

Build the Middle Ground: Modernizing Career Transition Services for Veterans

How shifting the burden of transition away from the veteran will improve outcomes and expand employer access to proven talent.

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Canada faces a crucial point for veteran employment and transition support.

Thousands of Canadian Armed Forces members release or retire from full-time service each year, and about half are looking for a second career. Meanwhile, 56 percent of Canadian employers report skills gaps in their own workforce, with industries from construction to security to skilled trades searching for the talent veterans can bring.

However, less than 50 percent of veterans describe their transition as “easy”. If these veterans are arriving post-military service with the leadership experience, operational discipline, and technical skills that most civilian job seekers spend a career building, then why is there such a disconnect?

Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) has already indicated, through the National Veterans Employment Strategy, that veterans may encounter barriers such as cultural adjustments, limited networks, credential recognition issues, and misconceptions about transferable skills. The strategy advocates for improved services, veteran-ready employers, stronger public service pathways, and trusted partnerships.

Canada must build the connective infrastructure that lets the labour market meet veterans on equal terms.

The pages to follow will share a clear view of what this infrastructure could look like. We explore a ‘Veteran Talent Network’ and ‘Pathway Management Model’ approach that connects veterans, employers, training and accreditation partners, and career advisors through structured workflows. To deliver at scale, the approach is backed by AI and digital tools, labour market information, and advisor-led judgment.



A veteran should not have to become a translator, a marketer, and a job seeker all at once.



A Two-Way Transition

Most transition programs equip the individual with better resumes, better interview coaching, and better job boards. All of that has value, but it treats the transition as a one-way street where the veteran does all the adapting.

A modernized CTS flips that assumption. The system itself should do more of the translation work: turning service records into language employers already trust, and turning employer job requirements into terms veterans can recognize against their own experience. That's meeting in the middle: a shared translation layer that respects the veteran's knowledge, while demonstrating its value to the labour market.

New Infrastructure: A Veteran Talent Network and Pathway Management Model

The next generation of CTS should be composed of an outcome-based Veteran Talent Network and Pathway Management Model that captures veteran capabilities, employer demand, and the workflows that connect them.

Veteran Capabilities	Employer Demand
• Competencies, translated into plain, employer-recognized language • Credentials, existing and in progress • Career interests and preferred pathways • Geographic preferences and constraints • Readiness indicators and support needs	• Current and emerging hiring needs by sector • Defence, security, and critical infrastructure • Logistics, trades, and cybersecurity organizations • Public sector classification and hiring requirements • Feedback on past placements

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This turns CTS from passive job-search support into active talent brokerage. It captures hiring demand, identifies suitable candidates, and facilitates warm introductions to hiring managers. It also closes the loop with feedback after every placement, and builds repeatable hiring pathways that don't have to be reinvented for the next veteran or employer. A modern CTS journey should be understandable to veterans, measurable for government, useful to employers, and workable for advisors.

Obviously not every veteran wants the same civilian career, and the model needs to support that range, including public service roles (where more than a third of veterans express interest), defence and security, cybersecurity, logistics, skilled trades, aerospace, entrepreneurship, and reserve-compatible work.

With this support, no veteran feels routed into a category that doesn't reflect their journey.

Create the Veteran Profile

The core of a modern CTS is structured veteran profiles that go beyond a resume: skills and credentials, career goals, readiness for civilian work, geographic constraints, and preferred career pathways.

This profile becomes the shared reference point for advisors, employers, training partners, and AI-assisted tools in the system. With a single, current source of truth, veterans don't have to re-explain their story at every step of the journey.

AI and digital tools will provide new efficiencies that help improve access, keep guidance consistent across advisors and regions, sharpen job matching, customize resumes, support interview preparation, and generate the relevant reporting for leadership. Technology should make CTS more accessible, consistent, measurable, and responsive. It should not replace the professional relationship between veteran and advisor.

As part of key human-in-the-loop procedures, an advisor must review and personalize every AI-assisted output before it reaches a veteran or an employer.



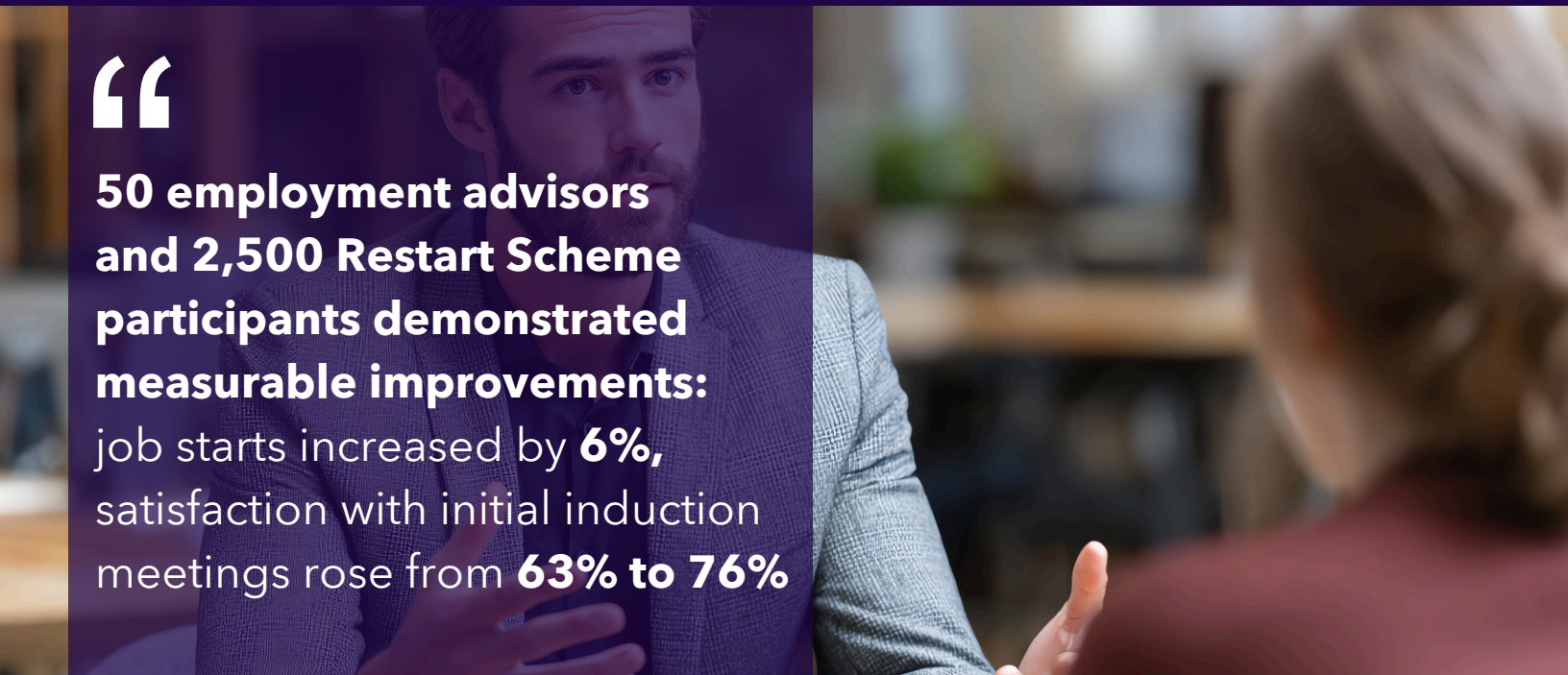
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Career Pathfinder: AI in service of the advisor, not in place of one

Career Pathfinder is Maximus UK's human-centred, AI-powered employability tool, designed to amplify the expertise of Employment Advisors rather than replace it. Developed inhouse from an idea submitted by a frontline advisor, it uses guided conversations to capture a participant's experience, skills, motivations and goals, helping advisors create tailored resumes and cover letters, prepare personalised interview questions and identify suitable career routes. Every output remains subject to advisor and participant review, keeping human judgement at the heart of the process.

A pilot involving more than 50 employment advisors and 2,500 Restart Scheme participants demonstrated measurable improvements: job starts increased by 6%, satisfaction with initial induction meetings rose from 63% to 76%, and the time required to create a resume was reduced from hours to minutes. By reducing the time spent on administrative tasks and improving the quality and consistency of participant-facing materials, Career Pathfinder gives advisors more time for the human conversations that build confidence, address barriers and help people move towards sustainable employment.



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Translate Service into Language Employers Understand

Civilian equivalency is where many transition programs fail. Military experience can be extensive and relevant, but described in terms that mean nothing to a civilian hiring manager. “Section Commander” does not appear on a job board, and “Logistics Officer” rarely captures the operational complexity a veteran actually managed.

A modern CTS must translate military experience into plain-language competencies, aligned to civilian occupations and labour market demand. This requires validated competency frameworks, advisor review, and precision, so that that an employer reading a translated profile trusts and understands it as much as a civilian applicant’s resume.

Micro-credentials Help Close the Gap

Many veterans already hold the operational, leadership, and technical skills a civilian role requires, but lack a specific certification an employer demands. They are missing the key piece of paper that opens the door.

A modern CTS should identify targeted micro-credentials or “credential wedges”: short, focused certifications that can convert existing military experience into qualifications that employers recognize. These provide the next step that will bridge defense experience and public certification.

Micro-credentials work for short-term, practical equivalencies. A brief course in cybersecurity awareness or project coordination can close a gap quickly, but a regulated or licensed profession, such as nursing, a trade certification, or a legal designation, cannot be shortcut.

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CREDENTIALS



Measure What Matters

Starting a new job is an important part of the goal – but only part. A shift to outcome-based metrics will ensure that leaders are measuring what matters.

Success measure	Why it matters more than a job start
Retention	A placement that ends in three months isn't a success story.
Earnings progression	Shows whether a veteran is building a career or filling a gap.
Satisfaction	Captures whether the experience matched the promise, for the veteran and their family.
Employer experience	A brokerage model only scales if employers have positive experiences and return to hire the next veteran.
Pathway quality	Tracks whether translated competencies and micro-credentials actually held up on the job.
Long-term career progression	The honest measure of whether CTS changed a trajectory.

A veteran who is thriving and satisfied 18 months into a new career, with a growth path in front of them, is the real return on a modernized Career Transition Services model.

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How It Works, Step-by-step

UNDERSTAND	1. Enrolment and profile development	Capture military background, goals, location, family context, readiness, credentials, interests, and constraints.
	2. Military-to-civilian translation	Convert experience into civilian competencies, resume language, interview examples, and occupation matches.
PREPARE	3. Pathway selection	Identify suitable employment, public sector, internship, apprenticeship, entrepreneurship, education, or portfolio-career pathways.
	4. Credential bridge	Recommend short, targeted certifications or training where a micro-credential can unlock market access.
CONNECT AND SUSTAIN	5. Employer matching and introductions	Match Veterans to employer needs, facilitate interviews, and support hiring manager engagement.
	6. Placement and follow-up	Track outcomes, collect feedback from both Veteran and employer, refine pathways, and support retention or career progression.



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Lessons From Comparable Transitions

Globally, Maximus successfully delivers this pattern of integrated case management, employer partnership, and post-placement follow-up at scale.

UK Restart Scheme: designing for retention, not just placement

Maximus delivers the UK's Restart Scheme for the Department for Work and Pensions under a hybrid payment model: a fixed delivery fee plus a larger payment tied to participants entering and sustaining work, verified against His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) real-time earnings data. A job outcome counts once cumulative earnings reach the equivalent of 16 hours a week for 26 weeks at the National Living Wage.

Maximus research found the first six weeks in a new job carry the highest risk of dropout, so proactive contact through that window is now standard practice. A Tesco work-trial partnership running since 2018 has moved 52 percent of participants into employment, built on a network of roughly 30 national employers and more than 500 regional employers and SMEs.

Conclusion: Respecting Veteran Experience

Career Transition Services should move beyond simply "helping veterans find jobs" to enabling the Canadian labour market to better understand, appreciate and apply veteran talent within a rewarding career path. Honouring a veteran's knowledge and experience means building the infrastructure that lets employers approach veterans on their terms. With this understanding, employers will be better equipped to welcome veterans into positive, long-term civilian careers.

Collaborating to meet in the middle is the standard our veterans deserve.



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About Maximus Canada

Maximus Canada is a trusted partner to governments across the country, specializing exclusively in public-sector service delivery to move Canadians, technology, and government forward. For more than two decades, the company has helped governments modernize through customer experience services, technology and consulting services, and health services.

Maximus strengthens the institutional backbone of defence and public safety: the programs and services behind every mission. By supporting the departments and agencies that serve members, veterans, families, and the public, operational teams can focus on what only they can do.



Delivered by Canadians. Powered by Experience.

LCdr (Ret'd) Shawn Perry is Director, Defence Growth & Partnerships at Maximus Canada, where he works with government partners to shape the future of veteran and defence-related programming.

Before joining Maximus, Shawn served for more than 35 years in the Royal Canadian Navy, working across defence, diplomacy, and governance. His expertise includes intelligence and security analysis, government procurement, and executive advisory for senior leaders in high-pressure environments.

Shawn brings Maximus Canada's proven experience in civilian sectors to meet the requirements of the mission, and the needs of the veteran.



Contact

Shawn Perry, M.S.M., C.D.
 Director, Defence Growth and Partnerships
 Maximus Canada
shawn.perry@maximuscanada.ca

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