

Translating Your Defence Career to a Civilian Resume

One of the biggest challenges for most Defence personnel is how to translate their military careers into terminology that Australian employers can understand and appreciate.

Many find that they are hemmed in by their Defence careers and struggle to get taken seriously by recruiters and hiring authorities. So how do you write a resume that will have recruiters and employers picking up the phone to schedule an interview? The following are my top five tips for generating an effective Defence to Civilian resume that works.

1. **Know your target.** Before you can build an effective resume you need to understand what civilian employers are looking for. Many Defence personnel don't know what they are qualified to do so they go out to the market with a broad generic resume. Generic resumes don't work.

Recruiters are looking for candidates who appear a fit. You need to know what you are targeting so that you can build a resume that positions you from the outset as a match to their criteria. Spend time identifying what you want to target and then build a focused, well thought-out strategy to do this.

2. **Capture their Interest.** After you know what you are targeting and what employers in this industry want write a strong opening profile section that packages up your skills and expertise in a way that shows an immediate fit for these needs. This section can either be short bullet points or a brief paragraph that should tell them what you bring in terms of experience, skills and value.

Experienced Logistics professional offering over 10 years managing supply movement and transport for the Australian Defence Force. Skilled in air, sea and road freight with proven success working in logistics environments with zero error margin for delays. Excellent attention to detail and known for being able to handle the most challenging of logistics assignments.

- 3. Translate Your Job Titles to Civilian Terms.** When presenting your employment background translate your Defence job titles into terms employers can relate to. For example instead of Naval Writer you may use Financial Administration Officer or Clerk. If you want to add clarification you can follow the civilian job title description with your Defence title in brackets.
- 4. Identify Your Relevant Transferable Skills.** When writing the description of your role and achievements in each position make sure to place the focus on the relevant skills that translate to the civilian sector and omit or play down the non-relevant areas. Common transferable skills may be areas such as safety, risk management, leadership, procedural compliance, team work, communications, time management, problem solving to name a few. This will reinforce your background match to the role you are targeting. Leave out or minimize the focus on non-relevant areas such as weaponry skills or Defence specific technologies.
- 5. Results Talk.** Make sure in each role you include your achievements. These are your most valuable asset in your resume. Take the time to identify what you did that offered value in each role.

For example did you step up to take on additional duties? Did you contribute suggestions that improved anything or resolved a problem? Were you recognised for your performance in any way? Did you maintain strict compliance with safety procedures delivering a flawless safety record? Did you contribute to team results or morale? Take the time to really look at each role and identify what you offered in value.

My final tip is to be loud and proud of your Defence background. Defence personnel are highly valued by civilian employers but like any individual it's all about showcasing your relevance and value. Sell your exceptional training, experience and ethics whilst maintaining the focus on the areas relevant to the commercial world or government sector. Click here for more tips on [Defence resumes](#) or [transitioning to the civilian sector](#).