



CIW VISIONARY SPONSOR ROUNDTABLE #3

POST-EVENT INSIGHTS

Building New Careers: Best Practices for Veteran Recruitment and Retention

Below is a breakdown of key themes, insights, and takeaways from the CIW Roundtable #3 Discussion.

Key Discussion Topics

- **Helmets to Hardhats & Resource Programs:** Nick Weathers, Western Regional Manager for Helmets to Hardhats, provided an overview of the non-profit platform that assists transitioning service members with apprenticeship/management job boards and GI Bill support. Other referenced programs included DoD SkillBridge and the IBEW VEEP (Veterans Electrical Entry Program).
- **Skills Translation & Misalignment:** Friction points during recruitment, where military rank and transferable skills (leadership, accountability, coordination) are not always readily recognized by HR/hiring managers, compounded by a lack of structured rotational programs.
- **Cultural Adaptation & Expectations:** The shift from military rigidity, clear chains of command, and mission urgency to civilian corporate ambiguity, softer interpersonal dynamics, and shifting deadlines.
- **Onboarding & Retention Strategies:** The critical role of internal Veteran Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), mentorship/buddy programs, dedicated career site pages, and pre-transition civilian certification guidance.

Core Industry Challenges & Barriers

- **Skill Translation Deficit:** Hiring managers often prioritize direct industry experience and struggle to translate military occupational specialties into civilian qualifications.
- **Immediate Productivity Demands:** Project-based hiring often demands immediate productivity, leaving little buffer or training time for mid-stream skill development.

Cultural Shift & Ambiguity: Veterans are accustomed to strict structure, mission clarity, and high accountability. Easing into civilian environments where project parameters, timelines, and communication styles can be ambiguous requires explicit guidance and adjustment.

Promising Practices & Spotlights

- **DoD SkillBridge Participation:** Leveraging the SkillBridge program allows service members to intern during their last 6 months of active duty at no salary cost to the employer.
- **Internal Veteran Champions & ERGs:** Engaging existing veteran employees in recruitment and onboarding creates peer connection and boosts referrals at little to no financial cost.
- **Recruiter & HR Training:** Training non-veteran talent acquisition staff on military vernacular and experience decoding to prevent qualified candidates from being screened out prematurely.
- **Clear Onboarding Check-Ins:** Implementing structured 30-60-90 day milestone reviews and clear career mapping to mirror the developmental frameworks service members are used to.



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TEAM DISCUSSION PROMPTS

Continuing the Reflection

We encourage you to utilize the post-event insights and the following discussion prompts within your internal teams to continue the conversation and reflect on how the construction industry is currently being experienced, understood, and considered by the audiences we are collectively trying to reach, and how we can continue to identify opportunities for visibility, awareness, access, and long-term engagement for the next generation of skilled professionals.

Thank you again for joining in the discussion! We hope that these reflections continue sparking conversation, curiosity, and exploration across your company and the industry at large.

—The Construction Inclusion Week Steering Committee

1. Decoding Public Perception & Misconceptions

- When non-construction professionals, such as military veterans, young adults, or those changing careers, look at our industry, what assumptions or blind spots might they have about available career paths?
- How can we better translate military rank, specialized skills, and non-traditional backgrounds into civilian job requirements while balancing immediate project needs with long-term development?
- What are 1–2 specific misconceptions our team can actively dismantle through our messaging and community outreach?

2. Enhancing Skills Translation

- Where might our current hiring, screening, or onboarding processes inadvertently create barriers or friction for non-traditional candidates?
- How can we better translate military rank, specialized skills, and non-traditional backgrounds into civilian job requirements while balancing immediate project needs with long-term development?

3. Creating Access & Early Visibility

- How can our team leverage existing community networks (i.e., SkillBridge, trade programs, partnerships with military bases, local youth outreach) to make our workplace culture and job opportunities visible earlier?

4. Cultivating Belonging & Sustainable Retention

- Once talent enters our doors, what structural and cultural support systems are actually keeping them here for the long haul?
- How can we move beyond initial recruitment to ensure long-term career progression, strong mentorship, and psychological safety for non-traditional hires?