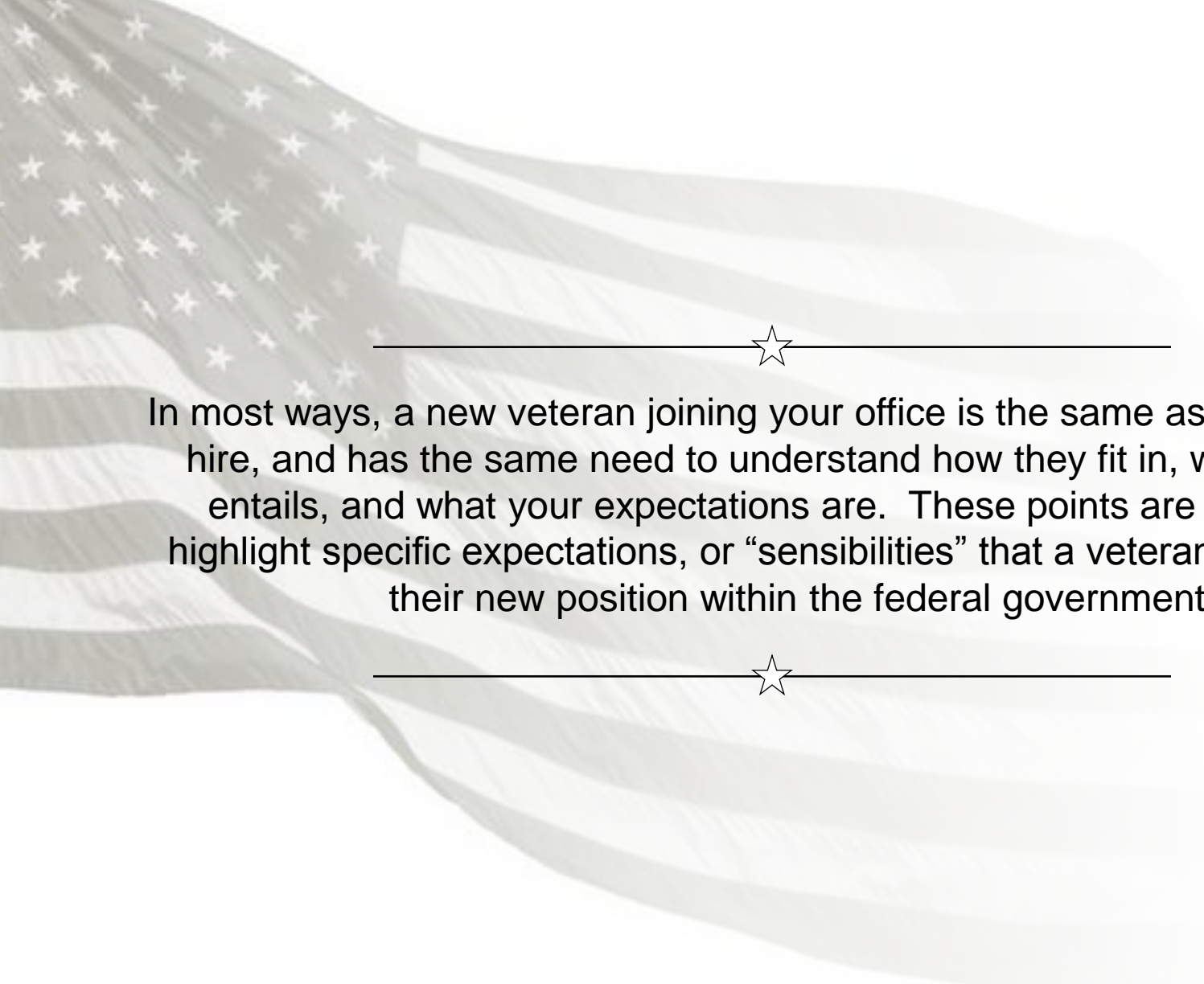




Helping a New Veteran Integrate into Your Organization

Tips for Government Supervisors
2016



In most ways, a new veteran joining your office is the same as any other new hire, and has the same need to understand how they fit in, what their job entails, and what your expectations are. These points are intended to highlight specific expectations, or “sensibilities” that a veteran may bring to their new position within the federal government.





First Impressions Matter

- A newly hired veteran's first impression of their organization is formed by their interaction with their HR in the hiring process and in the subsequent handling of their personnel actions. Be empathetic, understanding that a veteran is accustomed to a large support system and an HR/administration system that is built to handle a large volume of relatively similar actions. Depending on how that is handled, the veteran's new supervisor may need to be supportive as their new hire works through this.
- The veteran will probably be at least 15 minutes early for everything at first, and may interpret a more casual office attitude about promptness as a lack of organizational discipline.

Assign a Sponsor

Assign a sponsor to ensure a smooth entry on their first day. Sponsors should be in communication with the vet prior to their arrival at their organization; providing the vet with his/her contact info and making themselves available to answer questions regarding local area information such as transportation and what to expect on their first days. The sponsor should be familiar with their organization onboarding process in order to ensure a smooth first day that will include a security briefing, badging, and HR onboarding. A good office practice is to have the sponsor request system access at least one-week prior to arrival so that the vet is ready to log on and get productive upon arrival. Having that all set up, and a sponsor to help them through it, is very common in the military.

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The How-To's

Explain office norms such as staff meetings, telework policy, annual and sick leave requirements, etc. Remember that for many vets this may be the first time out of uniform and they may not be familiar with civil service (CS) regulations. A good source of information for new CS employees is the Department's document: [The ABC's: What Every New Employee Needs to Know](#). This document can be accessed from the Internet and should be provided to the vet for review prior to coming onboard.



Vets Are Used to Leading

Some Senior Enlisted grades and Warrant Officer equivalents are more “technical” and some are more “administrative...” An O-4, while equal to a GS-12, will generally have more leadership responsibilities than their civilian counterparts. Many were Junior-level managers and leaders in the military and are used to making decisions or having authority that they won’t have at that equivalent GS level in their government agency. They’re also used to working on their own with minimal guidance. They want the opportunity, and credit, for managing. These individual service members enjoy the structure, identity and contribution they bring to the job. Vets are accustomed to a system with structure and accountability, understanding their supervisor’s expectations, and being informed about what resources are available and how to ask for help. The vet will probably ask for permission, advice, or direction quite a bit, or at least want to. There are not a lot of DoD positions that work independently without a lot of direction or guidance by established SOPs.

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Chain of Command

The veteran will not expect interaction outside of his or her first line supervisor. The DOD hierarchy is strictly enforced and there are many rules that are governed by it. Other agencies have a much different management structure may be a bit disorienting at first.

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Work Ethic

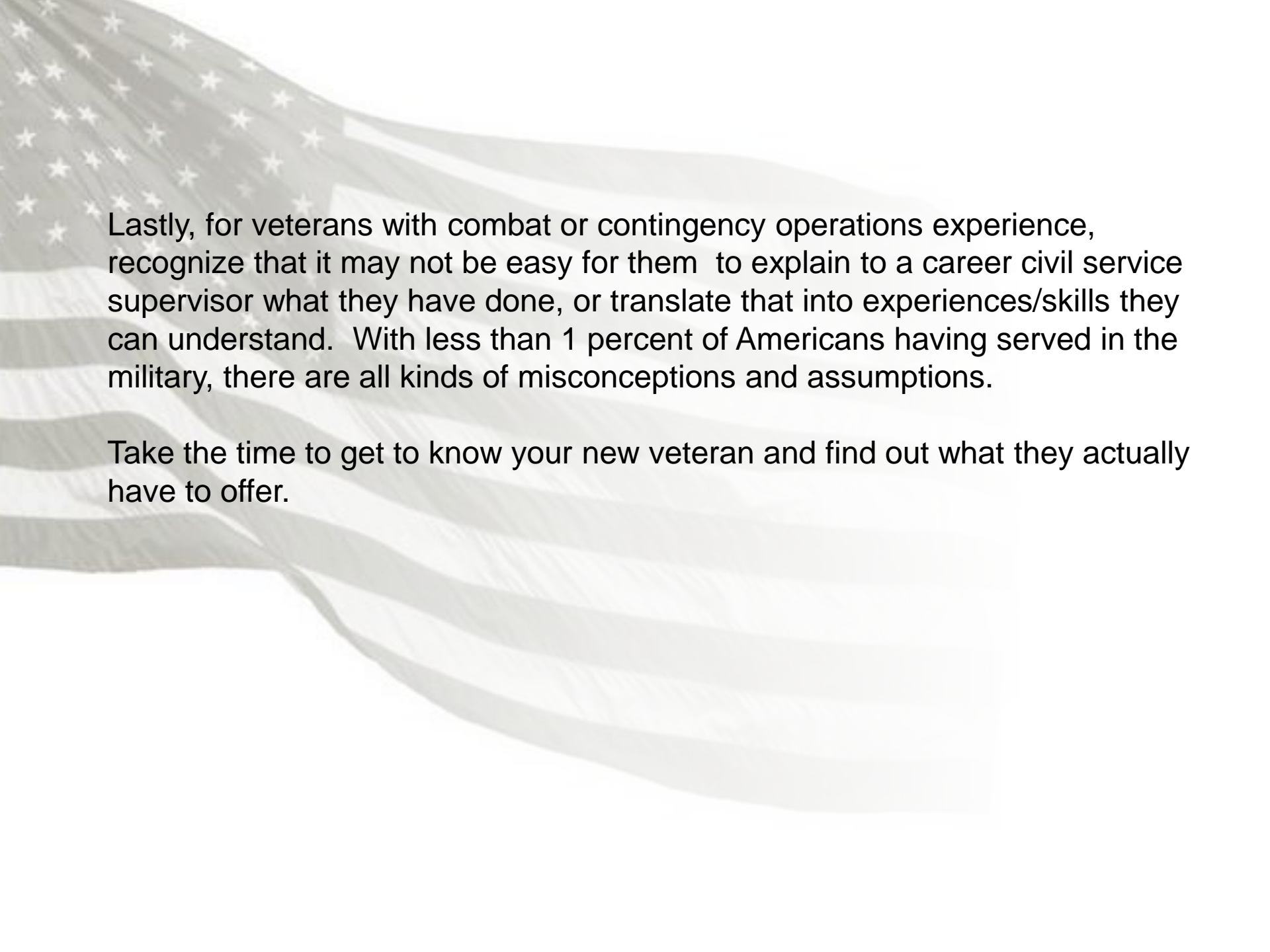
A supervisor should understand a vet's commitment to give their very best effort. Your new veteran employee wants to contribute to the success of the team and bureau. Vets make mistakes too, but generally will feel the need to make up for it by working harder and be more reliable, consistent and loyal than expected. A vet wants their supervisor to realize they come from a background of mission achievement, but that may mean they've been trained to be risk adverse as well.

Veterans are used to working in an adaptive environment and usually possess the skills, adaptation and the ability to overcome obstacles in abundance. This is an asset to the organization and should be utilized to the maximum extent possible, but in temperance to the goals and structure of the department.”

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The evaluation, promotion, recognition, and departure process

Be able to explain the differences between DoD and other systems. For example, when someone departs a unit in the military, it has significance that can impact the unit (depending on the size and mission), and some formal presentation or symbol of recognition (coins are common) is generally provided, and includes civilians working for/with, and departing the military.



Lastly, for veterans with combat or contingency operations experience, recognize that it may not be easy for them to explain to a career civil service supervisor what they have done, or translate that into experiences/skills they can understand. With less than 1 percent of Americans having served in the military, there are all kinds of misconceptions and assumptions.

Take the time to get to know your new veteran and find out what they actually have to offer.