



THE INSTITUTE OF  
LEADERSHIP

# Summary of Military Skills and Productivity Skills Report 2023/2024



## Key Points

1

According to the report "Battlefield to Boardroom" by The Institute of Leadership, 86 percent of veterans express that there is still a lack of comprehension among business managers regarding the seamless transferability of military-honed skills into civilian settings.

2

Paradoxically, the UK faces a profound skills gap, for which Service leavers are ideally suited to fill and yet perceptions of veterans' skills remain a persistent barrier.

3

The findings from our research indicate that there is a strong alignment between veterans, Service leavers, and the businesses and organisations that employ them. This highlights the valuable connection and shared understanding that exists.



**Recognition**

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# Introduction

The Institute of Leadership conducted comprehensive research between 2022 and 2023 to investigate the valuable and transferable productivity skills veterans and Service leavers bring to organisations.

The resultant white paper 'Veteran Productivity Skills' (2023) \* encompasses two distinct survey audiences: veterans and Service leavers, as well as employers of veterans.

The survey results shed light on critical insights regarding productivity skills, industry representation, job roles, gender balance, age demographics, and preferred skills in military and civilian environments. The white paper reviews relevant literature and highlights veterans' positive impact on productivity, drawing from studies in various industries. It outlines the benefits of veteran productivity skills and highlights their role in driving business success, increased output, cost savings, innovation, employee engagement, reputation building, competitiveness, and operational excellence.

The research also aims to serve as a comprehensive resource for veterans, Service leavers, employers, educators, and organisations invested in supporting the successful transition and productive integration of veterans and service leavers into civilian careers.

By recognising and harnessing the unique skills of veterans and Service leavers, we can foster an environment that enables their productivity and facilitates their contributions to the UK workforce.

# Strengths of Veterans and Service Leavers

The white paper identifies a range of strengths that veterans and Service leavers possess that can significantly contribute to their productivity in civilian careers:



### Problem Solving and Decision Making:

Military training instills critical thinking skills, strategic planning, and the ability to make decisions under pressure.



### Leadership and Teamwork:

Veterans are experienced team players who understand the value of collaboration and cooperation.



### Work Ethic and Discipline:

Veterans and Service leavers exhibit a strong work ethic and commitment to their role.



### Resilience and Adaptability:

Service often exposes individuals to challenging and high-pressure situations, teaching them to adapt to changing circumstances and persevere through adversity.



### Professionalism and Integrity:

The military places great emphasis on integrity, professionalism, and a strong sense of duty.



### Technical and Specialised Skills:

Depending on their military roles, veterans and Service leavers often possess specialised technical skills such as engineering, logistics, communications, healthcare, cybersecurity, and more.

Paradoxically, the UK faces a profound skills gap, for which Service leavers are ideally suited to fill and yet perceptions of veterans' skills remain a persistent barrier.

## The most important productivity skills brought to a civilian employer by Service leavers and veterans:

When asked to rank the military productivity skills in order of importance within a civilian environment we see problem-solving as the most important and time management a close second.

1. **Problem solving**
2. **Time management**
3. **Consistency of message**
4. **Embracing change**

When asked for additional productivity skills they felt would be used effectively in a civilian environment we see this:

1. **Leadership**
2. **Ability**
3. **Decision making**

## Methodology

Of the 825 responders to The Institute's first survey aimed at Service leavers and veterans currently in civilian employment, 95.39% (787) **had served, or are serving in, the Armed Forces.**

The survey had a wide distribution of industry representation: **education** and **training** had the greatest number of responders at 12.97% (107), followed by **consultancy, healthcare, engineering,** and **defence.**

**Senior managers** represented 26.42% (218) of responders, closely followed by **managers**, whilst 86.91% (717) of responders were **male** and 12.36% (102) **female**, which is representative of the current gender balance in the Armed Forces.

The survey covered a broad age range, with 42.18% (348) of responders **aged 51- 60 years**, and 2.30% (19) **aged 16-30.**



## Military Skills - What are the most impactful to you as a civilian employer?

When the employers were asked to rate the productivity skills that a veteran brings to a business, we see the following top three:

1. **Time management as the top skill**
2. **Problem solving skills**
3. **Communication skills**

The most sought-after skills by employers, that veterans bring are:

1. **Time management**
2. **Embracing change**
3. **Problem solving**

The survey also found that the following skills are being witnessed most in use by veterans in civilian businesses.

1. **Project management**
2. **Team leadership**

## Methodology

The second survey had a wide distribution of industry representation: **finance** had the largest representation with 19.72% (42) of the responders, **education**, and **training** responders with 12.21% (26), and then **healthcare** and **technology**.

Of the 213 responders 61.97% (132) had **not served in the Armed Forces**, and 72.77% (155) currently **employ veterans**.

**Senior managers** represented 28.64% (61) of responders, closely followed by **managers** with 25.35% (54).

59.62% (127) of responders were **male** and 40.38% (86) **female**.

The survey covered a broad age range, with 36.79% (78) of responders **aged 51 – 60 years**, 5.19% (11) aged **16-30 years**, and the remaining 58.02% aged **31-50**.

Please reference this report as follows:

The Institute of Leadership (2024) "Veteran Productivity Skills", available from <https://leadership.global/what-we-do/research.html>



## Survey Interpretations

The survey results reveal that there is a strong connection between veterans, Service leavers, and the businesses and organisations that employ them.

When questioned about the most crucial productivity skills, both veterans and Service leavers ranked time management as the top skill, closely followed by problem solving. Employers of veterans also emphasised the importance of time management as the primary skill sought, closely followed by the ability to embrace change.

When veterans and Service leavers were asked about the productivity skills they believed employers would prioritise, problem solving was ranked as the most important, followed by time management. Consistency of message was placed third, with embracing change ranking fourth.

## Summary of Key Findings

The two surveys and the following round tables held during the early part of 2023 demonstrate that productivity skills are essential to any employer, and there are several productivity skills that veterans and Service leavers possess that are sought after by civilian employers.

This is good news for any Service leaver or veteran, but they need to be supported to understand what productivity skills they have are the most important and how they capitalise upon them when applying for civilian employment.

From our discussions with veterans, Service leavers and the employers of both, there is a clear message that the success of veteran employment within a business is reliant upon a full top to bottom understanding of why veterans and Service leavers are being employed and what that strategy looks like.

Line managers need to be aware of the productivity skills veterans can offer. Senior management/ business owners need to be bought into the recruitment process to give the whole organisation the remit to engage in the veteran and Service leaver recruitment drive (leading from the top).

## Strategies for Enhancing Productivity

During the resettlement phase, any Service leavers or veterans need to be given the guidance on what type of productivity skills are needed and sought after by potential employers. Where they have an identifiable gap with productivity skills training should be made available that capitalises on their experience and clarifies how this translates to the productivity skills identified in this report.

Veterans and Service leavers benefit from having mentoring and coaching provided by either those who have been on a similar journey or the people who employ them. Through this coaching and mentoring they will get to understand first-hand the type of productivity skills needed and how they support civilian organisations to operate effectively. The old analogy of 'knowledge is power' cannot be truer in this phase of transition.

Service leavers need support with articulating their experiences into a viable and unique résumé. Many Service leavers are offered a generic résumé rather than one that has been specifically designed to articulate their individual skills and experience. There are many different organisations that offer this support to clearly indicate the productivity skills Service leavers have acquired in the military.

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## Recommendations for Action

Our veterans and Service leavers deserve support and need a consolidated approach to this golden opportunity that highlights the extensive range of productivity skills they possess and how those skills make them competitive in the marketplace.



### Collaboration

The Institute of Leadership recognises it cannot act in isolation; there are many different parties that need to come together to focus on the main veteran productivity skills needed by civilian employers. Veterans need support to recognise how these skills make them competitive in the marketplace. And as a collective, we need to focus on promoting veterans' skills to future employers.



### Workshops/Webinars

Workshops for committed employers that provide further assistance decoding résumé, spotlighting how veterans' productivity skills are battle-tested and seamlessly adaptable. They need to demonstrate how they are hiring people with great productivity skills that have been tested, often used daily, and integrate easily.



### Training and Development

Make employers of veterans and Service leavers aware of the ongoing training of the most valuable of productivity skills that reservist commitments offer. This is a two-way street; the Armed Forces benefit from how productivity skills used in a civilian environment can be utilised in a military environment. Equally the civilian employer has an employee that is experiencing new ways of using their productivity skills in an often high intensity environment whilst deployed on their reservist commitment.

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Published by the Institute of Leadership June 2024 © The Institute of Leadership

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