

Case Study Armed Forces and Figaro

As part of our campaign to understand how we can improve support for veterans or reservists, we are talking to a number of colleagues about their experiences of leaving the armed forces to find jobs. This is a chance for us to learn more about how we can support future employees who come from a military background.

Meet Toby who is the Director at The Figaro Shop who restores and renovates Nissan Figaro cars in Oxfordshire. Toby's company employs people from a range of alternative backgrounds including the armed forces, and this includes Mark. Mark served in the Royal Logistic Corps for 12 years as a Postal & Courier Operator and a further 8 years in the Military Provost Guard Service.

Toby explains what it takes to become an armed forces friendly employer:

What are the benefits of employing someone with an armed forces background?

We believe that spending time in the forces equips a person with a growth mindset, something that is a real benefit to a small business looking to upscale and overcome challenges.

Although business is very different in some respects, coping with pressure is universal and this has allowed Mark to share his skills and experience with others.

Mark's transferable skills include high values and standards, leading with honesty, trust, flexibility and a great communicator with a strong work ethic which is essential in business.

How does your company support members of the armed forces community?

We embrace employee culture, which is similar to what people experience in the forces. We have been working on ways to gain links with the forces community and show our appreciation for them. We try to be flexible and show empathy to a person's background and career. It's about mentoring and coaching them through the transition from leaving the forces to joining the world of work.

Let's meet Mark who works with Toby at Figaro. After serving worldwide including operational tours of Bosnia, Iraq & Afghanistan, Mark left the Army in Oct 2018 to live in Didcot, Oxfordshire where he has settled with his family.

Can you tell us more about your experiences?

After making the hard decision to leave the Military I made sure I gave myself the right tools to hit the ground running and exceed in a new career. I didn't want to go backwards, something all too common with many service leavers.

I knew I wanted my next career to be around cars and in a management position and I wanted to ensure that I had the skills and qualities needed to make it a success.

I had been studying an NVQ Level 3 in Mechanics and Diagnostics prior to leaving (mainly to give myself the qualification to back up my already extensive knowledge).

I went through the Career Transition Workshop, a three-day course set up for service leavers to help you identify transferrable skills and develop an effective CV, so you know how to approach the job market. This gave me a lot of information and knowledge to enable me to sell myself to a civilian employer, something I think most military personnel struggle to do.

I saw the job advertised at The Figaro Shop for a Project Manager which seemed to tick many of my boxes, but the advert was a few months old and I was concerned that the job would be filled. I applied regardless and with luck I was invited to have a short informal phone interview with Toby Brooks the Director before attending a more formal interview. A

week or so later I was invited to meet with my predecessor and the General Manager. and after a short conversation I was offered the position there and then. Just over a year later and I'm confident that both myself and Toby feel we have made a great choice.

What made you choose Figaro as an organisation? -

We all want to produce the best cars and we share that goal, so we have aligned our interests using project management skills and creating a likeminded and passionate team.

How does your armed forces skills translate to the job you are doing now?

There are many skills but mainly being organised has helped as well as leadership, motivating and team building skills while celebrating cultural diversity experiences.

What support has Figaro given you as a member of the armed forces community?

Mentoring and training and patience which has been influential in my journey.