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Career transitions after Army life

Sean Kelly updates *Focus* on the opportunities available for ex-military personnel as they transition into the civilian world.



DID YOU KNOW?

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profitable operation, almost all of which will be familiar territory for veterans. Most construction projects run in a remarkably similar manner to military operations. From initial setup through intense periods of activity to eventual extraction, Army personnel quickly find their feet in construction – and not just Sappers (Royal Engineers). The vast majority of Army trades and specialisations from logistics to communications have a construction equivalent.

Wilson James has had a close relationship with the British Army for most of its 25 years in existence. We have worked hard to build relationships with the Royal Logistic Corps Foundation (RLCF) and are founding partners of BuildForce. From its inception, Wilson James has provided sponsorship, mentors and a range of opportunities for its candidates. Each party has benefited greatly from this relationship.

Many outstanding individuals have joined Wilson James directly from the Army or have moved across to us from other organisations, drawn to our solution-orientated ethos. In the last 10 years, veterans of every rank have joined us, from Private to Brigadier. At one point in 2013, the organisation running our construction logistics integrator contract for Heathrow Airport had more Staff College-qualified officers than an armoured brigade headquarters, including RN and RAF colleagues, and enough Gurkha security officers (over 200) for a very decent parade.

Much like the Army, Wilson James is a family: loyal and willing to go the extra mile for team members, for clients and colleagues alike. Of course, having award-winning services covering security and logistics makes us eminently deployable in almost any crisis situation, but it is the quality of our people that clients trust. We rely on good people and the Army is a rich source of robust, determined and skilled individuals who can focus on the completion of the overall task with a proactive attitude. More than this, it is a deep well of capable leaders who are unafraid of decision-making.

Many servicemen and women find the transition to the civilian world a difficult one



Many servicemen and women coming to the end of their time in the military may feel their work experience and skills will be difficult to transfer into a new life. Fortunately there are many organisations that work to connect this experienced workforce to industries and companies that recognise that the skills ex-military personnel bring to the table.

The construction industry is particularly well suited to Army personnel, and there are a vast array of opportunities and positions within the field. Today's construction firms and supporting companies require specialist skills and experience to run a productive and

CASE STUDY: JOSH START



Like many leaving the Army, Josh Start questioned where his skills might be best placed and where he might rank amongst civilian peers. Following an outstanding career in the Royal Logistic Corps, he initially joined Wilson James as a consultant. He quickly made a name for himself on a number of projects working for major clients in the UK and overseas, and his potential for achievement and advancement was swiftly recognised. Moving into the mainstream construction logistics activity, he was promoted to Operations Manager at our Heathrow facility. Several years on, he is now head of this facility with a bright future ahead of him.

Josh Start's abilities have been widely acknowledged. He is the current CILT Young Manager of the Year and recently won the Professional of the Year award at the European Logistics Association Awards.

In conclusion

All too often commentators note that the nation has a duty to employ ex-forces personnel. This may be the case, but it is not necessary to do so out of altruism: Army veterans have a great deal to offer. What it is important for veterans to understand is that in the Army, you are surrounded by very capable, well trained and highly practised people. Behaviours and capabilities you might consider as standard whilst serving are often considered exceptional outside the Army and, with career mentoring, will help you stand out as a job candidate.

Likewise, what is important for potential employers to understand is that veterans have an abundance of highly valuable qualities, many of which they do not advertise. Organisations like RLCF and BuildForce can ease the transition and help veterans align their experience and skills with career opportunities. There are many companies, including Wilson James, who understand and value veterans and are eager to bring that experience and skill into their organisations.

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