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The military is a great place to fine tune or develop key skills that can lead to a long term career outside of the Service, if one chooses. Some of these skill areas are very much in demand, both in the military and civilian worlds. Auto and diesel mechanics are specifically an area of high interest to employers in the civilian area. For those who have served in the military as a mechanic, the transition to a civilian mechanic career can be rather easy, but it's not necessarily a challenge for those without experience either.

Les Davis, Regional Associate Vice President of Admissions-Military for WyoTech (a technical school focusing on auto and diesel mechanical trades, www.wyotech.edu), offers a number of key statistics that highlight the demand for mechanics in the US and how military personnel might fit in. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the nation's demand for auto mechanics is expected to have grown about 17 percent from 2010 to 2020, adding 124,800 jobs for a total of 848,200. "With knowing the need for mechanics and that the veteran unemployment rate is

at almost 11 percent, there should be an all-out effort to reach as many veterans as we can to fill these positions," says Davis.

Reaching out to as many veterans as possible to fill these positions is exactly what one company, Penske Truck Leasing, is doing. Ron Schwartz, Director of Staffing for Penske Truck Leasing, says, "We have found great success in hiring veterans for our positions in the organization, primarily in the vehicle maintenance, maintenance management, CDL truck drivers, and logistics fields." In fact, Penske has been very successful in their efforts to hire veterans in the field of vehicle maintenance. "Last year (2012), we hired over 200 people within vehicle maintenance and maintenance management, who identified themselves as veterans," says Schwartz.

From Penske's perspective, the skills veterans acquire through their military service are readily transferable to civilian careers, especially within the mechanic career arena. "Most certainly, the technical skills necessary in the vehicle maintenance world transfer to our organization," says Schwartz. "Naturally,

when someone joins Penske Truck Leasing's fleet maintenance team, we provide robust training on our processes, systems and ongoing training of vehicles because the technology is ever-changing." Penske has found that the dedication and work ethic of veterans complements their organization's values very nicely.

It should be noted that just because a company like Penske Truck Leasing might hire a veteran mechanic, that does not mean further training is not required. Technologies change and learning never really stops. Penske, for example, will train anyone new to their maintenance organization on the companies process and technologies—this is a key to success in their role at the company.

More specifically, "In terms of mechanical aptitude, it depends upon the specific vehicles and technologies of the vehicles the veterans have worked on during their military service. Penske Truck Leasing has developed its own internal Technician Certification Program (TCP) backed by National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) to provide



continuous ongoing training for all of our maintenance associates,"

says Schwartz.

Overall, about 25 percent of Penske's workforce is involved in fleet maintenance and Penske highly respects and values the experiences veterans bring to its organization. "We have attempted to get in front of as many veterans as we can to share the great career opportunities we can provide," says Schwartz. One way they try to reach veterans is to actively recruit at technical training schools across the country for diesel mechanics.

"I will note that we are seeing an

Working Wrenches

increase in the number of veterans leveraging their GI Bill status for training in these technical schools across the county,” says Schwartz. “This combination of hands-on experience from a veteran’s military service plus the formalized technical training is a great combination for Penske to consider when hiring.”

From the technical school side of things, they too often look to recruit veterans for training. “WyoTech has a specific military admissions team who are all veterans themselves,” says Davis. “Our military team works with active duty transitioning service members on all military installations throughout the United States as well as National Guard and Reservist.”

WyoTech has also found that the mechanic skills learned in the military are a solid foundation for a civilian career.

But, sometimes, a veteran might need just a little more training to get that perfect job.

“We have worked with service members who may have needed a little more training as

they leave the military,” says Davis. “We also work with service members that have been in the military six to 10 years or longer and need training on the latest technology in our industry.”

The training provided by technical schools can also help for those entering the military and it is later re-applied to civilian life. WyoTech has found that if someone completes their technical education with them, then they have an opportunity to go into the military at a slightly higher rank. “I have no doubt as a retiree from the military that our graduates would make awesome mechanics in any branch they would serve in,” says Davis. The combined education with work in the military would ultimately make the veteran very marketable.

One of the great things about quality technical schools like WyoTech is that they care about their graduates. WyoTech, for example, assists veterans, guardsman, and reservists in many ways. “When our active duty service members are leaving the military they are seeking training that will lead to a career,” says Davis. “When they are getting ready to graduate our career service department works with them to build their resume and get them in contact with employers who are looking for their skill sets.”

The training at most technical



Working Wrenches

schools is not too lengthy either. WyoTech's training is around nine months long. Veterans can be in and out of school within a year and into a career. "33 percent of our population consists of veterans at our six campuses located around the U.S.," says Davis. "We have had numerous veterans tell us it was WyoTech's large student veteran population that made WyoTech so attractive to them."

Couple the training one receives in the military and or at a technical school with a company such as Penske Truck Leasing, and the opportunities for those transitioning from military to civilian life are quite real. "Fleet maintenance is a big part of what Penske does every day and we employ over 4,300 maintenance technicians that go through over 40 hours of rigorous training annually," says Schwartz. "Given the demand for fleet maintenance, Penske has been making a concerted effort to hire veterans within its ranks."

Penske Truck Leasing is a \$5.1 billion company headquartered in Reading, Pa. and it is one of the largest transportation services providers in North America. Founded in 1969 by racing legend Roger Penske, Penske Truck Leasing employs about 20,000 people. The company provides full-service truck leasing, fleet maintenance, truck rent-

als, used truck sales, and logistics. The company operates a fleet of approximately 215,000 vehicles for its own use and on behalf of its customers combined. Penske Truck Leasing encourages interested veterans to connect with us at www.gopenske.com/careers/veterans and we thank them for their service.

Reflecting again on the U.S. Department of Labor statistics that note the demand for auto mechanics is expected to have grown about 17 percent from 2010 to 2020, adding 124,800 jobs for a total of 848,200; and, noting again the high unemployment rate of 11 percent for veterans, a career as a mechanic—whether you already have some experience or not—is worth considering. 

