

Best Practices in Manufacturing for Military Veteran Hiring

Arconic Veterans Network





2018, November: Ft. Riley students touring Arconic facility in Hutchinson, Kansas

› Company Overview

Arconic is a leading provider of aluminum sheet, plate, and extrusions, as well as innovative architectural products, that advance the automotive, aerospace, commercial transportation, industrial and building and construction markets. Headquartered in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Arconic has 18 locations in 13 states in the U.S. and is represented in nine other countries worldwide.

› Program Summary

Arconic and the Arconic Foundation are represented throughout both national and local efforts to assist transitioning servicemembers. Whether through national training initiatives like Heroes Make America or partnerships with specific military bases, Arconic is deeply involved in building bridges and helping to ease the transition from military to civilian life.

Nearly all of Arconic's veteran-serving initiatives come from the veteran employees themselves through the company's long-standing Employee Resource Group (ERG). Empowered through active executive sponsorship, a robust network of regional chapters, and open lines of communication, the Arconic Veterans Network (AVN) gives employees the opportunity to create the workplace and culture that they want and build strong connections to assist other veterans and the military community.

Part of the structure that makes AVN so successful is a simple design that allows ideas to move quickly from conversations at the chapter level to decision makers at the corporate level. For example, if a member of a local chapter wants to support a local nonprofit that offers services to the military community, a request can quickly be discussed at a chapter level and then introduced at the bi-weekly meeting of the corporate ERG. In many cases, a decision about corporate sponsorship can be reached in a small amount of time. The company sets aside a yearly budget for each ERG to pursue exactly these kinds of partnerships and initiatives.

In this way, AVN not only builds relationships between the company and the military community, but also establishes connections throughout the organization, between the executive-level and the plant-level and across all of the company's locations. This connection is furthered by the participation of the company's most senior-level executives. Current and past AVN executive sponsors include not only business unit Presidents, but CFOs and CEOs.

Title of Project



**Arconic Veterans Network
(AVN)**

Tags



Recruitment, Hiring, Training,
Retention, Mentorship, Employee
Resource Group (ERGs),
Community Outreach

Point of Contact



Dave Johnston
Vice President and General
Manager, Extrusions



As someone who transitioned from the military to the civilian workforce and in talking with those who had similar experiences, I can attest to the positive impact of hiring veterans, from both the veteran and the employer perspective. Our ERG chapters – particularly Arconic Veterans Network – also provide camaraderie and resources to help newly hired individuals who have a military background acclimate to our company, its culture and its procedures.

– **Dave Johnston**, Vice President and General Manager, Extrusions

➤ Program Impact

The Arconic Veterans Network provides significant value for its members and for the broader veteran and military communities. It also creates an enormous amount of value for Arconic by supporting the company’s hiring and retention efforts and building our community reputation through the AVN’s volunteer efforts.

The ERG helps to build bridges between workers and establishes opportunities for current employees to bring newly transitioning military members into the pipeline. Arconic and AVN’s robust network of veterans allow them to have a leg-up in the hiring process as they are able to connect transitioning servicemembers directly with current employees who are veterans themselves, lending significant credibility to their recruitment efforts. To aid in these connections, Arconic has developed partnerships with a number of U.S. Military bases, creating opportunities for transitioning servicemembers to learn about roles within the company. For example, Arconic has sponsored Frank n’Fridays with USO Illinois at the Rock Island Arsenal near the Davenport, Iowa plant for the past five years. This event, in which volunteers from AVN visit the base and buy lunch for active-duty military personnel, has opened the door for semi-annual “Lunch and Learn” sessions that highlight employment opportunities with Arconic.

Arconic has also been working directly with Fort Campbell on a new Plant-Post Partnership that includes an internship program in which active-duty servicemembers sign up to spend about 3 months of their service assignment training onsite with Arconic. At the end of the internship, the servicemember is fully trained and ready to easily transition into open positions in the industry. More than just a hiring initiative, the internship program is geared towards building long-lasting relationships with the military and those who serve.

The number of partnerships that have grown directly out of AVN may be the area of greatest impact for Arconic and for the military community. Arconic has also partnered with nonprofit organizations like American Corporate Partners (ACP) who focus on helping with the transition from the military to civilian life. Each year, AVN works to increase the number of members who take part in ACP’s Mentoring Program. Among many other organizations and nonprofits, Arconic has also partnered with Team Rubicon, Vettes on the River, Bridging the Gap Foundation, and Wreaths Across America.





➤ Lessons Learned

- ✓ Executive sponsorship is key to the initiation and continued success of any ERG. Without long-term commitment and sponsorship from the highest levels of an organization, any investment of time and resources will likely go to waste. These cannot be “flavor-of-the-day” kinds of programs. Part of this is ensuring that the entire organization is aligned on the mission.
- ✓ When starting a new ERG, it is crucial to identify the right person to spearhead the program. It must be a person with the passion and willingness to try different ideas. If the company has many locations, choose the first location based on identifying the right individual. Once the right lead has been established, determine what other people and/or resources they will need to create a lasting structure in that location. A chapter may not need any structure beyond identifying the right lead, but make sure this decision is made deliberately on a chapter-by-chapter basis.
- ✓ Don't assume that people will show up just because the ERG exists. Membership drives are important and can lead to the development of robust ERGs. An email blast probably won't get the job done. Get out into the workforce, talk to people, and show the level of commitment. The relationships that will carry the ERG forward can be developed by making a concerted, face-to-face effort.
- ✓ Reach out to form relationships and partnerships in the community. In many cases, community organizations will not reach out themselves. No matter how large or small, national, or regional, there is a veterans-related organization that a company can partner with. In many cases, regional or local organizations can have a more direct impact on the community than can national organizations. Make sure there is a budget (it doesn't have to be big) to help support these efforts and forge partnerships.
- ✓ Don't forget to have fun! There is a social aspect to successful ERGs. Don't get bogged down in the politics or bureaucracy of group membership or overly-complicated planning. Get a group of passionate people together and see what they come up with. In the end, a successful ERG has members who enjoy getting things done together.