheck is desired.** It is a demonstrated fact by the PEW Research Center that someone with a graduate degree or higher is associated with earning a larger salary than someone with a bachelor's degree. Graduate school can result in some pretty major gains. On the other hand, even if obtaining a master's degree is not a guarantee to a higher salary, the investment in one's personal development could be more attractive to high paying employers.
- 3 Everyone needs a backup plan.** Things happen. Life changes. The future remains unpredictable. However, even when life is going according to plan, statistics can be a reminder that no one truly knows what will happen tomorrow. Like how almost 4% of
- post-9/11 veterans, as stated by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, are unemployed. How the Department of Defense's 2017 report said 1.7-3.5% of service members are estimated to have divorced in fiscal year 2016. Or that soldiers are still dying while serving their country. If something were to happen, though, and a military spouse's life was so drastically changed that they could no longer rely on a military lifestyle, having a master's degree would only make someone better prepared to handle life's challenges.
- 4 It's time to fulfill a dream.** Maybe the biggest reason anyone should pursue a college degree is because they want it. Everyone sets goals for themselves, and some are based around education. If a military spouse pursuing their educational goals is something they've wanted to do, then they should do it. There are abundant sources of financial aid that specifically target military spouses, and there are many credible schools and programs that conform to a mobile lifestyle.
- 5 There are no excuses.** When something is scary, many people will make excuses as to why they shouldn't do it and why it isn't the right time. Maybe they've hit that point where they have used every excuse there is, and there are not any more to give. That means now is the time. A military spouse should jump in with both feet and just go for it.

Ultimately, military spouses should look ahead at what they want to do when either their service member transitions or an unusual opportunity to work presents itself. If a desired career field demands a master's degree or a higher wage is desired, it could be beneficial to fulfill that degree requirement in advance rather than rush to do it at a more critical time in their lives. ●

# Need help paying for higher education?



Typically, financial aid options for degrees higher than bachelor's are limited, but below are a list of organizations supporting any level of education for military spouses.

## [National Military Family Association](#)

**Application period:** Yearround

**Details:** Awards available for career funding, degrees, clinical supervision towards licensure in the mental health profession, and business expenses.

## [Pat Tillman Foundation](#)

**Application period:** Feb. 1-28, 2020

**Details:** Open to service members, veterans, and military spouses pursuing an undergraduate or graduate level degree.

## **Local spouse clubs**

**Application period:** Typically between Jan. through Apr. of each year.

**Details:** Some current duty locations have a corresponding spouse club for dependents local to the area. The organizations often include a number of volunteer and philanthropic activities, such as charitable giving and scholarships for spouses and military kids. Contact your base's family readiness support office for information

regarding the club nearest you.

## **Branch aid societies**

**Application period:** Typically between Jan. through May, but varies from organization to organization. Check websites for specific application period.

**Details:** Every military branch of service has a corresponding aid society offering a number of support services, including for education. Below are a list of current organizations offering some type of financial aid assistance for military spouses –

### [Air Force Aid Society](#)

### [Army Emergency Relief](#)

### [Coast Guard Mutual Assistance](#)

### [Navy Marine Corps Relief Society](#)

(next application period: Nov. 1, 2019)

### [ACMEs](#)

**Application period:** Varies by location.

**Details:** State Advisory Councils on Military Education (ACMEs) address education issues specific to the state in which they are located. There are currently 11 active organizations, according to the Council of College and Military Educators, and scholarship information can be found on individual websites at –

California: <https://www.caacme.org>

Colorado: <https://www.co-acme.org>

COMETS (Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas): <http://www.cometsmilitaryed.net>

Florida: <http://www.fla-acme.org>

Iowa: no website listed.

Midsouth (Kentucky, Tennessee): <http://www.midsouthacme.org>

New York:

<http://newyorkstateacme.weebly.com>

SECOME (Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina):

<http://www.secome.org>

Virginia: <http://www.vaacme.org>

Washington: <http://www.cmews.org>

# 5 ways to stand out when applying online

By T.T. Robinson

With thousands of fish swimming in the sea of virtual job applications, it's critical to differentiate yourself from others. With PCS moves, resume gaps and other unique challenges faced by military spouses, standing out for the right reasons can feel especially daunting. As a professional recruiter, I sift through thousands of resumes each month looking for that perfect catch and these are the five ways a resume can catch a potential screener's eye (or algorithm):

## 1 Focus on keywords.

When searching for a candidate for a position, recruiters focus on finding someone who meets a specific job description. Often, companies outsource this process to recruiting firms, so the person searching only has the description from which they can operate. Read the job descriptions of positions you are hoping to fill and ensure that those key skills are not just in your resume, but in your online profiles – or you won't show up in a job search.

If I'm looking for someone who has worked as a database administrator, I'm going to search that skillset instead of something broader like "computer skills" or instead of "journalism" I'm looking for copy editor, researcher, reporter, etc. List your certifications in your profile so that you'll have a better chance of appearing in job queries.

## 2 Close the gaps.

Listen, we get it. As military spouses our resumes frequently look like we can't hold a job or can't decide on a field. You have a master's in social work and somehow spent a year as a photographer, two years as an assistant baker and another year as a teacher. Close the resume gaps by finding things you've carried between duty stations.

Been an active member of the FRG for four duty stations now, or always serve as the room parent, no matter what school? Use that to your advantage. List it as one item: FRG advisor 2008 - present. The expanded description can be explained in bullet points, but showcasing one thing for a consistent amount of time only works in your favor. Also, speak to the gaps or the different career moves in a cover letter, or profile, if you can. Use words like versatile, agile, breadth of experience to talk about how these pivots enhance your total portfolio.

## 3 Use assertive language.

Employers want to see leadership, teamwork, dedication, and above all else, that you'll be a great hire. This is easy to show in reframing your language from passive to active. And use action words on your resume so that instead of merely "improving" your bullet points, you accelerate, amplify, boost, capitalize, and enhance (you get the idea!) them.

Not only do you want to use action words, but make sure you show the impact of your work. Would you rather see that someone developed a software to streamline a process, or developed a software that streamlined our processes, resulting in a \$400,000 annual savings for the company (way more impressive!)? Impact is what sets you apart and numbers can tell a story.

## 4 Make your contact information easily accessible.

A recruiter has found you and you're an ideal candidate. But, fatal error: we don't know how to contact you. Many recruiting software platforms, like LinkedIn, ZipRecruiter, etc., limit the number of direct messages you can send to candidates per month, and recruiters don't know how often you're checking that platform. Rather, list your cell phone and email directly on the resume or if you're willing, at least your email in your profile. Make yourself easy to find.

## 5 Time for new headshots.

First impressions are hard to undo and when talking about virtual encounters, how you carry yourself online makes a difference. A recent, professional headshot is a must, especially in the digital era where everyone is connecting. Yes, we know you looked great at that event, but we can also clearly see there's a person next to you cropped out. Professional headshots show that you're a professional.

Don't have the budget? Check out upcoming hiring events, such as [Hiring Our Heroes Military Spouse Professional Network events](#), which often have a photographer onsite taking them for free.

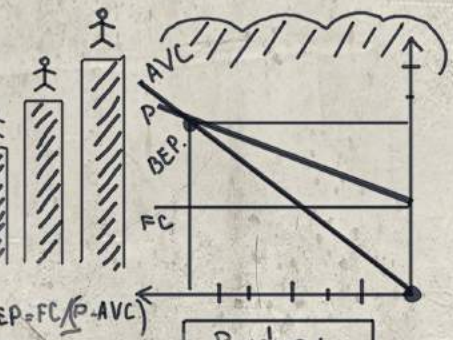
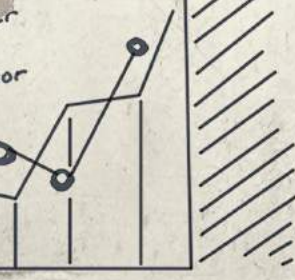
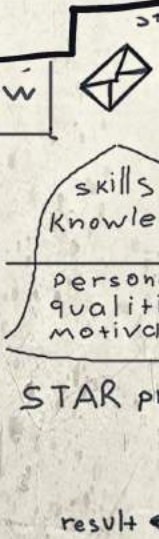
As more employers shift to a digital-only application process, it's easy to get lost among the thousands vying for the same position. Craft a strong digital presence by leaning on keywords, using assertive language, closing the resume gaps, utilizing a professional headshot and making it easy for recruiters to find you. By applying these tips, employers will know you are diligent about your career search, making you a stand out option for their workforce. ●

# Is there a lesson to be learned from your career path?

We want to hear from you.

[Military Families Magazine](#) is always looking for personal essays, tips and resources for our readers. If you are a military spouse doing the employment dance and have insight to share, contact us.

Submit a pitch to: [PITCH US](#).



Budget	
✓	10000
✓	500000
✓	300000
Total: 25,000,000	

