

## Stop saying you want to “Get your foot in the door”

One of the most gratifying things about working with transitioning veterans is sharing my personal transition story and the lessons I have learned since retiring from the military with those who are coming behind me. One opinion I often share is not something you *should* do, but rather something I recommend you *stop* doing; I recommend removing, “get my foot in the door” from your vocabulary. We all hear this phrase and speak these exact words regularly. However, before uttering this phrase again, consider you might be sending the wrong message.

“I’m looking for an opportunity to *get my foot in the door* with a great company like yours.”

Most have said this to a recruiter or hiring manager at least once. This is your way of telling an employer that you know you are not entitled to a huge salary and great leadership responsibilities as soon as you join their organization. You recognize the job market is tremendously competitive and you may need to come in at a level lower than your current compensation and scope of leadership. You know it might take some time to “learn the ropes” and assimilate into a new culture. You are OK “paying your dues” while you increase your business acumen and learn how to make a meaningful impact in a corporate environment. You are the perfect candidate, with a great attitude, and you communicate this by telling anybody who will listen that you don’t expect to be hired as a Vice President- you just want to “get your foot in the door.” While your intentions are noble, you might be shooting yourself in that very foot before getting it in the door- look at this from the employer’s perspective.

Understand *why* the manager is hiring- there is a hole on her team and she is not operating at 100%. She can’t accomplish her mission fully without hiring another person. Consider the time she spends reviewing resumes and conducting interviews; this is time away from her work and it is increasing her backlog. If she includes members from her team in the interview process it compounds the time spent away from high-priority work. This is not optimal; her team is not firing on all cylinders and she genuinely hopes the next candidate she interviews (YOU) is the one- the perfect fit for her team. She wants to hire you and get her team back on track, at 100% and once again focused on her business priorities. She wants YOU to WIN. When you tell her you really hope to “get your foot in the door” there is a good chance she will hear, “Once I am on your team I will be looking for other opportunities in the organization and I plan to jump ship as soon as something that looks better comes along.” She wants to hire a candidate that is fully committed to helping her team achieve greatness- a person who sees her open position as a *destination*, not a *revolving door*. When you jump ship, she must go through the entire hiring process all over again. This is obviously not the message you want to communicate; choose a different way to express your willingness to learn and grow in the organization and show your eagerness to join *her* team.

Good corporate leaders, just like good military leaders, want to develop their people so they advance and succeed. They won’t expect you to sit in the same role forever; they know you are ambitious, capable and have goals for your career. They will, however, expect commitment and loyalty from you. This is no different than military leaders you may have served under. Think about this when speaking to recruiters and hiring managers in organizations you hope to work for; think about the employer’s perspective and find a better way to communicate your primary objective is to contribute to the team and help them achieve their business objectives. There are better ways to say you want to “get your foot in the door.” Try something like this instead:

“I am excited to have the opportunity to work for a company that values professional development- a place where I can learn, grow and contribute to the mission over a long-term, meaningful career. I recognize that this is a people-development company, which is one of the things that most attracted me to your organization.”

At my company, we like to say, “Bloom where you are planted.” This is to say, give 100% to be the best you can be in your current role. Don’t focus on what you think your next job should be. Do this and you will build a great personal brand in the organization and doors will open for you- doors you may not even know exist. Doesn’t that sound a lot better than “getting your foot in the door?”