



Testimony of Greg Call, Head of LinkedIn's Veterans Program
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity
Hearing on "Examining 21st Century Programs and Strategies for Veteran Job Seekers"
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Introduction

Chairman Wenstrup, Ranking Member Takano, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to testify today. My name is Greg Call and I am the Head of LinkedIn's Veterans Program. The Veterans Program connects 2.1 million veteran and military members of LinkedIn with the networks, insights, and skills they need to succeed in the workplace.

LinkedIn is a professional network with over 433 million individuals around the world, and over 128 million in the United States. Our network connects the world's professionals to help make them more productive and to transform the ways companies recruit, develop, and retain talent.

Our vision is to create economic opportunity for every member of the global workforce. To achieve that vision, we're building the world's first Economic Graph -- a digital map of the global economy that includes every member of the global workforce and their skills, all open jobs, all employers, and all educational institutions (more information about the Economic Graph is available at www.linkedin.com/economic-graph). We share labor market insights from the Economic Graph with policymakers and other stakeholders across the globe to help create greater economic opportunity. And, as I'll discuss later in my testimony, LinkedIn is using information from the Economic Graph to help veterans find economic opportunity.

Connecting veterans to economic opportunity isn't just my job; it's also a personal commitment. I became a Marine Corps officer in 2008 at the age of 28. I transitioned out of the Marine Corps in 2012 after two deployments and over four years of honorable service. Like many transitioning servicemembers, I really had no civilian professional identity or professional network after leaving the military. LinkedIn enabled me to re-invent myself as a veteran entrepreneur and empowered me to connect with people and organizations to support my new mission in life. Through this platform, I built a strong professional identity and a powerful new support system including two mentors who were instrumental in my successful transition.

When the opportunity arose to lead LinkedIn's Veterans Program, I once again heard a call to duty. I wanted those Marines and every veteran to share the same successful transition story as me. This was my chance to become part of that solution.

The goal of my testimony this afternoon is to provide you with an overview of LinkedIn's work with veterans and to discuss three points in particular:

- **Connecting Veterans to Opportunity.** As I'll describe more fully below, LinkedIn is working to equip veterans with information and tools to find economic opportunity. We are doing this by, among other things, providing free one-year subscriptions to our job seekers and free one-year access to online courses through Lynda.com, a leading online learning platform that helps anyone learn business, technology, and creative skills.
- **Release of LinkedIn Veterans Insights Report.** LinkedIn recently released its [first annual report](#) on veterans in the workplace. This report, based primarily on aggregated LinkedIn member data, highlights the top industries in which veterans are working, the skills which they are bringing to industries, and the top employers of veterans. We hope these insights can be a resource for the federal government, veteran non-profits, and veteran program managers as they further develop programs designed to continue the reduction in veteran unemployment.
- **Recommendations to the Subcommittee.** LinkedIn has been working with the Transition Assistance Program ("TAP") to assist servicemembers with access to post-military opportunities. Among other things, we recommend adoption of professional opportunity tools like LinkedIn earlier into servicemembers' life cycle to ensure they have strong networks by the time they depart from the military.

Connecting Veterans to Opportunity

LinkedIn's Veterans Program is working to set veterans up for success in transition and helping to close the gap between military service and civilian employment by empowering veterans to build professional identities, professional networks, civilian careers, and workplace skills. Our website for the Veterans program is available at veterans.linkedin.com.

To do this, we are focusing on four key areas:

Professional Identities. LinkedIn allows its veteran members to build professional identities through a digital profile. A digital profile is a living expression of a veteran's experience, education, skills, awards, volunteer causes, and recommendations (which includes digital media videos, articles and posts). We understand that veterans sometime face challenges in developing their digital profile and therefore we created a "LinkedIn for Veterans" tutorial video that includes recommendations for translating their professional

military identity to a professional civilian identity. We also distribute these training materials through partnerships with veteran service organizations and also through TAP classes.

Professional Networks. As a part of our training, LinkedIn also focuses on helping veterans to use these networking tools. In our recent survey of veteran members, leveraging professional networks was the number one method that veterans utilize to find employment. Additionally, our groups program on LinkedIn has been extremely popular, especially the Veteran Mentor Network, which brings 100,000 transitioning veterans and civilian professionals together for online mentoring.

Civilian Careers. LinkedIn offers one year of free job-seeker subscription for veterans. Veterans can appear at the top of a recruiter's list, search within companies for recruiters and hiring managers, and communicate directly with recruiters and managers through InMail. They can increase the visibility of their LinkedIn profile, and conduct advanced searches to identify fellow veterans in their desired field of choice.

Workplace Skills. LinkedIn's latest addition to training includes our online learning platform Lynda.com. We now offer a one-year free Lynda.com account to all our veteran members. With over 6,000 available courses including our "LinkedIn for Veterans" course, Lynda.com has helped students, leaders, IT and design professionals, project managers, and others build software, creative, and business skills. Lynda.com can be deeply impactful because it allows veterans to build valuable skills and fill common skills gaps that they face in transition or during career progression.

Release of LinkedIn Veterans Insights Report

In May, the LinkedIn Veterans Program team leveraged our Economic Graph to generate and share insights into the professional identities of LinkedIn's veteran community. This report is primarily based upon the veterans who are on LinkedIn and offers additional insights into the unique skill sets of veterans entering the workforce.

We have also provided copies of the report to members of the Committee and your staff. We hope that this report and others like it can be used to better inform veterans about the paths that are available to them, and inform employers about the high level of talent that characterize the veteran applicant and leadership pool on LinkedIn.

To create this report, our team analyzed the professional experience, skills, education, and behaviors of over 2.1 million military personnel and veterans that are members of LinkedIn, as well as veteran employer data. Below are some of the major highlights of the report.

Leadership and Entrepreneurship. Today's veterans are high-demand talent, thriving and leading organizations. In fact, more than 186,000 veteran professionals identify themselves as executives, vice presidents, partners, founders, or owners on LinkedIn. There

are over 42,000 veteran Vice Presidents alone on LinkedIn, and over 64,000 owners of companies.

Leading Industries and Metro Regions. Information technology is the number one industry where veterans who are LinkedIn members are employed, followed by defense and space and government administration. The top metro area for veterans are: Washington, D.C.; New York, New York; Dallas-Ft. Worth, Texas; Los Angeles, California; Atlanta, Georgia; Seattle, Washington; San Diego, California; Houston, Texas; Norfolk, Virginia; and Chicago, Illinois.

Education and Training. Our data shows that veterans on LinkedIn are highly educated individuals across the workforce. Over 81 percent of veterans who have listed their education on LinkedIn have at least a bachelor's degree, while 31 percent have a master's degree and 5 percent have earned a doctorate degree. Overall, as noted above, servicemembers gravitate towards business and information technology degrees. In terms of training, on-the-job training is veterans' number one method for learning new skills; 61 percent received on-the-job training, 50 percent got an additional degree, and 31 percent were self-taught.

Professional Networking. Networking is the single most important way that veterans find career opportunities. Interestingly, on average, veterans and servicemembers have 26 percent more connections than non-veteran LinkedIn members. This networking is critical, especially because opportunities for veterans in the private sector are often different from what they did in the service. In fact, two-thirds of professional veterans state that they work in positions that are not similar to what they did in the military, and that it is imperative that they reach out to their networks to understand how to gain access to those jobs.

Recommendations to the Subcommittee

We appreciate the opportunity to share our recommendations to the Subcommittee on how to better connect veterans to opportunity, and we look forward to working with you on these matters.

Overall, we have two general recommendations. First, we believe that LinkedIn and other 21st Century career tools should be offered to servicemembers well before they transition to civilian life. Second, we believe that veterans should be encouraged to connect to programs at the time that they separate and also well beyond the time that they leave the service. Training and learning are lifelong endeavors and we recommend that the military support and promote skills-based learning and help transitioning servicemembers identify the training programs that teach those skills and lead to strong career outcomes at all stages of a veteran's professional life.

Career Tools Before Transition to Civilian Life

With respect to career tools before a servicemember transitions, LinkedIn recommends implementing a proactive strategy to veteran transition rather than waiting until servicemembers are being discharged or following their discharge. We can preempt transition challenges by integrating LinkedIn and other career tools during their time in the service. As servicemembers progress through their military career, they graduate from military education courses and serve in a variety of billets. Each one of those courses and billets has some kind of direct application to their professional identity. And as servicemembers progress through their military careers, they will meet and build relationships with civilian professionals. LinkedIn is an outstanding tool for servicemembers to create a robust and valuable professional story to tell civilian employers and to maintain those critical relationships that they will need to leverage during their transition.

Currently, transitioning servicemembers are provided basic information about LinkedIn during the employment segment of the TAP. While driving awareness of LinkedIn is essential, a more effective approach during the TAP would be providing practical application sessions to teach the best use of the platform. For instance, we provide tools such as the “LinkedIn for Veterans” Lynda.com course to facilitate practical application. This 60 minute tutorial provides skills for building an outstanding professional identity, improves job search techniques and enhances workplace skills, and could be easily integrated into the TAP curriculum. We also recommend that servicemembers utilize our job-seeker subscription for veterans, access to Lynda.com courses, both of which are free for one-year and available at any time after separation from the service.

Skills Training Beyond the Transition From the Military

In a similar vein, we believe that policymakers and other stakeholders should support skills training programs not just as transitional support but also as part of lifelong learning. This training should start before the transition out of the military.

Specifically, the military can help servicemembers by: (1) clearly mapping the skills gained in each role and helping servicemembers track that through their LinkedIn profiles; (2) promoting skills-based job descriptions by civilian employers; (3) helping transitioning servicemembers identify the gap between their existing skills and those needed for their desired civilian role; and (4) helping transitioning servicemembers identify the training programs that teach those skills and lead to strong career outcomes.

It is equally important to encourage veterans to continue upskilling and to connect to programs that help them do that. There are several programs throughout the U.S. that focus on teaching members of the workforce new skills. One recent example is Skillful (www.skillful.com), a Markle Foundation initiative to help workers in Colorado and Arizona

with high school diplomas or limited college education acquire new skills to advance their careers. This is important because over 40 percent of workers in Colorado and nearly 50 percent of workers in Arizona have a high school diploma and some or no college education. Yet 44 percent of the more than 468 recruiters and hiring managers we surveyed in Colorado and Arizona in February said it's hard to find people with the right technical skills. As a result, companies have a hard time hiring and are less productive, thereby stunting economic growth. In both states, we're working with local bases and veterans programs to connect servicemembers and veterans to Skillful, its career coaches, and its digital resources.

As part of this effort, LinkedIn has developed Training Finder (www.linkedin.com/training), a new product that helps job seekers acquire new skills and advance their careers. This tool shows them relevant training programs in their area; which programs are affiliated with employers; whether or not they're accredited; the program's employment rate, cost, and duration; the skills that the program will teach them; the jobs they'll be qualified for when they complete the program; and the estimated salary. Our goal is for these insights to help individuals select the training program that will teach them the skills they need to get the job they want. Combining LinkedIn jobs tools and the Training Finder can help veterans identify the gap between their current skill set, the skills needed for their ideal role, and then identify the best-fit program to acquire those skills. We believe that this new product could be a great tool for education and employment counselors within transition offices, and we look forward to training counselors on how to use Training Finder.

Conclusion

As Florent Groberg, the Congressional Medal of Honor recipient, recently noted:

In 2012, my lifelong passion for serving in our armed forces was cut short. Four years later, through the power of networking, a steadfast mindset and the act of seeking mentors...I am living proof of the power of LinkedIn. It is through this platform that I have made hundreds of connections with men and women that otherwise, I would have never had the opportunity to meet. This should be the story of every U.S. Military veteran.

We at LinkedIn are deeply inspired by Florent and we stand ready to work with you and each of the Members of the Congress on leveraging our tools and capabilities to expand opportunity for every veteran. Doing so is our duty and our mandate, and it is fundamentally tied to our mission and our vision at LinkedIn. Thank you.