

One Year Later, Hiring Our Heroes Discovers a Silver Lining with a Forced Virtual Reality



Written by _____
Hiring Our Heroes



When the world went virtual a year ago due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, Hiring Our Heroes, like many organizations, had to quickly pivot its program operations. For the Hiring Our Heroes events team — which in 2019 orchestrated 46 in-person events to include 28 Career Summits at military installations, 12 Hiring Expos, and six traditional events serving a total of 13,297 people — the pivot was a 180-degree turn.

Last spring, while many companies and organizations were pushing pause, more than 200,000 service members were still full speed ahead with their military-to-civilian transitions. Without dedicated hiring events coming to their military installation and limited access to the multitude of in-person transition resources, the employment landscape for transitioning service members was especially daunting.

Innovative Ways to Keep Serving Our Military

In this environment, Hiring Our Heroes faced a pressing question: How could we continue to deliver world-class curriculum without in-person events? How would transitioning service members, military spouses, and veterans connect with military-ready employers if they weren't shaking hands, exchanging business cards, and delivering elevator pitches at hiring events?

“Transition is tough, and it was made tougher with the pandemic. The military community is our customer and we had to find innovative ways to keep serving our customers. Our virtual events did just that,” said Eric Eversole, president of Hiring Our Heroes and a vice president at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

On March 30, 2020, HOH launched its first series of Career Community webinars. HOH Brand Ambassador and retired U.S. Army CSM and former SEAC [John Wayne Troxell](#) kicked off HOH’s virtual programming with a leadership- and motivation-focused session. Other sessions that week included a trio of transition-focused webinars: [Leveraging Indeed During Your Job Search](#), [LinkedIn for Veterans and Military Spouses](#), and Preparing for Interviews; wellness-focused Wednesday [BALANCE](#) workshops; “Industry Thursday” sessions featuring expert panelists from the transportation industry, and an employer-spotlight session highlighting careers for veterans and military spouses at Amazon.

The addition of virtual education and training allowed the military community to engage in career curriculum from anywhere, 24 hours a day. Last year, HOH orchestrated **244 virtual sessions, reaching more than 10,000 viewers**.

The programming continues into 2021 with new sessions scheduled weekly. The Career Community is a resource that continues to educate the military community on career-focused topics, as well as focused training for military recruiters and employers.

Working to Remove Roadblocks for Employers Hoping to Plug Military Talent into Their Pipelines

The virtual hiring events are also proving to be a blessing for employers still hoping to plug military talent into their pipelines. In 2020, many employers were not able to travel to hiring events and have faced extra roadblocks accessing job seekers at military installations with enforced COVID-19 restrictions.

Again, Hiring Our Heroes found new ways to connect military job seekers with meaningful employment opportunities. **In 2020, HOH hosted 21 virtual events, serving more than 15,000 job seekers.**

Today’s virtual hiring events have advanced further, leveraging ever-evolving technologies and focusing on specific industries. Examples of these include careers in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM); transportation, supply chain, and logistics; government contracting and consulting; and the public sector. HOH’s events average over 160 attendees with some drawing as many as 800 people and are hosted on Brazen’s virtual platform.

Data being collected after each event is impressive. HOH is currently seeing an **81% average show rate** and even more significant, **75% of the attendees are moving to next steps with employers**.

Another positive aspect of the virtual hiring fairs is an uptick in military veteran attendance numbers. This year, 62% of registrants have been veterans who have already separated or retired from the military.

Since in-person events have been canceled well into 2021, HOH continues to add virtual hiring events to the calendar as the demand for them remains strong.

“As the world begins to slowly shift back to events being held in person, it’s safe to say our virtual hiring events and curricula are here to stay,” Eversole said. “We are thrilled to have found another way to keep serving the military community.”

For more information on Hiring Our Heroes virtual or in-person events, visit our [2021 events calendar](#). Our events are free and available to veterans, service members, military spouses, and caregivers nationwide and overseas.

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