What is a military to civilian resume?

When someone with a military background decides to transition to civilian employment, the prospect of building a military-to-civilian resume can be confusing and, at times, daunting. As difficult as it may seem at first, spinning military experience into a format that will be appealing to a private sector employer isn't as hard as you might think.

First of all, remember that you'll be talking to a non-military audience. Too much military terminology will drive your average civilian Human Resources specialist to drop your resume in the nearest wastebasket. A good military-to-civilian resume translates military-speak into civilian language, allowing the reader to comprehend just what you're offering their organization. This includes job titles, responsibilities, contributions, professional development and training, and any awards or recognition. For example, soldiers should be described as "staff" or "employees," while uniforms, machine guns and ammunition are "supplies." As inexact as it may seem, a civilian employer is unlikely to know what a Field Artillery Battalion Operations Officer is – but an Operations Supervisor is a title that anyone can comprehend.

As with any job seeker, those shopping around a military-to-civilian resume need to have a clearly defined employment objective. If you've been in the service for a long time, you've probably accrued a great deal of diverse job experience. Don;t make the common mistake of listing every single thing you've ever done, resulting in an overly general, unfocused resume that doesn't sell you for a specific job target. Do a little research into the field you're hoping to enter, and note the descriptive phrases and qualifications listed by the employers. Then pinpoint the skills and accomplishments that you have which fit the job in question, and highlight that in your resume. Think of your military-to-civilian resume as an advertising tool, a document designed to market your skills as a candidate for the open position. If there's information on your resume that doesn't relate to your chosen career, remove it.

If you're only e-mail address is a military email address, consider getting a civilian e-mail account through a free service like Gmail or Hotmail – it will make you look more like you've already transitioned to civilian life. Once you've written your military-to-civilian resume, show it to friends and family members for review, and ask them to check for typos, misstatements and any leftover military terminology that might not be easily understandable by civilian interviewers.