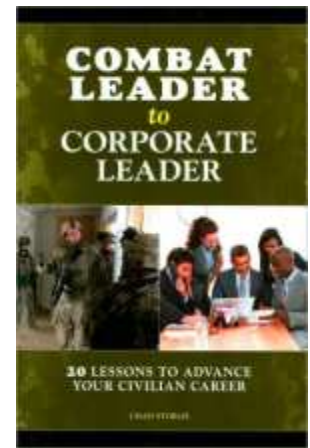


## Subject: Moving from “Can I?” to “I Can!” For Veterans in Their Career Transition & Advancement By Chad Storlie

The RAND Corporation, a well-respected research group, just published “A Needs Assessment of New York State Veterans,” that described the mental, physical, emotional, and employment challenges a select group of New York State military veterans (Gulf War II) were facing. A common theme in the report was the employment and employment satisfaction veterans were facing upon their return from combat to the civilian world. One veteran stated:



*“One of the big misconceptions . . . coming off active duty [is that] you walk on water. Companies are going to be coming to find you. They’re going to be recruiting you. [You] never really had that reality check, that . . . you’ve been out of the mix for years. And what you’re doing is not relevant to what’s going on in the civilian world. And they are more impressed with your Microsoft certifications than they are with your leadership time.”*

The unemployment rate, a tight job market, and questionable employer priorities are incredibly hard realizations for veterans, especially for younger veterans. The challenge for veterans and Gulf War II veterans just returning from combat in Iraq and Afghanistan is what to do with negative information and how to react. There are three stark choices: (1) Do nothing, (2) be pessimistic and (3) Understand & proactively act to apply military skills to what employers need. Veterans need to adopt and “I Can!” mindset.

The transition from “Can I?” to an “I Can!” mindset requires an incredibly strong sense of acceptance and the ability to transform negative information for veterans as they transition, plan, and advance their careers. Veterans must understand the overall challenges of high unemployment in the economy, which industries are ascendant and which are falling, and what skill sets employers require for the future. Mounds of negative economic information and a challenging career landscape can be daunting, that can easily lead to the “Can I?” perspective, self-doubt, and a lack of confidence. A “Can I?” mindset destroys career progress, career planning, and self-confidence.

Harnessing negative career and economic information is essential to make a veteran’s career advancement into an “I Can!” success story. Veterans cannot change the state of the economy and employer hiring practices. Veterans **CAN** change their attitude and constructively plan to mitigate negative economic information. This ability to turn negatives into positives is essential for their career advancement. The “I Can!” attitude makes a veteran proactive in their career advancement.

### **Three Steps for Veterans to Make Career Advancement into an “I Can!” Triumph**

1. **Networking is Essential to Understand the Industry and Make Connections.** Everyone is frustrated with on line job applications. Do not be a number in an electronic resume database. Making in person, phone, and snail mail connections with key decision makers in a company and/or industry that you want to work or learn about will make you a stand out and remembered. Not sure how to network, attend these free webinar’s in Feb 2011 and March 2011 by Anne Jones, Founder of Piton Inc – a 501(c)(3) dedicated to veterans, and myself.  
<http://www.pitoninc.org/webinar-signup/>
2. **Learn from Other Leading Veterans in Business.** Jim Murphy, a former US Air Force fighter pilot is the CEO of Afterburner, Inc. Afterburner, Inc is an industry leading consulting and education company that instructs Fortune 500 and Global 2000 companies the world over in how to apply military leadership and planning methodologies to their operations. Jim is a fantastic role model for veterans from all services how to translate military skills into understandable methods for civilian companies that allow them to win in the global marketplace. Bob McDonald, CEO of Proctor and Gamble, and John Meyer, CEO of Acxiom, are other great examples of military veterans in business.
3. **Use a Military Example How You Triumphed Under Adversity.** Civilian employers love stories how military personnel triumphed under adverse conditions, especially while they were deployed. Develop a triumph over adversity skill set that shows your skills, determination, and “I Can!” attitude. As you formulate the story, place in a “S-T-A-R-S” format. “S-T-A-R-S” is Situation, Task, Actions, Results, and Skills used. The “S-T-A-R-S” framework is a great way to tell your story, emphasis your skills and results, and further demonstrate your ability to triumph over diversity.