Maximising the impact of your internal military network

Key Enablers for Success

EMPLOYERS NETWORK
#militaryisgoodforbusiness

OA
OFFICERS' ASSOCIATION

	Start	Build	Integrate	Leverage
Considerations	• Ask the questions: 'What's the objective and purpose of starting a military network?' - 'What is it trying to achieve?' - 'What outcomes and benefits will it bring?' - 'How can success be measured?' • Determine if networks are appropriate for your organisation; will they impact on inclusion as a whole; will they disrupt the established lines of responsibility? • Ensure the network encapsulates a clear vision that links to wider organisational goals (and brand/culture). • Establishing senior 'buy in', with a champion on the board who can leverage support. • Set some initial aims and objectives and governance structure around the scale, size, outputs of the network but allow for fluidity - a network is not a static, controlled group. • Consider military/non-military mix? • Start small and be realistic about time to build. • Can you replicate the format of other networks within the organisation - LGBT, BAME, Graduate ? • Ensure a governance mechanism is in place and avoid 'scope creep'.	• As you start to grow and build the network, be open to support, advice and help. • Ensure effective communication which will enable the network to 'merge' into organisational activities and gain traction. • Make sure you involve non military people and use them as advocates to other parts of the business to broaden support for activity. • Identify the types of activities the network can undertake - e.g. mentoring.	• Understand which stakeholders need to be engaged in the activity and how you will communicate with them. • Use personalised communication wherever possible to promote engagement e.g utilising WhatsApp and/or intranet systems. • Look at the benefits of using internal vs external platforms for communication - where, when and how often are you communicating to and to whom.	• Capture the outcomes of the network - can they be measured and used as a barometer of impact. • Make sure there is a mechanism for feedback and development.
Benefits	• Helps to be recognised as an employer of choice. • Enhances brand reputation and supports CSR agenda in an organisation. • Opens up new opportunities for recruiting talent in your organisation. Identify cost benefits e.g. potential to save on recruitment costs.	• Spreads wider understanding of defence sector and military clients. • Helps bring in new talent pool - recruits often have accelerated promotion in organisation.	• Networks can help transition individuals into the organisation and build commercial awareness by learning through peers (with a cost benefit e.g. quicker for service leavers to assimilate working in organisation - therefore more productive quicker).	• An effective network can facilitate the transfer of skills across the organisation; break down of silos; foster innovation e.g. 'buddy scheme' can contribute to organisational and cultural know how. • The network can help the personal development of those involved in running the networks.

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Costs	• Think about the initial set up time. Is there agreement on travel and subsistence costs allocation. • Is this activity going to cost or save us money? What's the cost of not doing it? • Consider the cost of time for those involved - What else they could be doing and can you justify offsetting this cost?	• Collaboration across the organisation can cut down on time and resource allocation. • Understand what you can account for - sometimes having a dedicated budget can be counterproductive as it gets in the way of the delivery of activity, especially when a lot of activity is done through goodwill. • Make sure costs and responsibilities are spread across a team of people to ensure sustainability of activity. • Consider succession planning so that knowledge, experience and impetus is not lost.	• Can you use existing resources to support? Could company volunteering days be used and could this be a way of involving others in activity?	• Networks can result in cost savings in other areas of the business e.g. recruitment costs. Understanding the ROI can lead to greater engagement and support for the aims and objectives of the network. • Understanding the ROI can lead to accelerated decision making, buy in (especially at a strategic level) leading to enhanced satisfaction, so it's important to think about having impact measures (even soft ones). Consider linking to other external networks to capitalise on broader business benefits.
Challenges	• Be aware that some people can often be nervous about the perception of ex military personnel in organisations - some people don't like to identify themselves. • Understand the policies and framework of your organisation - sometimes you need to build activities rather then a network to achieve your goals. • Make sure rank does not become a feature, it isn't part of a civilian workforce and shouldn't govern within the network.	• Managing expectations - ensure everyone is aware of the objectives of the network, especially as it starts to grow. • Very important to make the network feel inclusive and part of the broader organisation. • Egos can often be involved especially when activities start to build profile, make sure you have good governance in place to deal with competing agendas.	• Need to ensure its not an 'exclusive club' but integrated into other programmes and opportunities across the business. Communication is paramount. • A good opportunity to think about how networks/sectors can come together, involve SME's and bring together different geographic locations.	• Make sure the network and activities are sustainable and are part of a broader organisational objective, there is a clear plan and visibility for activity across all relevant stakeholders to ensure you maximise impact