

For Bank of America, Hiring Vets Is a Person-to-Person Mission

By Michael Roney

Bank of America has learned a lot in its many years of hiring veterans—including the knowledge that success depends on a thoughtful, personal effort to connect with the men and women transitioning from military life.

"It's a high-touchpoint operation," says Jeff Cathey, Bank of America's senior military affairs executive, who himself served with distinction in the U.S. Navy for 29 years. "Service members are highly trained, yet often they are not aware of how their skills will correlate within corporate America. The challenge is to understand their specialties and soft skills such as leadership and teamwork, then help them understand how their talents map to the business world."

People and Programs

Cathey's Military Affairs Team works with departments across the entire organization to recruit and support veterans and spouses through programs in education, employment, wellness and housing. External partners include the Department of Veterans Affairs' Veterans Economic Communities Initiative, the Wounded Warrior Project®, the George W. Bush Institute's Military Service Initiative, the Pentagon's Soldier for Life program, Joining Forces, Special Operations Warrior Foundation, the National Military Families Association and many others.

Cathey says that probably the most difficult transitions are those young men and women who joined right out of high school and don't have any workforce experience outside of military service. "They tend to be humble. You'll ask, 'So why are you here and what skill set do you have?' and the candidate will say, 'Well, I'm just a sniper...'" and you drag



it out of him or her that as part of that job you plan, you analyze, you go in, you conduct the mission, you keep your team safe, you fall back and report to higher-ups. All of that happens in business."

For the third year, Bank of America offered a ten-week rotational program for veterans who are interested in joining its New York banking and markets division. "We get 25 or 30 veterans a year who do that trial, the vast majority of whom will get an offer and take it," Cathey notes. "Now that former sniper mentioned earlier is a successful analyst working in global banking and markets. We've got an army tank driver up in Manhattan, a marine aviator in Jacksonville, a female C-17 Globemaster pilot in Charlotte, a Marine colonel up in the D.C. area—the list goes on."

Worth the Effort

"Growing our talent base requires quite a bit of effort, but we're at 10,000 veterans and reservists today and have committed to hiring 10,000 more over the next several years," Cathey says. It's unbelievable when you walk into a room and it just exudes energy and intelligence—and it's men and women from all services. If you spend the time, you can find the skills that connect. It's challenging, but in a good way—and it pays off for sure."

Bank of America 

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