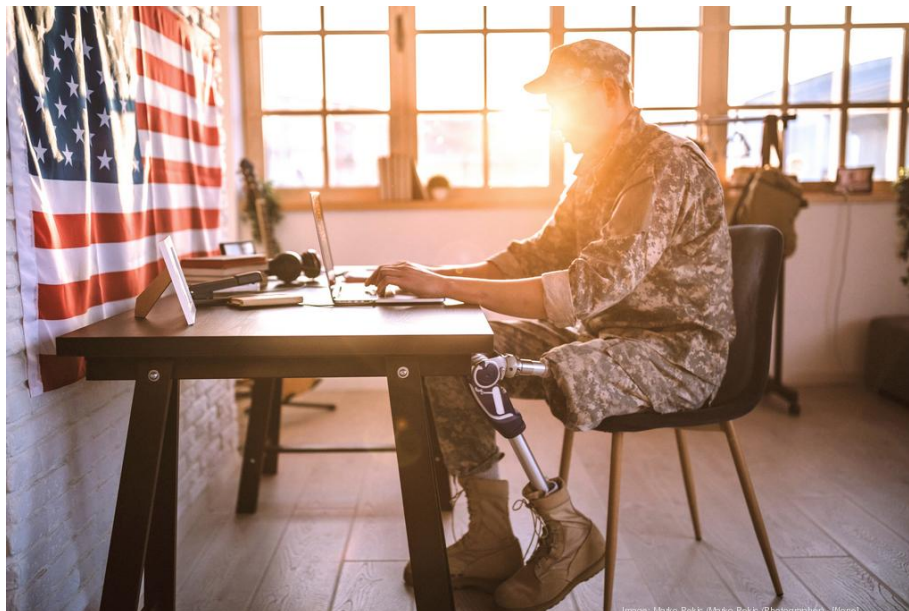


My View: Diversity, equity and inclusion strategies can also include veterans



When your company implements culturally-sensitive strategies that foster inclusivity for veterans — and all minority groups — your reward is a values-driven, loyal, disciplined and productive employee. PEKIC

**By Kathy Gallowitz – Contributing writer
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Thank you to Linda Luman, executive vice president of human resources at Achieve, for moderating the recently published “[Diversity Equity and Inclusion Table of Experts](#)” panel discussion in the Phoenix Business Journal (July 28, 2023). Representatives from the Black, Asian and gay communities articulated insightful, practical workplace strategies to cultivate inclusion.

Achieve is also a veteran-friendly company that “walks the walk” as civilian veteran champions. As an expert in military culture and veteran hiring, I agree with the panelist comments about needing leaders who model “what right looks like,” encouraging employees to participate in employee resource groups (ERGs) and many of their other recommendations.

I think the following strategies can help veterans feel like they are included in the workplace:

- Active listening with the goal of seeking to understand vs. being understood;
- A willingness to learn about the veteran and doing more than “showing up.” Start with small talk, like you would with anyone else and ask sincere, considerate unobtrusive questions. Follow the veteran’s lead about the pace and depth of conversation. More than likely, the veteran may feel awkward as they get to know you because many feel disconnected from and misunderstood by American society. Commit to continuous learning; there is no finish line.
- Host events and experiences that facilitate dialogue where veterans and civilians can share life experiences and get to know one another as people. Allow veterans to share their stories how and when they are ready, slowly cultivating trust.
- Ask how you can help veterans with their transition to their civilian career and follow through. Doing what you say you are going to do is essential to earning their trust.
- Be a visible ally by gently articulating and celebrating successes, acknowledging what happened and sharing it as appropriate to build awareness. Know that veterans may be uncomfortable with accolades.
- Speak up on their behalf whether or not the veteran is in the room.
- Wear/display symbols that demonstrate your kinship.
- Purposeful mentoring and sponsorship. Transitioning away from military service requires finding new meaning and purpose as well as changes in identity, worldview and communication style. These slow transformations are best supported by trusted confidantes who are available to answer questions, provide meaningful feedback and believe in them even before they believe in themselves.
- Invite veterans to share their ideas. Most veterans will provide input based on their variety of experiences and the focus of their military service, yet many may be hesitant to speak up, especially if they were junior-enlisted.
- Create human resource and talent acquisition policies that are fair, transparent, free of bias and responsive. Please also consider the needs of military spouses and caregivers.

When your company implements culturally-sensitive strategies that foster inclusivity for veterans — and all minority groups — your reward is a values-driven, loyal, disciplined and productive employee. The veterans’ reward is finding new meaning and purpose, feeling connected and welcomed, all the way home. What a win-win!

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