

Supporting the National Guard and Reservists as Civilian Employees

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The U.S. military's Reserve component comprises the National Guard and Reserves, and with its approximately 800,000 part-time service members it makes up roughly 40 percent of the U.S. military (Congressional Research Service, 2021). For simplicity throughout this chapter, we refer to of both National Guards members and Reservist members as Reservists. Reservists often maintain nonmilitary employment beyond their monthly trainings, and their military service is frequently unknown to the nonmilitary organization where they are employed. The majority of Reservists perform their military service on weekends and during a 2-week period of focused annual training. Some Reservists have a specific job that requires them to report during the standard Monday through Friday work week, but these roles are not as common as the traditional Reservists' duty schedule, which requires weekend military service and annual training. Some Reservists may be called up to active duty service for months or even a year when the military deems that Reservists' role is mission critical. Military service obligations interfering with civilian employment responsibilities are a frequently-cited concern of employers when hiring veterans, which may lead Reservists to avoid disclosing their military role to civilian employers.

Numerous transition issues and military-friendly best practices have already been discussed in preceding chapters. A majority of these topics and suggestions can be similarly applied to Reservists. However, organizations employing Reservists have numerous obligations that may be misunderstood or entirely overlooked. These obligations can cause a great deal of frustration for all involved civilian stakeholders (e.g., organization leaders, coworkers, veteran employee, and their families), particularly when Reservists and their civilian employers are unaware of the voluntary as well as legal aspects pertaining to service member employment. In addition, civilian employers

are often unaware of the unique benefits derived from this source of talent, including but not limited to active security clearances, nontechnical and technical skills, and other employer-desired personal attributes that the employees gain through their military experiences and training.

This chapter addresses several aspects related to Reservists and how to hire and retain them as employees in civilian organizations, beginning with a discussion about service obligations, training schedule, and potential transition issues experienced by Reservists. Additionally, we address employers' obligations toward supporting Reservists and offer guidance to help organizations alleviate periodic challenges that both the employer and Reservist may encounter. Similarly, both Reservists and employers are afforded rights and have obligations to consider. These legalities are discussed, and corresponding resources are outlined further in the chapter. In addition, we present strategies for organizations to successfully help acclimate an activated Reservist's return to civilian employment after a time period when they were activated into military duty. This chapter provides a better understanding of the expectations and support programs available that are related to employees who are also service members in a Reserve component.

Service Requirement Distinctions

Active duty service members share numerous similarities with Reservist service members, such as fulfilling minimal enlistment requirements, completing the same basic training, learning identical job specialties, and maintaining a high level of physical fitness. However, several distinctions can be identified that are necessary for employers to consider. These differences may impact service members' work attendance, as well as present an entirely new set of challenges for employers that have yet to be discussed. Table 12.1 provides a consolidated overview of some of the distinctions between service members in active and reserve status.

Each branch of the armed forces has a Reserve component, whose purpose is to maintain availability and readiness for active duty service if needed to support the active services. The Reserve components are federally funded and controlled by the military service under which they fall. In addition, the Army and Air Force have National Guard components, which, while also federally funded, are primarily controlled by the state where their units reside (National Guard, n.d.). Reserve components of the Armed Forces learn

Table 12.1 Distinctions Between Active Duty Members and Reservists

Distinction Type	Active Duty	Reserve/National Guard Status
Commitment to the military	Full time	Usually part time but may be activated into full time
Traditional work schedule ^a	Variable (primarily Monday–Friday though nights and weekends common)	One weekend per month, two additional weeks per year
Employment options outside the military	Restricted to military service obligations	Unrestricted; service member may seek nonmilitary employment
Purpose	Serve the people and defend the nation	Maintain trained units available for active duty when needed (Reserve); protect local communities and support active duty military forces (National Guard)
Enlistment requirement	At least 2-year service obligation	At least 6-year service obligation
Duty station	Can be stationed anywhere domestic or abroad, depending on mission requirements	Most often local/nearby
Retirement ^b	Eligible to receive full retirement benefits after 20 years OR participate in blended retirement system	Eligible to receive modified retirement benefits after 20 years of service and once 60 years of age or older

^aWork schedules can be highly variable for military given the wide array of occupations and jobs fulfilled by service members. Some active duty have atypical schedules; some Reservists serve according to specialized schedules depending on their career specialty and type of Reserve commitment.

^bActive duty service members may now be eligible to receive some retirement benefits without completing 20 years of service.

jobs identical to those who serve on active duty but learn and train in part-time status after completion of basic training and military occupation specialty schools. Reservists may be called to active duty for deployment when needed. The deployment—stateside or abroad—can range in length from only a few days to over a year. In fact, the conflicts since the 9/11 attacks have led to the largest and most frequent mobilization of reserve units since World War II, with approximately 10 percent of Reservists having served previously on active duty (South, 2018). On completing a deployment, the service member returns to reserve status unless called on again for subsequent re-deployment. Their reserve status remains until their enlistment is complete.

Reserve Component Training Requirements

Training in the Guard or Reserve components generally occurs one weekend per month (referred to as “drill”), with an additional 2 weeks over the year. These training obligations often impact Reservists and the organizations employing them. While the one weekend a month claim is accurate, the training period might begin before Saturday. In some instances, Reservists may choose or be asked to support preparations for drill weekend by reporting a day or two early. If the training starts on a Friday, the Reservist, assuming a traditional civilian Monday through Friday workweek, would have competing work obligations. Although Reserve unit commanders are generally willing to work with Reservist service members who are maintaining nonmilitary employment, there are instances where training requires time away from civilian employment. More explicitly, military training in the National Guard or Reserve is a requirement of service. Service members are obligated to complete prescheduled training each month. These instances can blur the lines between civilian employer and Reservist responsibilities. In any case, if the Reservist has orders documenting their reporting requirements, they should be cleared of their civilian work responsibilities.

While on drill, service members should not be expected to complete nonmilitary work. Work hours during drill weekends can extend far beyond the traditional 8-hour workday. The trainings may also require the service members’ attention throughout the weekend and severely inhibit their ability to complete outside activities. Further, depending on training location, cell phone or Internet service may not even be available. The service obligation can create tension between civilian employers and Reservists if civilian supervisors are not aware of their responsibilities. Awareness of the time requirements related to drill and annual training will reduce the likelihood of future issues.

Legal Rights and Responsibilities

Legal Rights of Reservists and Employers

Despite an overwhelming majority of organizations expressing support for military veterans, issues can arise when Reservists are being called to serve.

Although members of the National Guard and Reserve are afforded many rights that protect their job, they are not without responsibilities to their civilian employers. Whether prior to training, during a deployment, or after returning from duty, Reservists have obligations to their employer. Many of the legal requirements are straightforward and generally aspects of being a good employee or employer, but some of the requirements have a bit of a gray area that can be confusing for all parties.

Legal Rights of Reservists

Most U.S.-based organizations try to work with Reservists (e.g., accommodating their training schedule), but there are additional legal rights to consider. These rights have been established through the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) of 1994. USERRA, a federal statute, protects service members' and veterans' civilian employment rights, such as protections from discrimination and reappointment at work (Department of Justice, 2015). The rights of Reservists are protected from initial employment throughout their tenure with the organization. The statute generally protects Reservists' nonmilitary employment rights while they concurrently serve in the Armed Forces. Under USERRA, the following are legal requirements that employers cannot deny a Reservist (Department of Justice, 2015):

- Initial employment
- Reemployment
- Retention in employment
- Promotion
- Any other benefit of employment

Additionally, Reservists have the right to

- Military leaves of absence
- Prompt job reinstatement after service duty
- Accumulation of seniority benefits (as if they never left)
- Immediate reinstatement of health insurance (when they return)
- Maintenance of pension benefits
- Training/retraining of skills provided to non-Reservist employees

Table 12.2 Service Time Requirement for Reservists Completing Service

1–30 Days	→ Report next scheduled workday after service, safe transportation, and 8 hours rest
31–180 Days	→ Reapply to employer within 14 days
181+ Days	→ Reapply to employer within 90 days

These protections are not always clearcut. For instance, although Reservists are entitled to prompt job reinstatement after a service obligation is complete, that does not necessarily mean they are entitled to return to the same job they held prior to leaving. Employers may instead offer a position of comparable status, seniority, and pay to fit the organization's requirements. Similarly, if the Reservist was injured while deployed and that would impede their ability to perform their former job, an organization must make reasonable efforts to accommodate the disability, whether through revising the current position or finding an appropriate alternative. Concurrently, employers are required to maintain reemployment opportunities for a period of 5 years for any Reservist who is activated to serve on full-time active duty for a temporary period of time. On returning home, the Reservist has requirements for how quickly they are to report back to work. Depending on the length of the service obligation, the Reservist may have the right to take time away from nonmilitary employment prior to returning. The window between deployment and returning to the workplace is important as it allows the Reservist time to reacclimate, resolve issues that may have arisen while gone, and begin closing a potentially difficult chapter of their lives. Table 12.2 outlines the time requirements that Reservists must report or reapply to their jobs after being activated, depending on the length of deployment.

Legal Rights of Employers

Employers are afforded their own rights and protections as soon as they hire a member of the National Guard or Reserve. As noted, service members have training obligations that can impede their civilian work schedule. These training schedules are often known months in advance, and Reservists have a responsibility to provide sufficient notice to their civilian employers about all service obligations. Service members have paperwork (called "orders") that

clearly defines when their drill or training occurs. This paperwork can be provided by their unit commander and is a common request of employers. Service members are responsible for providing the paperwork on request. Advanced notice requirements are fairly loose and can cause issues, but the Reservist should always be able to produce written documentation from their unit leadership that details the dates of training or deployment that may conflict with work. Civilian employers can ask Reservists for documentation, and the Reservists are expected to provide it to their employer on request.

While Reservists are deployed, organizations are afforded additional protections that allow for some flexibility. For example, organizations are not required to hold jobs for as long as the service member chooses to or is away for service. Instead, a temporary replacement can be hired to fill in for the activated Reservist to help for the duration of the deployment. Once the Reservist returns to work, the temporary employee may be retained, released, or transferred to a different position. Organizations are also not required to maintain employee health benefits or pay the Reservist their salary. The military covers the Reservists' health insurance costs and compensates the service member for their time; however, as noted in the next section, some organizations choose to maintain some benefits for their Reservist employees as part of being a military-friendly employer.

The Business Case for Reserve Component Talent Management

Talent management is often seen as consisting of three prongs of human capital management: (a) assessment, (b) development, and (c) retention. The term also connotes a recognition that an organization's talent (i.e., employees at all levels) provides a foundational strength for meeting an organization's strategic objectives. Reservist talent management may be particularly critical as well as challenging for employers. Reservist employees represent a significant source of talent for organizations, including employees, individual contributors, managers, and executives at all levels and in all professions. Compared to a civilian employee in a related job and with similar years of experience, a Reservist often brings to the table a wealth of additional broadening experiences and team, project management, self-management, cross-cultural, and leadership competencies. For example, when comparing two junior-level financial analysts—one a civilian and one a Reservist—each with

a bachelor of science degree in finance and with 2 years of work experience in the same healthcare organization, the Reservist may already have had significantly greater responsibilities than his or her civilian counterpart. Often, the Reservist has already led a 20- to 40-person platoon in complex field training exercises requiring strategic and tactical planning equivalent to that required of civilian midlevel managers. These additional Reservist employee competencies should to be acknowledged and leveraged by the civilian employer's talent management practices.

Along with a wealth of additional competencies, Reservist talent represents potentially significant challenges for employers in all three prongs of the talent management equation. On the selection and assessment prong of talent management, employers as well as Reservists report uncertainty in civilian/military cross translation of competencies gained in military and civilian jobs and organizational experiences (e.g., some military occupations that are directly related to combat arms positions do not have directly comparable civilian occupations). Even in the majority of cases where civilian and military occupations are comparable (e.g., truck driver), the Reservist often has gained additional competencies as part of their military service. Employers' typical assessment and selection processes often neglect to measure the additional competencies fostered by military service. In addition, research suggests that employers are prone to stereotyping and other biases about military service (e.g., the perception that service members suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder or are not skilled in collaborative or participative leadership) that may attenuate the validity of their judgments during selection and assessment processes (Stone & Stone, 2015).

Lack of knowledge about the service member's military duties also may hamper an employer's ability to provide appropriate talent development initiatives for Reservist employees. For example, the Reservist may already be skilled in areas where their civilian employer assumes additional training is required. Reservists participate in a great deal of training, such as in leadership and problem-solving, and much of this training can be valuable across organization types. On the other hand, Reservist employees may have additional and unique talent development needs that their civilian counterparts may not have, including the need to be able to manage the constant transitions between their civilian and military jobs and navigate across organizational cultures.

Retaining Reservist talent can also pose a challenge for employers. For many Reservists, there may be a disconnect between their military and

civilian pay. Senior Reserve leaders can often make a significantly higher salary in their civilian jobs than in their military jobs, causing them to question the feasibility of maintaining their military service as they move up the ladder in their civilian career. On the other hand, some Reservists receive a higher compensation package from the military than from their civilian work, thus causing potential retention issues for the civilian employer. In both cases, it is incumbent on the civilian employer to have valid assessment and performance management processes in place to identify and retain high-potential and high-performing Reservist employees, and recognizing the additional competencies that Reservist talent often brings to the table, in order to meet their strategic talent needs.

By far the biggest Reservist talent management challenges reported by employers have to do with the frequent and often unpredictable absences required by Reservist military service. As noted, the traditional perception that Reserve service entails only one weekend a month plus 2 weeks during the summer is erroneous and underrepresented. The military service time commitment, particularly for noncommissioned officers and officers, is often much greater. Scheduling around these absences poses significant challenges for civilian employers, particularly those in smaller organizations. Whereas large enterprises can often delegate duties and responsibilities that are a normal part of the Reservist's civilian job, small organizations have fewer employees who are more likely to be responsible for filling multiple roles and job descriptions. When Reservist employees are activated for a long-term duty assignment, their employing organizations may struggle to reassign the workload without missing a beat. As a result, morale among coworkers who must bear additional duties to support their Reservist colleagues during their absences can also suffer. Managing and communicating expectations around Reservist service absences is key for effective talent management across the workforce in both large and medium-small enterprises.

Challenges Faced by Reserve Component Talent

To effectively manage Reservist employees, an understanding of the individual challenges faced by Reservist employees is imperative. These challenges primarily stem from the continuous and ongoing transitions that Reservists face as they navigate two jobs and two organizational cultures. Inherent within these ongoing transitions are potential role conflict,

identity conflict, work–life balance, and career management challenges, discussed below.

Continuous and Ongoing Transition

Military-to-civilian career transitions are often thought of as a one-time occurrence that occurs for active duty service members transitioning out of the military; however, Reservists go through a major military–civilian job transition at least twice per month (from civilian to service member for monthly service commitments and back to civilian life) as they serve their monthly commitments. As previously noted in this chapter and the other chapters in this book, military organizational culture is quite distinct from that of many civilian organizational cultures. The Armed Forces operate under a disciplined, hierarchical structure, whereas nonmilitary organizations are generally less rigid and structured. From long work hours to uniform and training obligations, Reservists who are also working in a nonmilitary job are required to repeatedly adapt their behaviors depending on the work environment they are currently in. The bimonthly transition can be stressful as the Reservist is forced to make adaptations that may be significantly different from their nonmilitary employer. Table 12.3 offers a simplified visual comparison between military and more traditional workplace cultures. Although the table offers insight, it should not be broadly applied across all organizations and workplace cultures as every organization is different.

Table 12.3 Comparison of (Typical) Military Versus Nonmilitary Workplace Cultures

<i>Military Culture</i>	<i>Corporate Culture</i>
Hierarchy/vertical structure	Matrix structure
Clearly defined roles and structure	Ambiguity in roles and structure
Clearly defined career progression with fixed terms of enlistment	Less-defined or undefined career progression without terms of enlistment
Organization-defined values and beliefs (protect citizens of the nation)	Corporate culture-defined values and beliefs (grow the organization)
Collectivist, mission oriented	Individualistic, individual focused
Pay determined by rank and service time	Pay determined by market value
Rules of conduct enforced by law	Rules of conduct enforced by employer

Role Conflict

With a variety of cultural differences and expectations associated with each of their employment roles, Reservist employees may experience challenges relating to several types of role conflict. Interrole conflict can occur when the behaviors expected for one job conflict with the expectations in the other job. Potential examples of interrole conflict can occur with any of the numerous examples of cultural differences between the Reservist employee's military and civilian organizational cultural role expectations. As an example, cultural differences in how leadership is expected to be enacted can cause interrole conflict. Reservist employees may be expected to take charge and explicitly tell subordinates what to do during certain military exercises, whereas in their civilian jobs a more collaborative or facilitative leadership approach may be expected. The reverse may also be true—where employees are expected to take charge and show more initiative in their civilian role than in their military role—depending on the requisite military and civilian job role requirements. In another example, organizational cultural differences in norms and values related to taking initiative and selfless service can lead to interrole conflict. In a military culture, there may be an expectation that members—regardless of their formal position or role—step up and show initiative to address a gap that is evident in order to accomplish a task. This same behavior in a civilian organizational context may be seen as undesirable and could be seen as competitively “showing off” in order to make one's coworkers look like slackers. The strong cultural military value and norms around the core military organizational value of “selfless service” may lead Reservist employees to volunteer for undesirable task assignments in their civilian job, thinking that the volunteering will be recognized and rewarded during performance appraisal time when in fact the behavior is seen as a lack of savvy in career management competencies. Thus, organizational cultural differences provide different lenses through which an employee's behavior is perceived and interpreted. Reservist employees face the challenge of learning and understanding these cultural differences in order to understand how their behavior in the military job role may be evaluated differently in their civilian job role.

Role ambiguity is another role challenge that Reservist employees may experience. When navigating a variety of role expectations, nailing down the exact specifics of the behavioral norms that are expected in the civilian versus the military jobs and understanding how these norms change over time as the job and organizational environments and concomitant demands change

can be challenging. As one example, a Reservist employee with whom we spoke regarding his experience related (with humor) how he immediately stood when his civilian chief executive officer entered a meeting, only to quickly realize and remember that this was not an expected norm for managers in his position in his civilian organization.

Another role challenge that a Reservist employee may experience is intraperson role conflict. This type of role conflict can occur when Reservist employees feel that they are being asked or required to do things that go against their values. For example, a person who likes to give their all to every job may experience intraperson role conflict when they realize that they must spread themselves out across their military, civilian, and nonwork roles and it is not possible to stay completely immersed in any one role. In this example, employers may offer time management classes and/or coaching opportunities in support of Reservist employees' managing of numerous roles and responsibilities.

Related to this example, role overload is perhaps the greatest role challenge for Reservist employees. Role overload occurs when the expectations associated with their civilian, military, and nonwork roles do not align; that is, it is not possible to accomplish all the behavioral and performance expectations associated with all of the roles. The Reservist employees with whom we spoke mentioned role overload as an issue most frequently, noting that performance of their Reservist military service roles often entailed many additional unacknowledged hours and days involved in traveling to and from their duty station, conducting preparations for their duty time, and after-action reviews of their military assignments. Likewise, as they progressed in their civilian jobs, the expectations for additional time devoted to professional development and performance excellence increased, so that even with the best personal discipline and time management competencies, perpetual trade-off and triaging decisions were required to navigate the role overload challenges between the military and civilian employment roles. Role overload, along with the other role challenges discussed here, can lead to stress, burnout, and reduced productivity in all roles. It is incumbent on employers to understand and address these challenges faced by their Reservist employees.

Work–Life Balance

With role responsibilities in both their military and civilian jobs, balancing the additional responsibilities of family and other nonwork roles can be

particularly challenging for Reservist employees. Research suggested that individuals vary in their preferred styles for balancing work and nonwork commitments (Cohen, Duberley, & Musson, 2009). These styles or strategies for balancing work and nonwork responsibilities include a *segmenting approach* (the individual keeps work and nonwork activities and identities separate); an *integrating approach* (individuals freely blend and integrate both work and nonwork activities throughout the day); and/or a *cycling approach* (individuals focus primarily on work or nonwork roles in cycles). For example, an individual who uses a segmenting approach may be careful about performing only work-related tasks while in the workplace and only performing home-related tasks while at home. An individual using an integrative approach, on the other hand, may be likely to perform work tasks while at home and vice versa, with few boundaries between their work and nonwork roles. An individual using a cyclist approach may gear up and focus all their energy on one role (e.g., their Reserve deployment) for an extended time period, to the neglect of their other roles, and then switch and focus on their other roles (e.g., civilian and/or personal) exclusively for a time. These work–life balance strategies are used by both civilian and military employees; the difference is that Reservist employees have an entire additional set of responsibilities to balance with their military service.

Keys to success in the use of any work–life balance strategy include the amount of control the individual has over their work and nonwork boundaries and their perceptions of how supportive their employer is of the pursuit of work–life balance (Allen, 2001; Lapierre et al., 2008). Because of the increased workload demanded by their military responsibilities with little flexibility, many Reservist employees experience low control over their work and nonwork boundaries; they must accomplish their military work during the designated weekend and duty times. Their employer’s policies and supervisor’s and organizational support of work–life balance thus become quite salient in the ways that Reservist employees are able to address work–life balance challenges. Employer best practices for acknowledging and assisting the Reservist with work–life balance strategies include explicit coaching conversations about how available the Reservist employee may or may not be (during each weekend rotation or deployment) to address their civilian work emails, client calls, or other responsibilities, and proactively planning for ways to fill the gaps when the Reservist employee is not available. In addition, a flex-time schedule and flex-place work arrangements can assist the Reservist employee with navigating the boundaries between their

roles. Research suggests that flexible work arrangements work best when there are agreed-on work deliverables and opportunities for open communication among all coworkers so that role responsibilities are clear, transparent, and acknowledged.

Career Identity

Related to role conflict and overload, Reservist employees may experience identity conflict in terms of their intersecting career and nonwork identities. Similar to interrole conflict, identity conflict can occur when one's values and behaviors associated with one identity are perceived as being different from, or conflicting with, the values and behaviors associated with another identity. Studies suggest that one's career identities are often a central component of their overall identity and sense of self-worth. For example, when introducing themselves, one of the first components of an introduction is one's job or career. The military as an organization is known for having strong and consistent structures that emphasize the organization's mission, values, and cultural norms in order to promote a strong personal military career identity. From wearing a military uniform to taking part in such recognized and automatic norms as saluting or farewell and promotion ceremonies, the socialization practices in the military provide for easy identification with one's military career. Likewise, many civilian careers also foster a strong sense of career identity, including workplace uniforms or dress codes for appropriate attire and shared values across the profession.

To handle their intersecting and potentially conflicting military and civilian career identities, several Reservists we interviewed said that they had to deliberately and mindfully don a new identity and mindset as they changed from their military clothing to their civilian clothing. Reservists we interviewed also reported using transition time—such as when commuting—to put themselves into the concomitant framework needed for their upcoming job role. For example, a Reservist employee may have an exceptional level of autonomy in their nonmilitary job, while having very little autonomy in their military role. Alternatively, a Reservist in the military may have attained a leadership position and be responsible for overseeing any number of service members during a drill weekend; however, they may be new in their nonmilitary job and be relegated to completing mundane tasks. Regardless of role, Reservists frequently need to

adapt their behaviors to fit with corresponding job responsibilities and the organization's culture.

Career Management

Managing careers in two different organizations can be challenging for Reservist employees. Military versus civilian organizational cultural differences related to career management are one source of this challenge. Career management in the military is considered both an individual and a leadership responsibility, with every effort made throughout the organization's talent management practices to reduce the ambiguity of suggested steps, performance metrics, and timelines for promotion. Emphasis is on developing the whole person, with continuous learning a bedrock of military talent and career management. Service members are scheduled and required by their military leaders to attend various trainings and military schools as an expected prerequisite for promotion to the next rank. In addition, for each Military Occupational Specialty, there are known positions and job experiences that are desirable for increased chances of promotion. The military performance management system is tied to career management processes, so that service members understand that they have a greater probability of landing positions and "stretch" assignments desirable for promotion when they have received favorable performance reviews. The military performance management system combines a graphic rating scale approach (with ratings on performance of military core values, e.g., selfless service); detailed text, a management-by-objectives approach (with written comments providing behavioral evidence and evaluative comments regarding how well the service member performed job-related duties and goals); and a forced-distribution rating system (with senior raters being expected/allowed to provide a constrained percentage of "top-block" or highest category ratings). At nearly every rank, a service member is rated on their own performance and how well they develop their subordinates. Career management thus is seen in the military as a responsibility for the entire organization and leaders at all levels, as well as an individual employee's responsibility.

In contrast to general career management processes in the military, civilian career management processes generally place greater locus of control on the individual. Unlike previous notions of careers being a linear

progression in a single organization, modern conceptualizations of a career include the “protean” and “boundaryless” careers. A protean career is one in which the individual takes complete responsibility for their own career by continually scanning the job market, keeping their skills and competencies updated, and seizing opportunities for career growth or personal balance goals, even if this means job-hopping among a variety of organizations and job types. Likewise, a boundaryless career is one that is not limited by organizational structures and may include a patchwork of part-time and entrepreneurial roles among various organizations.

These current career models, most relevant to today’s workforce, connote a heavy emphasis on self-directed behavior and career adaptability to manage one’s own career in a dynamic work environment. The employee is seen as having primary responsibility for learning the ropes and gaining an understanding of the implicit norms regarding what behaviors and job experiences are rewarded. In addition, the onus is on the employee to proactively seek promotion-worthy job experiences while avoiding less-desirable assignments and to develop their own mentoring and politically positive networks. The individual employee is seen as the primary “architect” and “self-agent” of their own career in civilian sectors (Briscoe, Hall, & DeMuth, 2006). The idea of one’s employer providing formal guidance and mechanisms for advancing in the company and into new roles, which is standard in the military, would be foreign in many civilian companies, where individuals are more commonly expected to take control of their career development and advancement.

Employer Best Practices in Supporting Reservists

Many of the employer-led best practices already discussed in other chapters, such as employee resource groups and mentoring programs, are also applicable for Reservist employees. Other frequently cited programs include veteran hiring initiatives, support for local veteran service organizations, volunteerism, and tailored job training for veterans. Additional opportunities intended to support Reservist employees are also available, which should be considered when establishing military-friendly programming. An appropriate starting point may be to connect with the local Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) representative in your area to schedule more in-depth training on employer responsibilities and related support

services. You can contact ESGR via their Customer Service Center at (800) 336-4590, Option 1, or by email at OSD.USERRA@mail.mil. ESGR state contacts can be located online (<https://www.esgr.mil/About-ESGR/Contact/Local-State-Pages>).

Established in 1972, ESGR is a Department of Defense program designed to promote the cooperation and understanding between service members and their civilian employers (ESGR, n.d.). ESGR representatives are available in every state, are well versed on legal rights of Reservists and organizations, and can serve as a liaison between Reservist service members and their employers. Periodic consulting with an ESGR ombudsman regarding service member employment obligations and issues is a highly valuable but underutilized resource for civilian employers. ESGR ombudsmen provide education and remain neutral through the process, with the intent on best meeting the needs of both the Reservists and the organization employing them. These resources can serve as a bridge between the employer and Reservist when work disputes occur. The ombuds (as they are called) are a free service provided by ESGR and can answer questions or address concerns that arise, providing an effective strategy for resolving disputes outside of the courtroom at no cost.

Additionally, ESGR annually recognizes employers who fulfill their legal responsibilities and those that go above and beyond in their support of their Reservist employees. Employees and others can nominate their employer or their boss for awards. (Information about the ESGR awards is available at <https://www.esgr.mil/Employer-Awards/ESGR-Awards-Programs>.) There are now seven ESGR-sponsored awards that recognize employers for their overall support of Reservists and their spouses, with awards generally offered in progressive forma (i.e., an initial award must be won prior to being eligible for the next tier). Organizations are generally nominated by one of their Reservist employees. Information about the different types of awards can be found on the ESGR website. The process is competitive, and the number of organizations recognized for some certificates or awards is limited. However, once selected, the corresponding certificates or awards are proudly displayed in many organizations today and are a symbol of recognition regarding how organizations meet the needs of their Reservist employees.

As noted previously in the chapter, Reservists are required to participate in military training monthly. The trainings occur at a unit or base generally near the service member's home; however, travel to training locations may require an extensive trip. Reservists working full time may then have a short

turnaround between jobs. Although service members have a legal right to 8 hours off between military duty and reporting back to work, that time does not necessarily include travel time or sleep. For Reservists required to travel 2 hours or more to their duty station, organizations can consider offering an early release from work or a later start time on returning.

Military-friendly organizations integrate numerous recommendations that have already been shared in this book and also apply to helping recruit, support, and retain Reservist service members. Other additional services can be offered to support Reservist employees in addition to the ones offered in the other chapters of this book. For one, providing full pay (i.e., paying the Reservist their full civilian salary regardless of their military salary) or differential pay (i.e., paying the difference between the military and civilian salary) to employees who are activated for service is a common approach for employers supporting Reservist employees. Active duty pay is often below what the Reservists are paid in their civilian job, and, as such, activation for deployment can cause financial hardship. Differential pay can help overcome new or ongoing financial expenses that are incurred during the Reservists' deployment. Organizations who choose to include differential pay as an employment benefit should consider how they implement their policy. The most frequent offering of differential pay occurs for Reservists being deployed overseas; however, employers interested in fully supporting Reservist employees activated for service are encouraged to consider extending the benefit for all military duty requirements. Additionally, organizations should clearly communicate their differential pay policies during the onboarding process to avoid unintentionally surprising their Reservist employees. Once activated, Reservists may also become ineligible to receive employer-sponsored health benefits, which could place undue burden on Reservists' families. Offering and maintaining health insurance for family members is a similar extended benefit provided by military-friendly employers that are effective with this population.

Perhaps most important, periodic discussions with employees who are also serving part time in the military can be beneficial. Established schedules to discuss service obligations, potential upcoming training or deployment conflicts, and any other concerns improves communication and transparency between both parties. Organizations can gain clarity in how the Reservist's time may be occupied in the upcoming months and be proactive in addressing potential issues. The allocated time promotes inclusivity on behalf of the organization to ensure the Reservist understands their dual responsibility is valued and supported.

Keep in Mind the Business Case for Reservist Talent Management

The recommendations that follow summarize best practices for employers' talent management practices for their Reservist employees.

Assessing, Developing, and Retention Policies

Valid assessment, development, and retention of high-potential/high-performing talent is a critical task for all organizations, and these talent management activities are especially important for managing Reservist talent. Reservist employees bring with them a wealth of skills and competencies that they develop during their military service duties, including leadership, teamwork, time management, self-discipline, resilience, and project management competencies. At the same time, Reservist employees are human, with inherent individual differences in their performance and potential in their civilian jobs. Valid, job-related talent management practices for assessing their performance and potential are critical to your company, so find ways to develop and address their competency gaps and manage their needs to retain these employees.

Include Reserve Service Experience in Your Human Resource Information System

An important but often-neglected tool for talent management is the organization's human resource information system. In order to leverage the additional competencies offered by Reservist talent, it is important to document the competencies that are continuously developed by their military service in Reservist employees. Outside of your organization, Reservists participate in a variety of intense and extensive training and development courses and field or deployment experiences throughout their military service, including language courses, college-level and degree-earning programs, and courses related to their military occupational specialty. In addition, Reservist employees frequently develop skills related to diversity and inclusion, adaptability, and cross-cultural navigation during their military exercises and deployments. Ensure that you measure and capture these

competencies during your performance management and talent identification assessment and selection activities.

Avoid Assumptions and Stereotypes With Valid Performance Management Systems

As much as possible, question the evaluative assumptions and interpretations made about a service member's behavior as being caused by their military identity and service. Studies suggest that service members are frequently labeled as "heroes, victims, or violent aggressors" in the way their behavior is interpreted and reported by various media outlets, including movies and television shows (Eisler, 2013). Rarely, if ever, can any individual's behavior or performance be explained by one evaluative label, as exemplified by research on evaluative biases such as the halo effect, contrast errors, and stereotyping shows. For example, a Reservist who stands at attention when their civilian supervisor enters a room may be perceived as overly bureaucratic or hierarchical in their approach to authority, when in fact the Reservist may simply be momentarily mixing up their two different organizational cultures. Likewise, Reservist employees who raise their voice may be perceived as verging on aggression, while civilian coworkers exhibiting the same behavior may be perceived as appropriately assertive.

The best employer strategies for avoiding these types of errors lies with using valid assessment and performance management systems that measure performance behaviors and job-related results and outcomes rather than relying primarily on subjective judgments of raters. For example, employers should make note of specific behavioral examples and provide immediate feedback to the Reservist employee about positive and negative performance situations. These behavioral examples and coaching conversations will help ensure there are fewer biases involved in how the supervisor interprets a Reservist's performance behavior and will also allow Reservist employees to understand how their actions are perceived.

Become Familiar With Military Culture and Values

The military–civilian knowledge gap exists between those who have served in the military and those who have not and thus may never fully understand

the military. But, organizations that make an effort to better understand who their Reservist employees are, the training they have received, and how the military has potentially influenced their development will benefit from these efforts. As repeatedly noted, the military is similar to all other organizations, where a culture is developed, reinforced, and instilled into its members. Despite taking off their uniform after each training or deployment, Reservist employees maintain aspects of a military identity, while also receiving exposure from their personal lives, family, friends, and broader environmental surroundings. The merging and sometimes contradicting cultures help shape Reservist employees' work beliefs and core values—each of which can be leveraged or addressed by organizations that seek to understand military operations. Leveraging military employee resource groups and sponsoring organization-wide military culture activities are two examples of ways to increase awareness among all employees of their colleagues who are also members of the military.

Acknowledge Intersecting Identities and Role Expectations of Reservist Talent

Research suggests that effective strategies to handle role conflict issues include the following: (a) *reactive role behavior*, or trying to do it all, and meet the expectations of all roles; (b) *personal role redefinition*, or personally prioritizing which role expectations are most aligned with one's own goals and values; and (c) *structural role redefinition*, or proactively communicating with role senders to negotiate different role expectations and priorities (Hall, 1972). Some employees may often start with a strategy of reactive role behavior and try to keep up with all the expectations from their role senders, including their military and civilian supervisors and coworkers, as well as fulfill the expectations in their personal roles. When this strategy fails to be effective, these individuals may prioritize various tasks in their own minds (or personal role redefinition) to alleviate some of the stress of not completing (perceived) lower priority tasks. Structural role redefinition requires proactive effort to directly communicate with role senders (e.g., supervisors, coworkers, family members) to gain agreement on scheduling rearrangements, task priorities, and taking some tasks off the plate. While each of these role-handling strategies is appropriate and effective in different situations, research suggests that proactive communication strategies

may offer the greatest opportunities for success and lead to lower rates of burnout. Thus, it will help employers to keep the lines of communication open and regularly discuss the strategic, tactical, and day-to-day role expectations of Reservist employees. Open communication about upcoming military assignments as well as civilian job responsibilities and top priorities will help both the Reservist employee and employer to navigate the sometimes-conflicting role demands as well as acknowledge the importance of both sets of identities. Regular one-on-one meetings and coaching sessions are a best practice for all leaders and are particularly efficacious for keeping the lines of communication open regarding Reservist employees' intersecting identities and roles.

Provide Flexibility for the Fluid Workload of Reservist Employee Talent

We discussed the strain an activated Reservist employee can have on coworkers who become responsible for filling their colleague's void while Reservist employees are away from their civilian job serving the country. Large enterprises often have the flexibility to hire a replacement or delegate a Reservist's job responsibilities to several remaining employees. Alternatively, small organizations are frequently left with a much larger gap to fill and can benefit from intentional management and preparation for activation of Reservist employees.

Prior to a Reservist's activation, organizations can begin cross-training all team members. The cross-training should consist of ensuring each position and employee in the department or unit can be performed by two or more employees. Cross-training has been widely used in organizations as part of succession planning, but rarely considered as a strategy for addressing Reservist activations. Through prolonged cross-training, employees should begin by teaching at least one colleague about their role and job responsibilities and demonstrate successful performance. On training completion, colleagues should fill the role of their trainer until they become proficient in each area of responsibility. The process should be repeated until every employee has learned at least one other position in the department.

If the decision is made to hire a short-term replacement for the activated Reservist employee, a current and accurate job description is required.

However, outdated and incomplete job descriptions often cause recruitment, training, and employee performance issues that can persist for extended periods. Particularly for smaller organizations, frequent reviews of existing job descriptions for accuracy and completeness can alleviate challenges experienced when Reservist employees are activated. Expanding annual examinations of job knowledge, skills, position requirements, and criteria for successful performance is recommended. These examinations can be completed any number of ways, including observation of employees' day-to-day tasks; employee, supervisor, and direct report interviews; and reviews of similar job titles across related organizations. Although committing to updating a job description can be time consuming, the payoff will be readily seen when a new hire is needed.

One final suggestion for addressing Reservists' activations is to be as proactive as possible in preparing for possible deployments. Although employers are well aware of the possibility, organizations rarely plan ahead of time, instead leaving to chance that their Reservist employee will not be activated. The lack of preparation in and of itself contributes to the challenges faced by smaller organizations. Even before notification of deployment, organizations can develop plans for delegating job responsibilities, communicating process or procedural changes, and adapting to a reduced workforce. The plans should be well thought out, documented, and involve participation from all stakeholders during the development process. Similar to succession planning, being proactive about how the organization would address a Reservist employee's potential deployment can reduce the overall frustration and negative impact felt by leaders and coworkers.

Provide Structures to Assist With Continuous Transitions

The transition back into the nonmilitary workplace can be especially challenging for a Reservist deployed for an extended period. Just as life continues to move forward at home for a Reservists' family, organizations continue to grow, develop, and change. Reservists, however, are often unaware of all that has transpired since their last day at work. The return back to their nonmilitary job leads to potentially new stressors as organization structures, reporting lines, priorities, and challenges in the organization all have evolved. These changes are generally communicated to employees as they happen, but Reservist employees do not receive the same communications. Thus,

Reservist employees need to be brought up to speed about everything that has happened since deploying.

A consolidated onboarding program can be used to help reintegrate Reservist employees after deployment. Whereas onboarding programs traditionally consist of paperwork, job training, and a tour of the facilities, a consolidated program would address only the identified needs of the returning employee. The onboarding should begin on the first day back to work and be a requirement before returning to perform the actual job. Consolidated onboarding programs for Reservists should be well designed and include feedback from Reservists, supervisors, and incumbents during the development stage. Similar to traditional onboarding programs, paperwork for reinstatement is likely necessary. Beyond paperwork addressing benefits, responsibilities, and expectations, a one-size-fits-all approach would likely not be appropriate; however, some common characteristics to properly onboard a returning Reservist employee include the following:

- Training on new systems, software, or equipment.
- Updated organization structure/chain of command.
- Scheduled introductory meetings with employees who have started since the Reservist left and who the Reservist may directly or indirectly engage.
- Meeting with direct supervisor or senior executive to share updates on organization priorities, goals, and overall strategic plan.
- Formalized reintegration training to reflect existing culture and employee expectations.
- Presentation of the internal, local, and national resources available to assist returning veterans.

Organizations may also consider identifying a “buddy” colleague to assist with the onboarding process. Buddies may be military-affiliated employees or anyone with background knowledge about both the organization and veteran transitions. While returning Reservist employees have more knowledge and insight into the organization than a brand-new employee, procedures, personnel, strategy, and performance expectations may have changed. These changes often go unannounced or overlooked for a returning Reservist employee and may cause frustrations for both Reservist employees and their employer. A buddy can thus be assigned to the Reservist to help bring that

employee back up to speed over an extended period of time. Buddies can begin connecting with Reservist employees even before the service member returns to their job or on their return date. Most important, the buddy and Reservist need to define relationship expectations, communication strategies, and frequency for discussing challenges of the reintegration process. Similar to new employees, it takes time to fully acclimate to a new culture and organization, and a buddy can serve as an important go-to resource for Reservist employees.

Each of the outlined strategies already exist to some extent in organizations today. USERRA regulations represent the floor or lowest level for supporting veterans, with many truly veteran-friendly companies implementing additional programming and services. As each organization is unique in their demographics (i.e., industry, size, function, and veteran/Reservist employees) the strategies may or may not be appropriate. Organizations should closely examine available strategies with current and future workplace needs. Once developed and implemented, continuous assessment and reevaluation of needs can ensure military-friendly programming is relevant and advantageous for all.

Conclusion

Despite roughly 40 percent of the armed services being comprised of Reservists, support for military veterans who are transitioning from active duty is often at the forefront of employers' military-friendly programming. Members of Reserve components—which include both Reserves and National Guard service members—acquire similar skill sets to their active duty counterparts and are likely to seek employment in organizations near their duty station. Organizations interested in hiring and retaining Reservist employees can benefit from this chapter by implementing many of the practices discussed and furthering their own knowledge regarding military support and transition issues. Though sometimes difficult to see or support, the knowledge and skills retained by Reservist service members are desirable and transferable into nonmilitary organizations. By improving efforts to be military friendly to all who serve, organizations can make themselves even more appealing to prospective Reservist employees, in turn providing a competitive advantage to a well-trained and disciplined talent pool.

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