

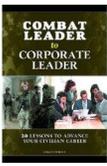
Create Options for Your Military-to-Civilian Transition and Career Advancement

A great career transition or business plan consists of several elements that a good military operations plan contains. A well understood competitive position, thorough analysis of what you expect the competitor's to do next, a clear mission statement, and a step-by-step execution plan with an achievable timeline are all common elements. However, just like military plans, no business plan or career transition plan survives first contact with the enemy.

There is dynamic change & disruption in today's economy. Markets get worse, employers reduce their hiring, and industries transform themselves. All of these events can be extremely disruptive for your career transition plan and career advancement plan. All good plans create multiple options to achieve the mission objectives and to accomplish critical tasks. In the US Military, operational planners use the concept of P-A-C-E (Primary, Alternate, Contingency, and Emergency) to ensure that they have a minimum of four different ways to accomplish a critical task. P-A-C-E is often used to ensure robust medical evacuation or ammunition re-supply. These are all plans and process that have a critical, direct correlation to the success of a mission or operation. For example, when a leader is planning an attack, they use P-A-C-E to ensure they have a minimum of four different ways for medical evacuation. The leaders plan and coordinate for the use of rotary wing evacuation, ground evacuation, the use of civilian vehicles, or the use of Host Nation resources so they have multiple options available in the event of injury. Military leaders know that multiple, well planned, and available options create the path to success when conditions are chaotic, the future hard to predict, and resources are scarce.

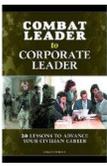
P-A-C-E is one of the simplest and the most valuable career transition planning and career advancement tools available. For career transition planning, P-A-C-E can be used when you are looking at Industries, companies, geographic locations, and types of positions. For example, in selecting geographic locations, one city or one state may be insufficient. You will probably need to look at Colorado, Texas, North Dakota, and Missouri as opposed to only Colorado. For industries, if you are interested in the Energy industry, you may need to expand into Natural Gas, Drilling, and Light Manufacturing. The entire point of P-A-C-E is that once you have expanded your geography, industries, companies, and positions, you now are looking at 15-20 viable options that can be investigated and explored instead of the 2-3 at the top of your head. The use of P-A-C-E forces you to explore and expand your interests and ensure that you look fully at ALL available options.

P-A-C-E is another great tool for the all important task of networking. Networking is the process of meeting key individuals in the companies, industries, professions, and geographies that you are interested in and then exchanging information that can make you a more viable and informed candidate. Once you have a location and industry selected, for example Electrical Power Generation in the Denver metro area at the Denver Power Company (hypothetical company) focused on customer service, you can use P-A-C-E to help build a network. Your goal for P-A-C-E in networking is to create 4-6 separate contacts outside of Human Resources that you are interested in working at. These contacts can then provide you with information about the company's hiring practices, arrange informational interviews, and let you know about available opportunities. Having multiple contacts at one company really demonstrates your interest. Networking is hard work, but the use of P-A-C-E to create and grow a large network is absolutely essential to a successful career transition.



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Anyone can plan for success, but it is the use of P-A-C-E and other military planning tools will ensure that you meet your career transition and career advancement objectives. I have yet to meet any veteran that had a military plan that survived first contact with the enemy. When a plan has to be changed, those leaders that anticipated and planned for multiple options under realistic conditions were always the most successful. The best career transition and career advancement plans expect and indeed anticipate failure. Expecting failure and challenge is not defeatist or pessimistic - it is realistic. An effective career transition and career transition plan, unless it is based on a premise that conditions will change, will not be worth a penny after the first competitive and marketplace “salvos” are fired. Career planning supports achieving the mission of an effective transition and a satisfying career, no matter the changes encountered in the competitive landscape and the greater economy.



Creating Career Options for Military-to-Civilian Transition Planning

Before anything else, the number one rule for starting a career transition plan is to identify your goals. The hardest part of a military career transition is defining your career goals and then creating viable options to meet your goals. Career planning goals usually revolve around location and occupation. Where do I want to live? What do I want to do? How can I fully apply my military experience? What professional occupations am I most interested in? Career planning is far, far more complicated than just creating a resume, drafting a cover letter, establishing a few connections, and then applying for a job. Defining your career goals must come first.

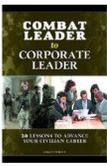
If you look at the want ads and job-listing guides first, then you let someone else define your goals. It is all too easy to let immediately available information guide you in setting your career goals. Unfortunately, most people use the job application process as the way to plan for their career. They let job listings guide what they feel they can do and where they can live as opposed to deciding what they want to do. The critical part of post-military career transition planning is to create a wide array of geographic, industry, and occupational options that reflect your interests, professional goals, and dreams of the future. P-A-C-E can easily be used as a tool to create career interest options that can definitely guide an effective, post military career transition.

My last Military.com column described the use of the military P-A-C-E process as a methodology to create options for both career planning, implementing corporate strategy, and ensuring a critical business task is completed. P-A-C-E represents Primary, Alternate, Contingency, and Emergency, which are different methods to accomplish the same task. Military planners use P-A-C-E as a process to ensure that critical, have-to-be accomplished tasks have a minimum of four ways to be successfully completed. P-A-C-E is an option creating process that anticipates changes and ensures success of critical functions even when obstacles emerge. The use of Geographic, Industry, and Occupation elements (GIO, pronounced "GEO") framework is a simple, readily available, and immediate career planning framework that will help you create Primary, Alternate, Contingency, and Emergency career plans for an effective transition.

The Six Steps of the Geographic, Industry, and Occupation (GIO) Process to Create Career Options:

Step 1: Read Business News & Network. The very first step to career planning is to understand and to learn the full range of opportunities and possibilities that are available. Post military career planning starts with understanding all that is going on and available in the professional business world. The only way to discover these possibilities is through reading and education. The New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, Business Week, Fortune, the Business section of the local paper, and Google News Alerts are all ways to read about what is going on, discovering new ideas, and determining what you want to do next. Additionally, starting an ongoing conversation with contacts in your network is another excellent way to learn about fascinating areas in business.

Step 2: List Geographic Preferences. The next step is to list your geographic preferences. This could only be one location or it could be six. The idea is to sit down with your family and discuss where you would like to live. It could be climate, proximity to family, your hometown, or a lower cost of living that drive any and all of the geographic priorities. Once you have determined your geographic preferences, and then create a prioritized list from first to last. Geographic preferences need to be in specific city, state combinations to prioritize your eventual career list.



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Step 3: List Industry Preferences. An Industry classification is a collection of companies that perform a similar function or service. For example, the airline industry is composed of Southwest, Delta, United, and many others. Your industry preferences can be areas that you have experience or interest. You can have from one to five industries listed.

Step 4: List Occupational Preferences. An Occupation is a job function or area of responsibility that is performed in a generally similar fashion across an Industry or an array of companies. An example of an Occupation could be a Customer Service Manager whose responsibilities it is to fulfill post-product support for customers ranging from call centers to resolving customer complaints to up-selling customers on additional products. This range of responsibilities would be generally similar across an array of companies. Other examples of Occupations include Purchasing, Transportation (an Industry and an Occupation), or Sales. You can have one to five different occupations.

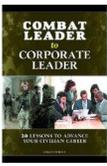
Step 5: List and Prioritize your Combinations into a GIO List. The next step is to list your priorities in order of Geography, Industry, and Occupation. An example of the list is as follows:

- (1) Denver, CO (Geography); Manufacturing (Industry); and Salesperson (Occupation).
- (2) Butte, MT (Geography); Energy Production (Industry); and Transportation (Occupation).

The goal is to list as many combinations as you can. This is a brainstorming process; do not worry about discarding GIO combinations at this point. What you want the GIO list to do is to rank order your preferences from the most to the least desirable. The business reading that you did in Step 1 will help you identify areas of opportunity that you wish to pursue.

Step 6: Match the GIO Priority List to Companies. The final step is to use a resource such as Hoover's or InfoUSA to begin research to match Company names to your prioritized GIO list. You can also begin to use the want ads as a research tool to look at available opportunities and discover company names. For example, look for Salesperson openings in Manufacturing in Denver, CO to match your first priority from Step 5. The next best step is to establish contacts and network within the company's on your GIO list. This way you learn more about what you want to do, meet the people that you will potentially work for, and understand what it takes to succeed in this line of business. In person networking is the single best way to demonstrate your professionalism, interest, and how you can translate your military skills to business. Only a fraction of the available jobs are listed, so meeting contacts and establishing a network is the single best way to be hired. Finally, you may discover that there are no Industry's or Occupation's in your specific geographic preference area, so you can then update and reorder your list.

Effective career transition starts with a rigorous goal setting process. The Geographic, Industry, and Occupation (GIO) model is a simple and direct planning model to identify your preferences and career goals prior to starting your networking and job application process. The GIO model creates options that can be prioritized, matched with companies, and then used to build your network and guide your military-to-civilian career transition. Do just apply for jobs. Employ the GIO model to create viable career options to meet your goals!



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About the Author:

CHAD STORLIE has had a distinguished career in both military and civilian service. Chad is a retired US Army Reserve Special Forces officer with 20+ years of service in infantry, special forces, and joint headquarters units. He has served in Iraq, Bosnia, Korea, and throughout the United States. He has been awarded the Bronze Star, the Combat Infantryman's Badge, the Meritorious Service Medal, the Special Forces Tab, and the Ranger Tab. Chad is a mid-level marketing executive and has worked in marketing and sales roles for various companies, including General Electric, Comcast, and Manugistics. In his spare time, Chad has taught marketing at Creighton University, developed Combat Analytics—a counterinsurgency assessment process—and written articles that have been published in several military journals, The Harvard Business Review blog, and Oxford Leadership Journal. Chad holds a BA from Northwestern University and an MBA from Georgetown University.

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ⁱ Terry L. Schell and Terri Tanielian, editors; "A Needs Assessment of New York State Veterans: Final Report to the New York State Health Foundation," Rand Corporation, Santa Monica, CA; 2011. Page 30.