

HR Opportunities

One of the most common military career fields that folks mention when asked what civilian career interests them is human resources. The challenge or opportunity, whichever your viewpoint, is that there is a world of difference between the two.

I once chatted with a senior enlisted army-type who was interested in an HR position. I asked him to bring his resume and the job description with him when we met. The position was a senior HR manager for Boeing. Now Boeing is a great employer. There was a catch. We reviewed the resume and compared his Army experiences with the job description. The conversation went generally ok on the items listed on the primary responsibilities. However, once the conversation hit the skills required, the hiccups began. When asked about FMLA, OCA, EEOC, TCHR, ESOP, 401K, FSA, and benefits management to name a few, there was a blank stare.

I then asked about managing contracts. He replied that he had managed contracts. I clarified with a “no, labor contracts”. Once he understood that I was referring to unions, he replied none. I explained that with 25 years as a HR director, I was not qualified for that position. My experience was always in non-union environments where I worked daily to keep it that way. We then started a search for a non-union opportunity.

The point is that there is a world of difference between the military and civilian HR environments. Not to say that you can’t make it. However, you do need to do your research. Check out the opportunities to complete the HR certification. Onward to Opportunity is an excellent source. SkillBridge provides you with the opportunity to see the HR operation in action. Points to remember are that HR varies by industry, even company by company. Again, research will help you understand.

Best of luck.

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