



THE SECRET TO MAXIMIZING MILITARY LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE VALUE TO THE CIVILIAN WORKFORCE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In less than 3 years, the knowledge discussed in this whiter paper has helped nearly 400 Veterans earn average starting salaries of \$90,000 through becoming certified and placed into 282 Fortune 500 companies as professional project and program managers. The \$30M of economic activity created is a result of applying this proven method of translating military leadership experience into its universally understood commercial form of project management; helping Veterans effectively communicate their value to civilian hiring managers.

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INTRODUCTION

This white paper covers a topic important to all Military Leaders; a successful transition into the civilian workforce. It holds the secret to help military leaders translate their military leadership experience into a context a civilian hiring manager can understand and compensate the Veteran for: project management. It has been developed over a decade of teaching thousands of Veterans business and translation knowledge and skills.

The reason for this paper is two-fold.

First, military missions and exercises (“missions”) and civilian projects share the same definition: *temporary endeavors undertaken to produce unique goods, services, or results*. This means that military leaders have significant amounts of project management experience. Furthermore, if those same military leaders have experience coordinating multiple missions simultaneously, they also have a significant amount of program management experience, which means this valuable experience should go on their resumes and social media profiles! However, this realization is not yet mainstream in the consciousness or conversations among the Department of Defense (DoD), project management professional organizations, or Corporate America, which means no one knows the military leader is an experienced, talented project and program manager; often including the military leader!

Second, missing these project and program management opportunities could be financially detrimental to the Veteran military leader in the civilian workforce (“CIVDIV”). According to Mark Langley, the CEO and President of the global project management professional organization The Project Management Institute, Inc. (PMI), “by 2027, employers around the globe will need nearly 88 million individuals in project management-oriented roles” (Langley, 2017, para. 5). That means the military leaders omitting their valuable project and program management experience could experience unemployment, underemployment, post-Service career dissatisfaction, and significant underpayment. This was my experience; to the tune of roughly \$600,000 over 12 years.

The rest of this white paper is organized as follows. The first section, Discovery and Development, describes the genesis for the adaptation of the theory and model of business administration to the military transition, which is discussed in the second section, The Theory and the Model, i.e. the secret. The third section presents some key Implications we can take away from this paper’s secret, closing with a discussion of how to apply our newfound knowledge in the Application section, and a brief Conclusion.

DISCOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT

My journey to discovering the secret I share in this white paper was long, winding, seemingly disparate, and often dark with despair. However, it turns out that I needed



every ‘scar’ from the arenas of education, training, government, and private sector that I fought through to be able to gain, synthesize, and present the knowledge I share with you now. Knowledge that can help you transform from military leader into successful, Veteran professional in the CIVDIV. It has worked exceptionally well for me and the thousands of other Veterans I have shared it with.

NAVY

In 1994, I left the US Navy with honorable service and an amazing set of knowledge, experience, skills, and abilities leading others and managing projects. However, I spoke in terms, concepts, and acronyms familiar to me; i.e. the dialect of military leadership. This dialect did not resonate with the dozens of civilian hiring managers I interviewed with over the next decade because they did not understand it. They understand the dialect of project and general management. I couldn’t successfully transform because I couldn’t successfully translate.

JOB DESERT

Because I couldn’t relate my valuable military experience, knowledge, skills, and abilities to civilian hiring managers, my journey in the job desert was long and dark. It took 12 years for me to find a meaningful, lucrative career. In addition to the money I left on the table, *I also struggled to find a new identity and purpose*; on one occasion finding myself holding an empty liquor bottle and a loaded firearm. I was not able to implement that COA, which meant I continued to endure a long painful transition. However, while out in the job desert, I found something that profoundly changed my life and fortune; it’s a concept I call **Vet Stone**, and it’s the product of 2 other concepts combined.

ROSETTA STONE AND FAYOLISM

The first concept underpinning Vet Stone is the **Rosetta Stone**. The Rosetta Stone had one message written on it in 3 ancient languages; Hieroglyphs, Demotic Script, and Greek. Linguists used their knowledge of ancient Greek to fill in the blanks of the more ancient, but not completely dead Demotic script. They used this cipher to then fill in the blanks of the more ancient, dead language of Hieroglyphs, which allowed them to unlock the rich, valuable ‘hidden’ history of dynastic Egypt, which brings us to our second concept.

The second concept key to understanding how to translate military leadership experience into valuable project, program, and general management experience civilians recognize is **Fayolism**. Fayolism is more commonly known as the *theory of business administration*, and it rest on a system of 4 functions managers use to run organizations: planning, organizing, leading, and controlling.

Today, researchers interchange “administration” with “manage”, meaning we can also apply Fayol’s theory to general management as well. General Managers in the CIVDIV

have fiduciary responsibility for their organizations also, which means an added level of metrics and performance expectations added to the planning function. Military leaders, when converting bullets, beans, and band-aids to the dollars it took to buy them, have that same responsibility when signing a hand receipt or taking ownership of a property book full of these items, which means they are equivalent to general managers in the CIVDIV!

Therefore, much like Greek unlocked Demotic, which unlocked Hieroglyphs, which unlocked hidden value, converting a military leader's experience into general management experience through project management unlocks its hidden value to the civilian hiring manager (see Figure 1 below). In conclusion, developing a thorough understanding of Fayol's model provides the transitioning military leader with the same knowledge the civilian has; context, which levels the playing field.

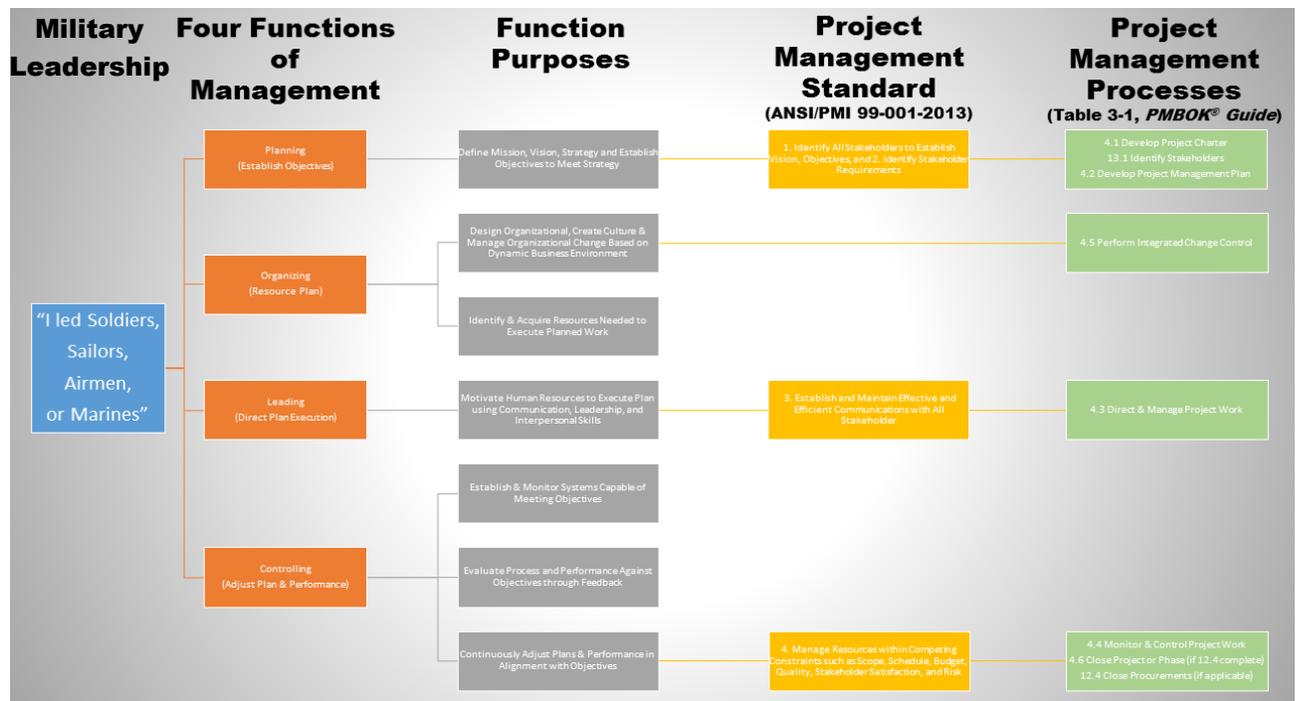


Figure 1. Military Leadership to General Management Chain (Wright, 2016).

THE THEORY AND THE MODEL

Fayol's theory has had such staying power since its publication over a hundred years ago that he is considered the father of management, it is presented in every scope-level college course in management, and organizations of all sizes across all verticals of business and sectors of the economy use it today, either consciously or subconsciously. It is the foundation for how organizations work through their managers.

HENRI FAYOL

Henri Fayol was a French mining engineer and executive who was also a philosopher and social scientist. He based his principles, functions, and system on his experience in these domains. Often missing from critiques and reviews of Fayol's work are his deeper musings: 1. Management's leadership role is situational, 2. When leading, managers should consider the team, 3. Planning is a valuable, important activity, but it is not a substitute for execution and experience gained executing the plan, and 4. The functions are applied to achieve the expected outcomes. Although never a military leader, Fayol sure shared the tenets of one!

FAYOLISM: THE GENERAL THEORY OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Fayol published his *theory of business administration* in his book *General and Industrial Management* in 1916 (Carter, 1986). One of the key contributions in his book was the 5 functions of management within any organization, which has been reduced to 4 over the years as Command and Coordination have been merged. This produces a framework of: 1. Plan, 2. Organize, 3. Lead, 4. Control, and 5. (not really a formal function, but...) Iterate through the cycle until goals are met. Figure 2 below depicts Fayol's contemporary model.

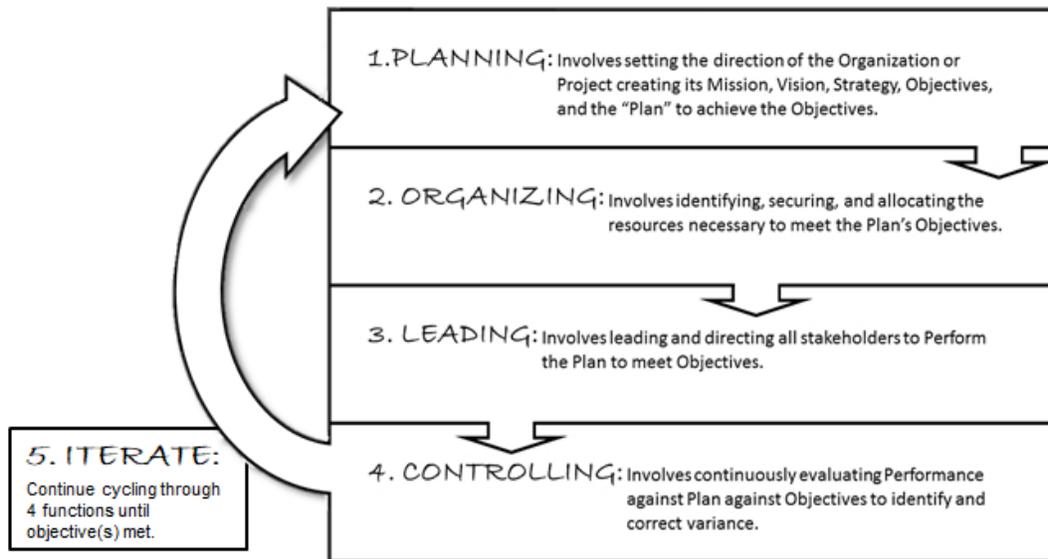


Figure 2. Fayol's 4 Functions of Management (Adapted by Wright, 2016).

Fayol's contemporary model is not a rigid framework, but more of a managerial system. This system, and the manager employing it, responds to the situation and environment at hand: process, project, program, or portfolio. This situational view makes the model a bit more universally applicable. From the perspective of the manager's organization, it supplies many rich implications that, when understood, can inform the way a manager

thinks about their contributions and performs their role; running an organization to meet a need.

IMPLICATIONS

A review of Fayol's 4 functions of management reveals several parallels the military leader can use to present their military leadership experience value in a context the civilian hiring manager can understand. If civilian hiring managers understand the value a military leader is bringing them, they can quantify it in terms of expectations, salary, and a favorable hiring decision. This section describes these implications.

SHARED OBJECTIVES

The first parallel is that military leaders and civilian managers share the same role: marshal scarce resources to produce measured organizational success! Organizational success is achieved by planning objectives with performance metrics to describe 'success', organizing resources to meet those expectations, leading the human resources to perform the plan to the metrics, and comparing performance to plan, tweaking performance, the plan, or a bit of both as necessary to meet the objectives. This is iteration. This parallel gives rise to the next 3 parallels: fully qualified, projects, and debunking the manager versus leader myth.

FULLY QUALIFIED

I, and many others like me, have received rejection letters informing us we were "underqualified", or that a "more qualified" applicant was selected for a position we interviewed for. How can this be? We military leaders have deep, broad experience in planning, resourcing, leading, and controlling! It's simple really; since we're raised in a cult of leadership, we talk about our experience only in terms of leadership, so we appear light in the other 3 areas! The lesson here is: when talking about your leadership experience, ensure you discuss your experience in the other 3 processes as well, so the interviewer sees you as "fully qualified"! Additionally, discuss your dedication to mission success, not just a paycheck, and *you win!* Average civilians go home when it's quitting time, and mediocrity is often the acceptable standard. When you deliver because failure isn't a choice, you'll stand out, and your managers will adore you and promote you! I have seen this happen hundreds of times.

PROJECTS VERSUS OPERATIONS

Projects are temporary, meaning they have start and stop dates, which is different from operations, which don't have completion dates. The manager's core functions are still the same, we just add the project initiation and closure functions. Initiating is figuring out and agreeing on what we're doing, for whom, by when, to what acceptable metrics, and how much money do we have to do so. Closing is documenting what we did: was it



what we were supposed to do, are the folks and parties involved satisfied with what they received, are all obligations met, and what would we do different next time to make this better? So, as you can see, the knowledge, experience, skills, and abilities of the general manager apply to project and program management as well, we just augment them with a basic understanding of how the temporal nature of projects affects their endeavor and introduce a tool box one can use to add on initiating and closing. PMI's Project Management Body of Knowledge (*PMBOK Guide*[®]) is a widely accepted primer on this subject in the Western hemisphere*.

DEBUNKING THE MANAGER VERSUS LEADER MYTH

Popular press, belief, profit, and bias aside, from a purely organizational role perspective, managers and leaders aren't different people! Manager is a role and leadership is a function executed in that role. In addition to managing budgets, schedules, processes, and structures, managers must lead their human resources in the activities represented by these managed items. Conversely, military leaders must also manage things like budgets, schedules, processes, and structures in addition to leading subordinates, peers, and seniors. So, the argument isn't "leader versus manager", it's "is a particular manager any good at the leading function?", or "how do managers learn to lead well"? This means that managers should learn to lead well, so their resources are consumed judiciously, and their plans executed to expectations, by motivated, self-directing, resilient, high-performing teams.

This parallel has a deeper nuance though for military leaders however: gravity.

SHARED ENVIRONMENTAL GRAVITY

Very few industries and their projects share a condition common to every military mission or exercise; the loss of life or limb. However, Fayol came from an industry, mining, that was like the defense industry in this regard. As a result, he wrote about the team's well-being and its capabilities as key considerations of a manager; he thought leadership an important function. Managers that get good at leading excel. Military leaders are formally taught how to do so and evaluated on their performance of the leadership function their entire tenure. This presents another valuable discussion point for the interview: "I have deep experience in planning, organizing, and controlling, but execution through adaptive leadership is where my strong project, program, and general management performance shines!"

REALIZING VALUE THROUGH THE MILITARY LEADERSHIP>PROJECT MANAGEMENT>GENERAL MANAGEMENT RELATIONSHIP

We discussed earlier how using the universally understood project management dialect to translate the archaic military leadership dialect into the understood and valued general management dialect could convey the value of the military leader's value to the CIVDIV, see Figure 1 above. An appreciation for the size of the opportunity will make your time to read and understand this paper matter!

In a 2017 *Federal Times* article, PMI's CEO and President Mark Langley said that by 2027, "employers will need nearly 88 million individuals working in project management-oriented roles [and] within the United States alone, an average of 214,000 new project management jobs will be open *each year* in project-oriented industries, resulting in 2.1 million new job openings between 2017 and 2027" (Langley, 2017, paras. 5 and 6). Military leaders with project and program management experience on their resumes and in their social media profiles stand out!

SITUATIONAL

Military leaders know several things are essential to mission: a clear understanding of the mission, discipline to process, agility in application of process, timely and accurate communication and decision-making, and full responsibility and accountability to achieve the mission. In between mission tasking and completion, how to get to the clear desired end-state is fluid because the leader trusts the team, methods, TTP, training, focus, and readiness of their people. Much like a service branch's decision-making process provides the system to produce mission success, Fayol's model can be used in the same manner.

APPLICATION

At this point, we have described the secret to presenting military leadership experience value to civilian hiring managers in a context that is familiar to them, so they recognize its value and pay you for it: Fayolism! We also looked at Fayolism's author, the theory, the model, its implications, and the discovery story of how Vet Stone connects military leadership to project management to general management to unlock meaningful, lucrative, post-Service careers. In this closing section, we will look at how to apply our new-found knowledge to create your new context.

SUCCESS

In Planning, the manager sets the objectives and the metrics necessary to determine successful accomplishment of the objective(s) and then back-plans from that desired end state. Sound familiar? We'll do the same with our story telling; discuss what we did, how we knew it was done, and what it meant for our organization, all in a transparent, compelling manner using proven sales, marketing, and storytelling concepts.

"P & L STATEMENT", I.E. THE PROFIT AND LOSS OR INCOME STATEMENT

In the CIVDIV, the dollar drives everything! It's all about making or saving money. All this activity is depicted on the colloquial "P&L Statement", which can also be called the Profit and Loss Statement, or the Income Statement. We generate as much revenue ("Total Annual Revenue") as possible on the "top line" of a P&L, from which we subtract all expenses to do so, to produce the net income, i.e. the "bottom line" profits or losses

on the P&L. The key is we can grow the top line, or reduce expenses, or a combination of both, to make the net income number larger. Remember that “fiduciary responsibility” we mentioned earlier? The P&L is where it’s tracked. Understand how the processes, teams, departments, divisions, projects, programs, or portfolios you manage affect which line or lines and how, and you’ll be speaking in the most basic language of value in any organization, it’s profits. Additionally, you show strategic awareness, which is extremely valuable, and noticed!

METRICS

The P&L depicts high-level metrics, i.e. organizational performance targets. Lower level metrics, which are specific to the business team, unit, department, division, line, project, program, or portfolio, are derived from these. In uniform, metrics are called standards, i.e. the number of requisite push-ups to pass a PFT or the necessary number of rounds on a target to qualify on a weapons platform. Some performance metrics are also called Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) because they are key to evaluating a process, unit, or program, or organization. They are the fundamental measure of success. Your KPIs are what your superiors use to evaluate your managerial performance; they are the facts for your stories.

SALES AND MARKETING FUNDAMENTALS

My final year in uniform, my second uniform, a US Army uniform, was 2002, and during my 8 total years in 2 services, I never received any sales, marketing, or storytelling training. Maybe I just wasn’t in the right rate, MOS, or billet, i.e. recruiting. My point is, as we transition out of service, we’re told to “sell ourselves”, “create a brand”, “use social media (SM)”, “tell our story”, but we’re not supplied any training to do so! This means we often don’t achieve the results we want.

When we don’t realize success, we can lose income, opportunity, and our sense of purpose and identity. Because identity and purpose are so closely linked to what we are today, this section provides a brief treatment of these topics to provide at least enough context, tools, and tips to help today’s transitioning military leader maximize the value of their leadership experience through marketing and selling themselves.

In general: 1. We buy on emotion, not logic, 2. We buy a way out of something, and 3. We buy stories, not facts. Logic allows us to justify our emotional purchases after the fact. As organisms, we seek pleasure and avoid pain, and pain avoidance is the stronger of the two. Facts tell, they matter to our logical narrative post-purchase, but stories sell! They speak to our emotions, our empathy, our compassion, which drives our behavior.

Here are the steps to help you tell your story more effectively: 1. Identify your audience, 2. Identify their pain, or pleasure, describing it in terms of metrics, KPIs, and P&Ls, 3. Gather your facts to support your story to inform your targeted audience how buying your solution will help them, 4. Use professional social media platforms like LinkedIn to research your audience, facts, and deliver your story.

SALES AND MARKETING STEPS

Identify your audience, i.e. companies you want to work for: Who are they? What industry are they in? What is their mission? Who are their customers and competitors?

Identify their pain or pleasure: How are they doing in meeting their mission (look at press, financial boards, LinkedIn, or the Wall Street Journal)? What would they like to do different/better/more profitably? Their strategic objectives provide clear tells. What socio or economic trends, challenges, or opportunities do they face?

Tell your story based on their needs: Who are you, and what can you do in terms of skills and abilities to bring value to them? What evidence do you have to back that up? What problems can you solve for them? An example from my career:

“I am the guy usually called in to get failing projects back on track, and I usually do; that’s why I keep getting called. I have found that the failure usually stems from a lack of management support, poor morale, poor meetings, or unclear expectations. If you have project problems in any of these areas, I am confident I can help you; when would you like me to start?”

Tip: you need to become comfortable talking about yourself and your accomplishments. Civilians are, and they do. If your team did something, you get credit for it in the CIVDIV.

LINKEDIN

In December 2018, Web analytics and SEO company Omnicore reported LinkedIn was used by 590+ million users, 26 million business, and 90% of recruiters (Aslam, 2018). This means a transitioning military leader can use LinkedIn to do a good bit of research to develop an understanding of the companies they’d like to work for, the pain those companies face, and how they can help the company. Here is a basic way to use LinkedIn to develop your situation.

PROFILE

Countless of articles and best practice at Vets2PM working with thousands of Veterans reveals that in preparation to use LinkedIn to develop your situation, you should:

1. Have a professional picture on your profile; close enough to see your sparkling eyes and warm smile; no shades, shorts, friends, booze shots, or uniforms. The viewer must be able to imagine you on their team.
2. Customize your value-adding “tag line”, i.e. the spot under your name; don’t leave it the default current (default) position title. It should state your succinct (<120 characters) value proposition statement. Your VPS should consist of who you are, what you can do, and for whom. For example, mine is:
“Veteran|Founder helping Military Veterans profoundly change their lives through

Project Management|Entrepreneurship|AI.” You can tell at once whether I am qualified and able to help you or not, and you’ll connect or reach out.

3. Present a summary that is written in the first person, as a conversation with the reader, that elaborates on your VPS, and provides them with contact information and a call to action (CTA) so they can act on what they’ve read, which is the goal; contact you for your resume or an interview. Remember, facts tell, stories sell. Here’s mine: “Mark Twain said, “the two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why”. I was born 3 months premature in 1969, and every year on my birthday my dad told me I was here for a purpose. However, during my dark 12-year military transition, I felt he was wrong. Now that he is gone, and I have his perspective and my hustle, I realize I needed every battle scar, i.e. mistake, to be in the position now to wake up every day and bring the full measure of my decades of experience, education, training, and skills as a Veteran, serial Founder, college professor and Business Chair, project and hiring manager, to bear helping my fellow Veterans avoid the transition job desert I got lost in. I show them the clear, actionable Vets2PM path out of the job desert and the Vet Stone key to open the gate into the land of professional milk and honey that is a meaningful, lucrative career in project management. Veterans: check out the Extra TAP Class at www.vets2pm.com to learn about the Project Management Opportunity (PMO), find out how to translate your military leadership experience into highly valuable project management experience, and discuss how we prepare you to be a successful project manager. Veteran Employment/Training/Support Organizations: please let us help you carry out your mission by training your Veteran clients for employment in a high-paying, high-growth, meaningful career. Hiring Organizations: please let us help you meet your strategic Veteran hiring objectives by sourcing low-cost, low-risk, highly qualified, trained, and certified Veteran Project Managers from us. Finally, if you’d like a powerful, fun, informative key note about the economics of hiring Veterans, please contact me at eric@vets2pm.com.”
4. Create a personalized, easy-to-remember LinkedIn profile URL, like this: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/docwright2012/> Additionally, you can make it match your other social media profiles for maximum effect.
5. Put your Experience blocks in sequential order, from recent to past, ensuring you put a sentence or two into each about what value you created using the resources under your leadership. This is where a lot of folks lose sizzle opportunities; you should constantly be reinforcing your opening VPS. Look at these two for comparison: “I led 284 troops and managed \$34M in equipment while deployed”, or “My 284-person team was the leanest one in the organization, and only had \$34M in scarce resources that I coached them to optimize so we could deliver 5 project and 2 programs, exceeding organizational objectives as demonstrated by THIS or THAT award.” *Always be providing value!*

6. List your Interests and Volunteer Organizations.
7. Generate “500+ Connections”.
8. Follow key companies you’d like to work in and their industries to keep up on trends they and their industry face.
9. Find 1-3 mentors in those industries and companies; just reach out to connect through a personalized message on why you’d like to connect and receive mentorship from them.
10. Always send personalized connection invites, “Thank you” messages to those that accept, and provide Comments with your Likes. This is the coveted, mysterious “engagement” you’ll hear about. It’s important to create it because it increases the reach of your profile.

USING LINKEDIN TO CONDUCT EFFECTIVE RESEARCH

Once you’ve spent a couple hours per week cultivating your network and creating engagement, have conversations with your network about their companies’ cultures, challenges, opportunities, norms, and customers. Ask them what kinds of questions they were asked in interviews, how management is viewed, how employees are treated, what they like and dislike about their jobs, and about how they feel about their customers. It must be sincere, genuine, and transparent; share why you’re asking, and what your objective is. People will give you their opinions; it’s social media! All this information can help you develop 3-5 solid questions for the interviewers; which is a must have. Additionally, even if you get to the fifth interview, have a question or two ready, even if you have to recycle one or two. Senior managers have told me they like this because it gives them a chance to offer the perspective too. Good questions are good questions and can start memorable conversations, which can lead to favorable hiring decisions.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we have described the secret to maximizing military leadership experience value to civilian hiring managers; Fayolism! When you know what civilians know, you can talk about your military leadership experience in terms, concepts, and language familiar to them. When they understand how valuable your military leadership experience is to them, they will pay you handsomely for it. Additionally, you bring multiple intangibles most of the other interviewees don’t. You can use the model of business administration to hang your broad, deep experience on so you’re fully qualified, which is conveyed in a powerful story, to a targeted audience, which shows your business, social media, and communications savvy.



Figure 3. The Secret Equation (Wright, 2019).

ABOUT Vets2PM, LLC AND ERIC “DOC” WRIGHT, Ph.D., PMP, CPD

Vets2PM, LLC is a Service Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business (“SDVOSB”) staffed with Veterans, Veteran spouses, and Veteran children, all working tirelessly using their individual expertise to collectively *help Military Veterans become Project Managers* through inspiration, training, preparation, and lifetime career mentoring and placement services. We are the only training provider providing a full Veteran-to-Project Manager (Vets2PM) program consisting of PMP exam application assistance and audit defense, all hard copy PMP®/CAPM®/ACP® exam preparation texts (*PMBOK® Guide*, Study Workbook, PMI PMP Q&A Guide), videos, audio recordings, tests and quizzes, a 2-page Executive resume, a 4-hour interview skills development workshop, a LinkedIn profile make-over and usage strategy, and lifetime PM industry-based mentorship and career placement through our cutting-edge Purple X Veteran PM Talent Management database. Please visit www.vets2pm.com and www.militaryvetstone.com.

Eric “Doc” Wright is an honorably discharged, decorated 2-Service (USN and USA), 2-Era (Gulf and post-911) Military Veteran; serial Founder of 3 companies; a university College of Business Chair and full Professor; an experienced, credentialed Project Manager and PMI-chapter recognized Mentor; and an “entertaining” Instructor/Speaker on: project management, deep learning and the military transition, PMI’s PMP®/CAPM®/ACP® exams, vetpreneurship, and project manager professional development. He helps Military Veterans change their lives profoundly through project management, entrepreneurship, and AI. Please link up with him and follow him at www.linkedin.com/in/docwright.

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