

## Governing Energy

### Veterans Administration

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Recently, this author was in two taxicabs. A young single mom, a recent US Army veteran who took me to the airport in the very early morning hours, drove the first one. Raising a young boy and going to school, she was driving the taxi to help the owner due the volume of traffic from the Regatta of that weekend, according to her. One surmises that the extra cash from the job may have been an economic driver as well.

Upon arrival back in Houston, the cab back to the marina where my automobile was located was also driven by a veteran of a slightly earlier era. This mid-career individual was very articulate and appeared very knowledgeable and even wise. Extremely talkative, he raised and took defensible positions on several sensitive issues from society's current dialogue—not the normal conversation one would expect to have with a cabbie.

These two conversations early one Sunday morning were enlightening in many ways. Both of these individuals were very personable, highly intelligent and by my brief observation hard working. I can honestly say, I enjoyed their company and talking with them shortened my journey.

However, several thoughts raced through my head as I exited the last taxi, paid the man and he shook my hand. It appeared that he might be under-employed. If that is the case, I asked myself why is it *still* so hard for veterans to find jobs.

This point is not a new one and others have expressed similar concerns over the past few years. Moreover, as a veteran myself it was initially difficult for me to navigate the corporate jungle. To say that in my early twenties, just out of the Army with no corporate experience, I was clueless might be an understatement. Fortunately, I managed to land an entry-level position with one of the two energy service companies where my direct military experience fit well.

The energy sector is a logical next step in their careers for discharged military personnel of all ranks and Military Occupation Specialties (MOS).<sup>1</sup> The first taxi cab driver had worked in military communications and the second in logistics. These are two skills the industry desperately needs.

The industry has an outreach program and many recent veterans are employed throughout it, both in the operator and services sectors. Can we do more? Always!

Readers may draw the logical conclusion that the subject of this piece is to hire vets! Evidence suggests that vets are highly prized talent and most add value to their employers and enjoy successful careers.

However, there is another question. Many vets, perhaps these two living in Texas and documented by my personal experience at the beginning of my career do not know how to find a civilian job. They may not even understand the functions of an oil company, an energy services company or an engineering firm. Nor what kinds of people they employ.

Much has been written about the so-called Big Crew Change, labor shortages in certain states such as North Dakota as well as the apparently shrinking labor pool et al. and it will not be further addressed herein. However, perhaps the industry can look in its own backyard and reach out to those vets who may not understand how corporations can use their service skill set. This effort would be an extension to the current initiatives that are successful helping vets making the transition.

Veterans whose “separation from active military service” may be a decade or more ago still can offer valuable knowledge and skills the industry needs.<sup>ii</sup> Both kinds of resources are out there, I know I just met two in one morning.

“Thank you for your service,” either begins or ends many conversations with veterans, especially on television shows. Yet for many of these young (and even not so young) people, their *service* to their families and society is really just beginning.

This blog and other written material and speeches by this author have addressed the continuous improvement of processes as well as use of good or even so-called “best practices” the industry undertakes in operations. One of the key components of the recent SEMS regulations is personnel competency and proficiency.

Perhaps Veteran’s hiring processes could be extended to those vets who may not have the luxury of understanding that their MOS has a direct linkage to the Knowledge, Skills, Abilities (KSA) needed now. Not in the sense of direct mapping of skills from one job to another but as a function of technical knowledge, problem-solving skills, ability to learn, work ethic and maturity that vets bring.

## **How does your organization administer its veteran’s affairs to take full advantage of these available resources?**

### **About the Author**

Dr. [Scott M. Shemwell](#) has over 30 years technical and executive management experience primarily in the energy sector. He is the author of three books and has written extensively about the field of operations management. Shemwell is the Managing Director of The Rapid Response Institute, a firm that focuses on providing its customers with solutions enabling operations excellence and regulatory compliance management. He has studied cultural interactions for more than 30 years--his dissertation; *Cross Cultural Negotiations Between Japanese and American Businessmen: A Systems Analysis (Exploratory Study)* is an early peer reviewed manuscript addressing the systemic structure of social relationships.

### **End Notes**

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<sup>i</sup> <http://usmilitary.about.com/od/enlistedjobs/tp/armyenlistedjobs.htm>

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.vetsfirst.org/military-separation-guide/>