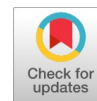


Study of Skills & Qualities of Indian Military Veterans Valued Most by Employers and Colleagues

Mishra Virendra Kumar, RK Jain



Abstract: 1) A skilled, dedicated and responsible employable persons is a resource employer are always looking for to have in their organisation. Employers across the world are facing a growing skills gap that impacts the productivity and long-term economic prosperity of the organisation. Majority of graduates and qualified professionals churned out from the universities and training institutes lack employability skills. Situations become difficult for the employers due to growing attrition rate and employers find it tough to cope up with situation when trained and skilled Human Capital leaves the organisation and there is not enough pool of resources to choose from. The workforce simply does not have enough employable workers and skilled candidates to fill an ever-increasing number of high skilled jobs. Indian Armed forces constitute one of the most trained personnel with very high level of motivation, trainable and possessing qualities most suitable to any organization today. Every year Indian Armed forces contribute over 60000 disciplined, hard & soft skilled, motivated and well-trained persons in form of Ex-Servicemen (ESM, Indian Military veteran or veteran) who retire from active service in the age group 40 - 54 years and still have enough productive and employable life ahead. Drawing from the pool of transitioning military for these types of jobs could be an excellent way to develop a pipeline of talent to fill the skills gap. Articles and papers cite the reasons why employers should hire veteran and what kind of skills veterans have. 2) Employers are often on the look-out for employees who are dedicated, committed, trustworthy and loyal to them while hiring new employees. Indian veterans are cross-trained in multiple skills and have experience in varied tasks and responsibilities and employable in all categories from senior & strategic leadership roles to junior level leader and ground level workforce levels. Employers, entrepreneurs, peers and colleagues of veteran were approached to give their views on the most sought-after skills and qualities they see in veterans as employees. The paper brings out the skills and employable qualities which Indian employers' value most in the veterans.

Keywords: Indian Military Veterans; Multi- Skilled; Skills & Qualities Valued in Veterans; Veteran at Workplace

I. INTRODUCTION

Employers across the world are facing a growing skills gap that threatens the productivity of the organisation in particular and nation's long-term economic prosperity in general.

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Graduates and qualified professionals churned out from the universities and training institutes lack employability skills. Situations become difficult for the employers due to growing attrition rate and employers find it tough to cope up with situation

When trained and skilled Human Capital leaves the organisation and there is not enough pool of resources to choose from.

The workforce simply does not have enough skilled work force to fill an ever-increasing number of high skilled jobs. Every year Indian Armed forces contribute over 60000 disciplined, hard & soft skilled, motivated and well-trained persons in form of Ex Servicemen (veteran) to the employable work force across the country [1]. These veterans are one of the most trained personnel with very high level of motivation, trainability and possessing qualities most suitable to the organizations today. Armed forces personnel retire from the active military service in the age group 40- 54 years but still have enough productive and employable life ahead [2]. Drawing from the pool of transitioning military for these types of jobs could be an excellent way to develop a pool of talent [3].

Various studies and papers indicate the skills and qualities in the veterans which the employers may find useful in the prospective workforce. Articles and papers cite the reasons why employers should hire veteran and what kind of skills veterans bring to the workplace to make them more efficient and productive [4].

This paper brings out more clarity in the skills and qualities which Indian employers' value most in the veterans. Employers and entrepreneurs were approached to give their views on the most sought-after skills and qualities they see in veterans, the potential employees. Industries should willingly be on the lookout for such skilled human resource available as Retired Armed Forces Personnel (referred as Veteran) [5].

II. BACKGROUND

Employability skills are the essential skills, personal qualities and values that enable one to thrive in any workplace. Most employers advertise for the hard skills they seek when posting a job opening, they also look for unadvertised soft skills [6]. Because these soft skills are usually not mentioned in a job posting, many veterans applying for jobs overlook putting these into their resume [7]. Employers place a lot of emphasis on finding candidates with the right skills and competencies for their organisations [8].



Companies while hiring, often look for workers who are dedicated, committed, trustworthy and loyal to the organisation. It is imperative that the employers be made aware of the valuable skillset, qualities and the traits the veterans bring with them to the workplace [9].

Accordingly, this paper endeavours to bring it to the knowledge of the 'seeker as well as the sought' about what an employer looks for in potential employees and what skills the veterans should focus on including in their capability matrix and the CVs [11].

III. OBJECTIVE

To study and understand the skills and qualities of Indian military veterans valued most by employers and colleagues in corporate world.

IV. RESEARCH RELEVANCE

Young veterans still have a lot of productive residual life after early retirement from Armed forces [13]. They are multi skilled, dedicated, disciplined and possess many skills which the industry needs [14]. They need to be made aware of the skills which are valued most by the Corporates [15]. This will enable the Indian veterans to hone up their skills further to enhance their employability for the second career [16]. Result would be applicable to all veterans irrespective of the services they belong to i.e. Army, Airforce, Navy or other paramilitary forces [17].

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is mainly exploratory in nature based on primary and secondary data using convenient sampling method.

- a) **Sampling Procedure** Convenient sampling was followed and respondents were approached through direct emails to various respondents in the industries known to employ veterans, through veterans and through social media groups. Also, questionnaire was sent to large group of veteran employers and hence bias towards the veterans can't be ruled out. Over 400 persons were approached to give their response.
- b) **Data Source** Primary Data is based on primary data collected from a sample of about 70 respondents through structured questionnaire. Interviews and interactions were carried out using the same questionnaire to gather the primary data. Secondary Data has also been collected from papers, articles to help frame the questionnaire.
- c) **Data Collection** Primary data was collected and collated through online Google form and also through physical filling of questionnaire. A total of 23 qualities were identified after referring the existing papers and articles on the soft and employable skills required by the industry requirements. Questionnaire were prepared in 5-point Likert format and data collected in a tabulated form. From the master table, sub-tables were produced.
- d) **Tools Of Analysis.** Data was reformatted in Microsoft Excel and also in tabulated format fit for analysis through SPSS. Percentage and statistical analysis were done to analyse the data to meet the desired objective.

VI. LITERATURE REVIEW

Sandeep Chaudhary (Feb 22, 2019) 'View: Made In Indian armed forces', has emphasized how hiring, integrating and engaging veterans in the workforce can add substantial value to an organization [18]. The article explains certain terms which were coined by armed forces and brings out the calibre of armed forces personnel which makes them stand out even in situation that are Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and ambiguous [31].

Abdul Junaid (N.D.) '8 Reasons Indian Companies Should Hire A Military Veteran' reasons giving 8 qualities why Indian veterans be hired to bring better management skills to the workplace in any organisation [10].

Ron Kness, (Jun 21, 2019) 'The Business of Hiring Veterans: 10 Traits that Make Veterans Stand Out' brings out the traits which the veterans bring to the workplace to enhance the productivity [21]

Ron Kness (May 31, 2019) 'Top 5 Soft Skills Employers Seek That Your Military Service Provides' brings out the 5 soft skills that employers seek and that the military service provides. These skills of the veterans can help organisations to enhance their effectiveness. [12]

Todd Jones (Dec 20, 2019) '3 Skills All Veterans Have That Make Them Great Business Leader' brings out the three main skills the courage, loyalty and team member mentality which helps a veteran to be a great business leader [8]

Skills, Traits and qualities employers look for in their employees.

Various sought-after traits/skills which the employers look for in their employees as scanned during the literature review is given below: -

1. Employee should be mature and intelligent enough to understand and follow the instructions, policies and guideline laid down by the organisation.
2. He should have the ability perform the duties even under stressful situations.
3. He should be adaptive to the organisation's requirement
4. Exhibit the necessary leadership skills who should be able to carry the team and in a collaborative and cohesive manner.
5. Employee should be committed, exhibit loyalty and dedication to the assigned responsibility.
6. Have good communication skills including interpersonal skills.
7. Be dependable and show Determination in performance of his duties.
8. A trust worthy and must exhibit the qualities of courage, sincerity and integrity.
9. Capable of decision making and managing the diverse resources made available to him in the organisation
10. Be ethical in his dealings.
11. Be a quick learner to adopt new technology or the changes.
12. Be a punctual employee adhering to the organisation's SOPs.

Research Gap

The focus of the previous studies and articles has been around the traits of the veterans which they would bring to the organisation [19]. However there has been very scarce details available on various aspects of the skills and qualities which the employers, colleagues or the hiring agencies value the most, especially in Indian context [20].

Various skills report in India comprehensively brings out the soft & hard skills availability in the Indian workforce, gaps in employability [21]. However, there is very little work done to understand what are the qualities and skills in the Indian military veterans which are valued most by the industry. This paper attempts to bring out these aspects taking their views on all qualities and traits of the veterans. Now knowing these skilled personnel are available, Industry has a vast pool of dedicated, motivated and multi skilled personnel available to choose from [22].

Data Collection

The structure questionnaire consisting of 23 statements giving affirmative and negatively connotation were prepared duly taking into consideration the inputs from pilot study, interaction with employers and HR staff [23]. The questionnaire was shared with potential respondents focussing those in and around Mhow Indore District in Madhya Pradesh, especially those where Veterans are known to be employed [24]. However due to prevailing COVID situation the questionnaire was shared in Google form online and respondents from places beyond Mhow also responded [25].

Employers and target population of varying sectors were approached and the questionnaire shared. Online Video conference was held and the issues explained to them. These respondents were from a varied sector as given at Table 1.

Table 1

Respondents from Sector /Domain	Number
Automotive	3
Construction	3
Defence equipments	6
Financial services	2
FMCG	6
Hospitality	5
Information & Infra Security	3
Manufacturing	7
Pharma	2
Power	2
Research Institute	2
Supply chain	3
Telecom / IT	14
Trading in agri commodities	1
Training & Development	12

Respondents were required to give the approximate number of veterans employed in their establishment. As given at Table 2 below

Table 2

Number of Veterans employed in the establishment	
Less than 20	58
More than 20	13
Total	71

Respondents were classified into four categories in the questionnaire. A total of 71 responses were received. It is presumed that views of these respondents are in echoed by others in their organisation in general. The is given as at was Table 3

Table 3

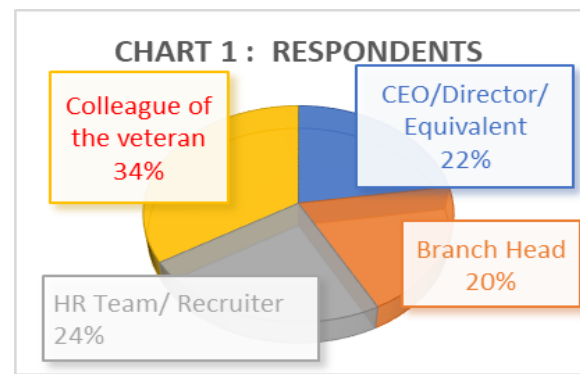
Designation	Numbers
CEO/Director/ Equivalent	16
Branch Head	14
HR Team/ Recruiter	17
Colleague of the veteran	24
Total	71

Findings and Data Analysis

Skills, Traits and qualities which veterans bring to the work place are explained below. The study found out the relative importance given by the organisations. Table at Appendix A gives the percentage of response from respondents to all 23 qualities. The detailed finding of the study is given in subsequent paragraphs and tabulated data as findings.

Respondents:

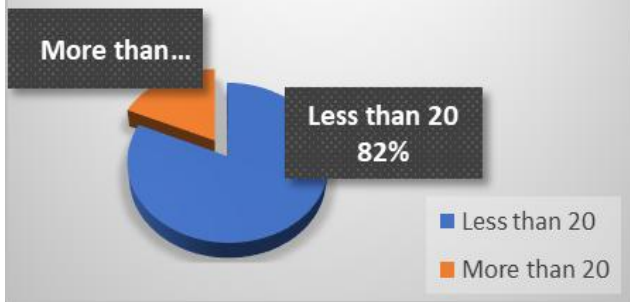
There were total of 71 persons who responded to the survey. They in someway or the other were connected to the veterans. Percentage of the respondents to the survey is shown in the pie chart 1.



Employer's Establishment

Out of the 71 organisation/ establishments from where the replies were sent by the respondents, 82 % of those had less than 20 veterans employed with them. It is shown in Chart 2

CHART 2: veterans employed in the organisation



Skills/ Qualities/ Traits of veteran employees valued by the respondents.

A total of 71 respondents graded the skills/ qualities of the veterans they valued. Percentage analysis of the strongly agreed/ agreed for each quality is as given at table 4.

Table gives the % of respondents agreeing to the statements about veterans.

Table 4

Ser No	Skills/ Qualities which makes the veteran a better employee as compared to others	% of respondents agreeing
1.	Leadership skills gets ingrained in them as they grow in the environment responsible for giving leadership roles	76%
2.	Ability to work in a team makes them adept at team work	79%
3.	Quick learner and Adaptability to service conditions	73%
4.	Coming from an organisation having people from all races, religion, culture and background, they possess diversity management and inclusiveness	77%
5.	Professional attitude to complete the task and perform their duty	73%
6.	Cross trained in multi skills makes them a good learner	77%
7.	Diligence and adherence to schedule throughout their military service makes them a great employee	70%
8.	Sense of duty and assumes ownership of assigned task	73%
9.	Ability to handle stressful situation	73%
10.	Strong Work ethics and core values of trustworthiness, service before self, etc	73%
11.	They possess creative thinking and problem-solving skills	68%
12.	Excellence in Communication and interpersonal skills	83%
13.	They are self-motivated and Self driven	75%
14.	They are organised and disciplined and bring this quality to the workplace	77%
15.	Capacity to work and take decision even under volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous situation	70%
16.	Their exposure and experience enable them to think global and act local	62%
17.	Determination to handle the assigned responsibility	70%
18.	Integrity and loyalty to the duty and assignment	80%
19.	Taking Responsibility and initiative	72%
20.	Commitment. Adept at handling problems without losing focus	75%
21.	They indulge in politics and religious discussion	9%
22.	They indulge in unionism	8%
23.	They are not punctual	18%

Highlights It is presumed that views of these respondents are in echoed by others in their organisation in general.

1. Three most agreed/ valued Traits/ Qualities by all

- a. Excellence in **Communication and interpersonal skills** 83%
 - b. **Integrity and loyalty** to the duty and assignment 80%
 - c. Ability to work in a team makes them adept at **team work** 79%
2. Three most disagreed/ valued Traits/ Qualities by all. Respondents disagreed about following issues about the veterans in their organisation
- a. They are not **punctual** 75%
 - b. They indulge in **politics and religious discussion** 73%
3. **Top 15 Skills and qualities valued most by the Respondents are amplified as under.** It is presumed that views of these respondents are in echoed by others in their organisation in general.
- a. **Communication and interpersonal skills.** A leader or a manager must convey his ideas, thoughts and instructions etc whether written or verbal, clear manner so as to be understood by the desired person. Also, for an effective team leadership interpersonal communication is an essential requirement. **83% respondents were of the view that veterans excel in Communication and interpersonal skills.**
 - b. **Integrity and loyalty** Integrity is the act of behaving in a manner expected from you when no one is watching you. Being loyal, one is expected to be faithful to the cause, ideal, custom and to the organisation. **80% of the respondents valued the Integrity and loyalty to the duty and assignment displayed by the veterans.**
 - c. **Team work.** Success of any mission depends on how the leader takes his team along and facilitates the team members to give their best. 79% of the respondents felt the veteran's ability to work in a team makes them adept at team work
 - d. **Diversity management and inclusiveness** A good leader should be capable of creating a good working environment with due regard to similarities and differences of all individuals. respondents valued this as an important quality of veterans. 77% of the respondents felt that coming from an organisation having people from all races, religion, culture and background, veterans possess **diversity management and inclusiveness qualities.**
 - e. **Multi Skills & Good Learner** 77% respondents valued this important aspect of the ability of the veterans to take on varying roles and learn new skills quickly.
 - f. **Organised And Disciplined** 77% respondents agreed that veterans are organised and disciplined and bring this quality to the workplace.
 - g. **Leadership skills** A leader sets the direction, inspires the team and leads them to the destination. Right from their birth into the armed forces, military men get trained to be part of the team and lead the teams. 76% of the respondents valued and agreed that **Leadership skills** gets ingrained in the military men as they grow in the environment responsible for giving leadership roles.
 - h. **Self-Motivated and Self Driven** 75% felt that veterans are **self-motivated and Self driven**

- i. **Commitment** 75% respondents were of the view that veterans are adept at handling problems without losing focus
- j. **Quick learner and Adaptability** Veterans are quick learner and adapt to service conditions well. 73% of respondents agreed that veterans are quick learner and Adapt to service conditions well.
- k. **Professional attitude** 73% valued the Professional attitude of veterans to complete the task and perform their duty
- l. **Sense of duty** 73% valued the sense of duty of veterans and that they assume the ownership of assigned task..
- m. **Working under Stressful situations** 73% of respondents felt that veterans have the ability to handle stressful situation.
- n. **Work ethics** 73% of respondents felt that veterans have Strong Work ethics and core values of trustworthiness, service before self.
- o. **Responsibility and initiative** 72% of the respondents agreed that veterans have a high sense of taking **Responsibility and initiative** for completing the assigned task.

Scope for future studies. It is presumed that views of the respondents are echoed by others also in their organisation in general. Since the scope was limited to understand the views of the persons from corporate from various sectors and domain in and around Indore and some known corporate persons online. Studies may be undertaken in future by researchers to study and analyse views from specific industrial sectors or organisation or types of jobs and may be specific to other places.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Veterans have qualities that had been drilled into them every day since beginning of their career and basic training that help them stand out over most civilian competitors [26]. Hiring and engaging veterans in the workforce can add substantial value to an organization. Military veterans returning to civilian life are very sought-after work-forces even for some major companies today [27]. They are some of the most highly skilled, adaptable and resourceful individuals that a company could hire. Today hiring departments use automated scanning softwares to scrutinise and filter out the applicants. Generally, it is during the interview where the true value of an individual is discovered. However, many veterans lose out on this count due to their failure to have suitable CV with military skills and qualities properly translated into civil version. Employers who have hired veterans in the past usually continue to do so because they have experienced the true worth of the veterans and what individuals with military experience and training bring to the table as employees. It will be worthwhile for the hiring agency to coordinate with the Armed Forces placement agencies to tap this pool of resources and earmark the veterans much before they leave their active military service and join the new company immediately after retirement.



VIII. CONCLUSION

Armed Force personnel turned Veterans are very methodically scrutinized by selection centres where the undergo very strict mental and physical abilities selection process. After that they go through years of rigorous training throughout their career. They have led large teams and are battle hardened leaders who have often come out with flying colours even during Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and ambiguous situation. Military experience for resource management has provided veterans with training and work experience valued by many employers across the spectrum of the sectors and domains. The adaptive, well trained, motivated and multi skilled human resource that also has aptitude to learn quickly is available to fill the gap in Industrial requirements which is facing huge skills gap amongst the workforce available for employment. Military personnel are often cross-trained in multiple skills and have experience in varied tasks and responsibilities.

Employers and companies can immensely benefit from hiring Veterans who bring with them tremendous skill set and can-do lot of value addition for enhancing efficiency and productivity at the work place. As can be seen in the study there are over 15 Skills and traits which have been valued most by over 70% of respondents. Veteran excels in their Communication & interpersonal skills, Integrity & loyalty to the duty and assignment, Team work, Punctuality and apolitical attitude. Hence hiring a veteran pays in enhancing the productivity of the organisation.

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