Experience and the Tiger

# Experience Necessary

How often have you read in a job advert, “previous experience necessary”, “minimum of 3 years’ experience in a related role”, or “must have relevant experience”?

It may surprise you that, as a Veteran, you have all the experience needed but do not realise it, and probably do not deploy it to your advantage. Consider all the things you did during your service as a Tiger… many Veterans have what recruiters are seeking, you just need to recognise it and present it for what it is.

# Appropriate Experience

What is appropriate experience? I would describe it as having had enough time in the field to see the results caused by your own decisions and workflow. Experience can be viewed as a sum of factors such as time working, experiences survived, the nature of the role, responsibilities, and lessons learned. In essence, a lot of the "experience factor" will come down to you explaining how your unique military experience is actually relevant to their requirement.

Soft-skills and team fit are key. Hard, technical skills alone are not enough; an employer will always be interested in team productivity more than the output of an individual.

# Volunteer

Further and relevant experience can be gained by volunteering to a non-profit organisation, charity, or sports club. For example, if you’re looking for a job in marketing, volunteer to help a group with its marketing. It is an ideal method of enhancing your skills, as well as expanding your circle of networking contacts. Volunteering anywhere can improve your CV, but if you can work with a non-profit that has connections with a company you want to work for, that’s even better. It shows you’ve researched the firm, and it’s a way to network your way to employees already there.

# Alternate Facts

When asked about years of experience answer the question directly and start your answer early on, in the covering letter accompanying your CV. Acknowledge the advertised requirement and explain why you should be measured as a candidate. Emphasise your capability and stay away from comparing yourself to others. If that gets you to interview, then you will have the opportunity to provide a strong pitch, show enthusiasm, demonstrate that you have researched the role and make an impression, persevere, and think on your feet.

A Veteran Tiger will have many qualifications, awards, and credentials that may not be related to one particular accomplishment or deployment. Veterans are widely travelled, have seen the world, and worked in high-stress situations. Nearly all Veterans have leadership courses under their belts, and they can apply that knowledge in the workplace. Each Veteran has an aptitude to work in new environments, and it’s written on their CV’s from their transitions through new deployments and postings.

# ‘You say experience, you mean proven skills’

When an employer says that they want “experience” what they really want is “skills+proven results.” Employers need to know if you possess the aptitudes necessary to perform the job, and crucially, what you have accomplished. Prove it by emphasising fundamental soft skills like leadership and critical thinking — companies value them just as much as hard skills, and in many cases, even more.

# Ignore the experience gap

To overcome the experience gap, ignore it! Remember at all times that people write job adverts, and seldom have they done the advertised job themselves. “1-2 years’ experience preferred” on a marketing position is not a hard requirement. It’s a broad gesture designed to describe a kind of candidate; you don’t need to meet that description exactly to get an interview. An employer cares about; your ability to do the job, and can you prove it?

The key to finding a job, particularly if you don’t have much professional experience, is networking. Always have prepared a brief explanation of what you would like your next job to be and your past experiences to share with people who ask what you would like to be doing professionally.

The fact that you’ve lived in a ‘military bubble’ for the past few years has probably limited your experience of other industries. But it has not limited your useful experience.