

Case Study: Howmet Aerospace

Leveraging Transition Programs to Expand
Access to Veterans



➤ Company Overview

Howmet Aerospace Inc., headquartered in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, is a leading global provider of advanced engineered solutions for the aerospace and transportation industries. The company's primary business focuses on jet engine components, aerospace fastening systems and airframe structural components necessary for mission-critical performance and efficiency in aerospace and defense applications, as well as forged wheels for commercial transportation. With nearly 1,150 granted and pending patents, the company's differentiated technologies enable lighter, more fuel-efficient aircraft and commercial trucks to operate with a lower carbon footprint.

Howmet holds its employees to the highest ethical standards while also committing heavily to environmental, social and governance initiatives.

Howmet Aerospace Foundation invests in STEM and technical education and workforce development initiatives, with an emphasis on increased access to STEM fields for underrepresented individuals. It is the independently endowed charitable arm of Howmet Aerospace.

Each year, Howmet Aerospace Foundation grants more than \$7 million to its nonprofit partners around the world, including the Manufacturing Institute's Heroes MAKE America initiative. This effort is supplemented by the volunteer activities of Howmet Aerospace employees.

➤ Program Summary

In the United States, more than 200,000 service members transition from military to civilian life each year. Many transitioning personnel hold highly desirable skills, a disciplined work ethic and relevant experience for multiple industries. Seeing a current need for skilled labor, Howmet Aerospace recognized a major opportunity to tap into this available workforce. To do so, Howmet focused on creating a new transition program for service members to help ease the adjustment from military to civilian employment.

Project Title



Leveraging Transition Programs to Expand Access to Veterans

Tags



Veteran Transition Programs

Complexity



2 out of 3 light bulbs

Budget



\$\$

Location



Nationwide

Point of Contact



Cindy Penney
Vice President, Talent, Human Resources and Technology

► Program Summary Continued

Drawing on experiences from their existing relationship with the Manufacturing Institute's Heroes MAKE America initiative, Howmet saw the value of creating opportunities for their veteran employees to share details about their careers with transitioning veterans through on-site tours and virtual Heroes Connect events.

To kickstart the creation of the transition program, Howmet relied on its current veteran support initiatives, including its Veteran Employee Resource Group. Using the ERG as a starting resource, employees within the Veteran ERG were selected for a paid secondment focused on identifying potential local bases that would align logistically with company facilities. While usually volunteer roles, Howmet believed that offering compensation ensured the selected team could dedicate significant time and effort to creating the program. After identifying several bases, the team connected with transition officers at each base to determine what sites could support a transition program and what skills were readily available from potential candidates. Potential candidates were then notified of the program and invited to learn more about the company and the possible positions they would fill at facility site tour visits. After touring sites, interested service members can enroll, and those selected officially join the transition program.

Once in the program, each transitioning service member can be given a part-time position. This part-time work enables each member to gain work experience while also balancing their current military duties. Ranging from mechanics and engineers to front-office work, the positions available provide meaningful opportunities to grow within the profession. Along with the part-time work, each member is assigned a "buddy" or mentor. The mentor is tasked with familiarizing the transition program member with the facilities and guiding them in their day-to-day work.

After transitioning personnel are released officially from their military duties, the part-time role can then migrate into a full-time position. This transition program saves Howmet money on training and recruitment. Additionally, it strengthens the ties it has with the veteran community, as well as strengthens retention efforts, as new employees are already familiar with the work they will be performing.

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We see that the greatest untapped population is veterans returning home, as they are consistently a disciplined, loyal and highly skilled group of people eager to find new opportunities.”

— *Cindy Penney,
Vice President, Talent,
Human Resources
and Technology*



➤ Program Impact

The program has helped raise awareness of the Howmet brand among the veteran community. The program has strengthened connections and built new partnerships with local bases around Howmet facilities, while showcasing the multitude of positions offered. Employees have displayed pride in having service members on site, and those veterans already with the company feel valued knowing that the company is taking steps to help bring more representation to the veteran community. As the program is less than a year old, there are only a total of nine members in the transition program. Howmet hopes to expand the program and have an additional 12–15 program members by next year. Howmet is also expanding its partnerships with local bases, as employees are working with other bases around the country that have been identified as potential partners to expand the program.

While Howmet employees were the driving force behind these achievements, the company was able to strengthen and accelerate the connections and partnerships outlined above through its relationship with the MI's Heroes MAKE America initiative.

➤ Steps for Implementation

1. Select current veteran employees who could gain skills and experience through their participation in identifying potential military bases that would align logistically with Howmet company facilities.
2. At identified military bases, connect with transition officers to conduct outreach to potential candidates about careers at the company, opportunities for facility tours and the transition program. Use Workplace or other social media platforms to further develop a community of veterans at your company. Encourage the sharing of experiences, resources and events/activities.
3. Once in the program, each transitioning service member should be assigned a part-time position that enables them to gain work experience while also balancing their current military duties. Develop partnerships with employers who serve veterans to expand the ways in which your company provides resources.
4. Finally, after transitioning personnel are released from their military duties officially, the part-time role should transition into a full-time role.

Best Practices

- ✓ **Start small.** While having a robust transition program is the end goal, initially starting small can help resolve difficulties or challenges that may arise in the program. It can also allow the program to be nimble and more reactive early on and implement creative solutions.
- ✓ **Engage Current Veteran Employees.** Many companies have veteran representation and the capacity to use their knowledge to help build a potential transition program. While not every company may have the ability to pay veterans to identify sites and communicate with local bases, empowering veterans as advisers has helped leverage their familiarity with customs and culture to achieve more effective and efficient conversations.
- ✓ **Leverage External Resources.** A transition program will require work from within the company, and there are several external resources and partners available to help build connections with the military community. For example, transition officers offer a wealth of information that can help companies learn more about the characteristics and qualities of the base they serve and can also be an initial networking contact.