



# MARINES IN TRANSITION

a publication of the Marine Executive Association

www.MarineEA.org



## MARINES IN TRANSITION

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### MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

*John Beiswanger, MEA President*

The summer is here and the transition season is in full throttle. The contracting front is at a fever pitch by now with the end of the FY approaching. It has been relatively quiet year to date but at Quantico at least, we are starting to see some more opportunities come across the wire. This is good news for those in transition and hoping to stay connected to the warfighter. With sequestration uncertainty, it has been a slow business year to date though and even now our GS brethren are working their way through the recently imposed furloughs. One trend we are seeing is that contracts are being awarded more and more to Small Businesses. While in transition, seek out Small Businesses! They can be a lot of fun to work for and often have more of a family environment to them. They are certainly more agile than the large businesses. Many will pay you more in exchange for fewer benefits. Something to consider.

Another thing to consider is that most Small Businesses have a core competency that they start out with. If you are an IT transitioning Marine, search out Small Businesses that was founded on IT competencies. In other words try to match your own skills with businesses that are like minded.

How do you get connected with Small Businesses? Networking, Networking, Networking. Make the effort to attend MEA luncheons and socials. Talk to fellow MEA members in the industry and get their opinion on what Small Businesses are a good match for your interests and schedule an information interview. It's a good way to get your name "out there."

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chair\_emeritus@marineea.org

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chair@marineea.org

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president@marineea.org

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vp@marineea.org

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generalcounsel@marineea.org

### Deputy General Counsel

Dave Jonas  
deputygencounsel@marineea.org

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execdir@marineea.org

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## JOB SEARCH - IRS DEDUCTIONS

### *Max Wix, 2013 MEA Chairman*

Are you starting or in the middle of job search? Save your receipts. The IRS publication 529 explains tax deductions available to people searching for new employment. The rules are relatively simple.

#### First the limitations:

- You have to be searching for a job in your current occupation. There are no tax breaks if you're looking for a job in a new occupation.
- Your job search deductions fall under the "Miscellaneous Itemized Deductions" category. This means only expenses above 2% of your adjusted gross income can be deducted. Make sure you save all your receipts to help get above the 2% threshold.
- No tax break if you have been unemployed for a substantial (not defined by the IRS) period before looking for a job now.
- There are no tax breaks if you're searching for your first job.
- If someone else pays for the services, like an employer, you can't deduct the cost. You personally have pay the costs for the expenses to be deductible.

#### The allowable deductions include:

- The deductions are available to you even if you don't get the jobs you apply for.
- The fees you pay an employment or outplacement agency, including video interview preparation services.
- Resume preparation services and mailing costs.
- Travel and travel expenses. Keep records on the costs to travel to and from the location (the business mileage rate if traveling by car) and the expenses you accumulate while in the area searching for the job. If mixing business with pleasure, be careful. The pleasure parts of the trip are not deductible.

Pretend you will be audited and maintain records that are beyond reproach. Better to be safe than sorry. For additional details, see <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p529.pdf>.

## 25+ SEMINAR UPDATE

*Chuck Heiser, Camp Pendleton Chapter*

We have some exciting new updates in our 25+ Seminars. We constantly strive to keep our program current and up-to-date. We try to evaluate our program constantly with the basic format...What is working and what isn't. One of the important areas is the feedback that we get from our evaluations at the completion of each class. Our class members know what they need and what works for them and we have made some dramatic changes as a result of what our students tell us they want. In our PowerPoint Program (203 Slides) we used a lot of animation; our students said that it slowed things down and they didn't like it. I'm not completely sure they are right but we are going to try it to see how it works out. We also had requests for more mock interviews. I want to control the interviewing process; I don't want them to do mock interviews that allow them to practice mutual ignorance. Interviewing is the most important skill they will learn. If they don't ace the interview, they don't get the job. I will still control most of the interviewing module but I am going to allow 30 minutes of mock interviewing at the end. Each group of three will have an interviewer an interviewee and an observer to make sure the basics that they just learned are being adhered to. These are some examples of how we try to keep current with good educational goals and also meet the complete needs of our students.

In our last two seminars we have seen a large increase in enrollment from an average of 35 to an enrollment of 70. 70 students is too large a class to deal with and still offer the personalized approach that we have been known for. We plan to limit enrollment to a maximum of 50 per class.

This will still allow the personalization without spending too much time on control and logistics. If we continue to get high enrollment numbers we may have to add another section. We may have to go from 3X/yr. to 4X/yr. we will keep a close watch on this.

These are some important areas that we try to improve in to keep the goal of developing the skill levels of every student in the class and yet at the same time to incorporate their expressed opinions and ideas in view.

To enroll in our program please contact SgtMaj Val (Walter Valentine) in Bldg. 13150; phone number 760.725.6207 for details. We are going to stop enrolling people when we reach 50 students. This program is open to senior Marines and Sailors who have at least 25 years of service and have achieved to rank of at least MSgt (enlisted) or Maj (officer). For our July class we now have 70 registered but this is the last time that we will do this. Val has already started registering students in our November class. We do not have the exact dates set for 2014 but classes will be in March, July and November. We suggest that you plan to attend at least one year away from your EAS. Our classes are given at Bldg. 1795 (The former Officers Club) This bldg.. is very close to the San Luis Rey Gate. If you would like to and there is room you can take the class again as a positive review. You may also take this class after you retire. We want to be sure that we give you every opportunity to learn this valuable information.

## THE GREAT DIVIDE: AN 'UNFAIR FIGHT' FOR JOB-SEEKING VETERANS

### *Leo Shane III Stars and Stripes*

Published: May 8, 2013, reprinted with permission  
<http://www.stripes.com/news/an-unfair-fight-for-job-seeking-veterans-1.219943>

Home Depot wants to hire more veterans. But as its human resources staff sorts through stacks of resumes each day, they often can't find a reason why they should.

"Veterans resumes are often too wordy and don't explain really what their skills are," said Eric Schelling, director of talent acquisition for the company.

"We see things like overseas ribbons and military certification classes and we know it's probably impressive. But on the civilian side, we don't really know what any of that is."

Home Depot isn't new to hiring former military personnel. The company is one of the largest private employers of veterans in the United States, with more than 34,000 associates spread out throughout the country and 1,500 guardsmen and reservists currently mobilized worldwide.

Still, they struggle.

They face the same veteran-hiring problems that plague companies parsing through job candidates in an uneasy economy: figuring out how to bring returning war heroes into a civilian world that doesn't really understand what working in the military means.

"My approach to everything (veterans) put on the resume would be, 'How would I explain this to someone who has never been in the military?'" Schelling said. "Because the person reading it probably hasn't."

America has been at war for more than 11 years, but the impact of those deployments and wartime stress hasn't been felt by most of the country.

As the rest of the country strived for status quo at a time of war, veterans deployed. They developed a new language of FOBs and terps but missed the rise of "American Idol." They learned basic Farsi while friends back home got marketable degrees. They saw the war, while much of the country did not.

Pentagon leaders in their "support-the-troops" speeches remind listeners that less than 1 percent of the population has served during the last recent war, while the number of veterans from past conflicts has steadily dwindled.

Slowly, the divide between those who served and those who didn't has grown from a troublesome gap to a gaping chasm.

That's particularly evident on the jobs front, where unemployment among the youngest generation has remained stubbornly above national averages for the last five years. Employers say they want to hire veterans, but rely more and more on computer systems that routinely filter out military job titles and skills in favor of familiar civilian phrases.

It's a language barrier between troops who have worn their resumes on their sleeves and a civilian hiring system that doesn't know a captain from a colonel.

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## THE GREAT DIVIDE CONTINUED

“Over the last few years, the bigger companies and the ones who have already hired veterans, they sort of get it now,” said James Schmeling, co-founder of the Institute for Veterans and Military Families at Syracuse University. “But the ones who have had no exposure to the military, they’re never going to get it.”

Researchers at the Institute say that’s not just a reintegration headache for veterans and their families. In a recent strategy paper, they argued that those types of problems represent the first cracks in the nation’s fragile promise to honor the sacrifice of the newest generation of service members.

“Such a failure will have adverse implications for the sustainability of an all-volunteer force, and thus our national security,” they wrote.

“Additionally, failing to effectively, efficiently and meaningfully empower those who have shouldered the burden of the nation’s wars may precipitate social and economic challenges capable of overwhelming these supportive services for decades.”

Veterans without jobs are more likely to succumb to depression, struggle with substance abuse, ignore post-traumatic stress disorder and end up living on the streets, researchers said. Veterans who find civilian sector jobs are more likely to speak proudly of their military service and encourage their children to sign up.

Ray Watkins, who served 24 years in the Army and Army Reserve, was unemployed for eight months after leaving the military, and says the frustration of the job search quickly becomes infectious.

He thinks he was lucky to land his current jobs: a full-time job with the Food and Drug Administration and a part-time job at Home Depot’s Bethesda store. Both took numerous online forms and months of waiting.

When a district manager at Home Depot finally called him, the process sped up rapidly. “I got a call to come meet some local managers,” Watkins said. “I thought I was coming in to shake hands and they offered me a job. But I had to get my resume into a manager’s hands first, get past all those computers.”

Watkins worked in Army personnel, writing thousands of promotion recommendations and protocol documents. He has years of expertise in picking out the right keywords for the right paperwork. Even he admitted that translating a military resume to civilian language was constant stress.

“I’d spend hours a day on it,” he said. “You learn to change ‘senior NCO’ to ‘senior manager’ or ‘senior adviser.’ You can’t even mention the TOC (tactical operations center) or an overseas base. It takes a while not just to write that, but to actually think that way.

“And I was used to writing these kinds of things. I can’t imagine how an infantry guy even gets started.”

The military does have resume writing tips in its transition assistance programs, but veterans groups grumble that the advice is too broad and basic to really help in civilian job searches. Schelling said one of the biggest mistakes he sees with Home Depot applicants looking for those jobs is skipping over employment buzzwords in their resumes.

For example, civilian workers don’t “command” employees, they “manage” or “supervise” them.

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### THE GREAT DIVIDE CONTINUED

“If you’re applying for a project manager job but using your military job description instead, what you’re doing is putting yourself at a huge disadvantage,” he said. “Recruiters don’t have 30 minutes to review every resume that comes across their desk. They need to see clear and concise language that shows what you’ve done in civilian terms.

“If you’re not using those keywords, you’re getting filtered out by our technology before we even see the resumes.”

Home Depot has created an online military translator to help veteran job seekers overcome those pitfalls, twisting “parachute rigger” into “service technician” and “cavalry scout” into “receiving supervisor.”

Schelling said he has seen marked improvement in how veterans are marketing themselves to the company, which in turn has made hiring them easier.

Over the last three years, an entire mini-industry has emerged around those military skills translators, with Fortune 500 companies and veterans groups offering their own takes on the theme. The military services each have their own, as do the departments of Labor and Veterans Affairs.

In March, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce took the idea a step further with their new Personal Branding Resume Engine, which allows veterans to input their military accomplishments and get a interview-ready resume, business cards and personalized pitches for the job interview.

Kevin Schmiegel, founder of the Chamber’s Hiring our Heroes campaign, said the idea grew out of the hundreds of problematic elevator pitches he heard from veterans at job fairs over the last few years.

“It’s an unfair fight for the veterans,” he said. “For former enlisted guys, 24 and under, who are getting ready to talk to an employer for the first time, they don’t have the tools to compete.

“We see a lot of (skills translators) that try and fit a square peg in a round hole, Schmiegel said. “Guys in combat arms only get to look at security jobs. We need to stop pigeonholing them based on their military jobs, and start looking at the whole of their service.”

So “infantry work” becomes “trained, led and supervised subordinate personnel.” Logistics work overseas becomes “managed support of equipment and supplies in a challenging environment.”

The effort is half resume builder, half business lesson, Schmiegel said. The idea is to get them to think about a job application the same way their civilian competition does.

It’s not an easy task. At a Washington job fair last month, officials from the Military Officers Association of America offered free resume critiques to military job seekers. Many of the resumes were a mess.

“I’m stunned by the number of academy folks at these job fairs who can’t put together a professional resume,” said Jerry Crews, a retired Army colonel and job placement adviser for the association. “We tell them that they have to do a better job explaining their experience, showing their qualifications and figuring out what they really want to be doing.”

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### THE GREAT DIVIDE CONTINUED

Army Capt. Vanessa Stoloff walked away from the workshop with a resume full of edits, although she said there was a lot less red pen this time than after the last critique she attended.

“I just have great difficulty translating my work from military speak into actual language,” she said, laughing. “I’ve come pretty far, but they’re telling me I still have some work to do.”

Even after a year of editing, she has too many acronyms, too many lengthy explanations of her work. She knows that many potential employers have no idea what it means to supervise projects for the Army Corps of Engineers, but she isn’t sure she’s found the right words yet.

That begs the question: Why not do a better job training the hiring managers? Nearly all of the national campaigns have focused on the values veterans bring to businesses, but provide few resources to help employers better understand the military.

Schelling said Home Depot’s skills translators aren’t used by their own hiring managers to decipher veterans’ resumes because doing so can run afoul of fair hiring practices.

Schmiegel, in a recent op-ed, argued that large employers are more attuned to those issues, but many small businesses still aren’t, which closes the door on tens of thousands of jobs across the country.

In the current competitive job market, other employers would rather skip to the next candidate than try and rebuild a veteran’s resume for them.

“At the end of the day, veterans are still a small slice of the population — too small for HR to really target,” said Derek Bennett, chief of staff at Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America. “That gap between veterans and employers is likely going to be there for a while.”

He sees reasons for optimism. More young veterans are in the workforce than ever before, helping to establish Iraq and Afghanistan veterans as reliable employees. Bennett said the nationwide push to hire veterans, spurred by advocacy groups and lawmakers in recent years, has helped make a difference.

“But I’d still like to see more done on the employer end,” Bennett said.

The worst filter for veterans looking for jobs is “college degree.” Many prospective employers dump all applicants without one, even when the job might be better suited with someone boasting years of hands-on military experience.

Employers aren’t likely to change that anytime soon. Finishing college is viewed as proof of workplace competence in a way that honorable military service isn’t.

Schelling said his hiring managers have learned what a premium veterans bring to the workforce: reliability, flexibility, dedication and a host of other intangibles. Once veterans make it to the interview, those traits all shine through.

Getting those former troops in the door remains the challenge. Watkins said he thinks the job search is getting harder now, because more veterans are using those same skills translators and keyword replacements.

With 1 million service members expected to leave the military in the next decade, that means veterans’ top competition might not be recent college grads. Instead, it could be each other.

## HOW TO FIND ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO LIST ON YOUR RESUME

Often when people sit down to write their resume, they automatically think in terms of responsibilities. "I had to take notes, fax people, and answer phones." This is natural. They probably asked themselves what they did at work and that made them think of a list of tasks. Having these things is fine, because you want to give a concise picture of your daily routine, but what's even better is if you can find accomplishments to highlight. Things that you did at work that went above and beyond... or at least can be written as such. But what qualifies as an accomplishment and not something that was just part of your job?

Were you promoted? Promotions are one of those things that really make prospective employers take notice, because they show that you were going above and beyond without you having to tout individual moments of greatness. This is especially true if you can say something like "promoted faster than anyone else to this position" or "promoted after only X months."

Did you receive a bonus? A bonus is another sign that your company recognized your value and decided to acknowledge it. If you can tie this bonus to actual specific performance, all the better. Even saying something like "my performance earned me a bonus three years running," it's a good thing.

Did you complete any training? Schooling or training, especially if you received a certificate that now says you are qualified to do whatever it is the training was for can be very helpful.

Did you save the company money? Perhaps, somewhere in your daily responsibilities, you realized that you could automatically respond to a lot of the company email rather than it taking someone an entire day to do it manually. Or you discovered that the business was overpaying a vendor for some kind of item. Things like this saved the company money, and who doesn't want someone on their team that's going to put more profits in their pocket?

Did you plan an event? It can be anything from the company's annual holiday party to going on a retreat to bringing a guest speaker in. Event planning shows your organizational skills and ability to handle longer-term projects successfully.

Can you make the everyday sound extraordinary? In the first paragraph, there was an example of responsibilities where the person answered phones. Instead of this, you could say you "managed 9 different phone lines on a daily basis." Maybe that won't blow them away, but it sure sounds more impressive than "answered phones." Lots of your responsibilities can be reworded in this way to show them as accomplishments rather than just part of the daily drudgery.

How do you show your accomplishments?

### Read the VetJobs Veteran Eagle Newsletter

The Veteran Eagle is a newsletter for veterans, transitioning military, their family members and friends and supporters of VetJobs.

[Read the latest issue.](#)



## HOW TO CREATE A JOB SEARCH STRATEGY

Doing a job search based on job titles alone will not get you very far. Different companies call the same positions, different things. Instead of focusing on your next title, focus on the keywords of what you want to do. For example, instead of searching for a marketing manager, change your search to social media planning, marketing campaigns, consumer reach, and so on.

### Focus Your Job Boards

More isn't always better – so streamline the places you go to, to search for opportunities. There are several aggregate job boards that will find positions from other job boards and companies – delivering a large reach. But relying only on aggregates can leave some hidden gems out of reach.

Strategically plan a few job boards that will deliver the biggest reach for what you are seeking, and stick to those. Stop wasting time on a dozen job boards, only to weed through the exact same opportunities.

### Know Your Culture Fit

You are not a good “fit” for every company. No matter how much you are open to any job, you need to narrow down the type of company and culture you want to work at – and then target your search around that. This is an easy step to overlook, especially as the job hunt lingers on, but being true to who you are and the type of environments you thrive in will help you achieve long-term success at any company.

### Keep Track of Where You Are Applying

There is more to landing a new job than simply searching online and applying. In fact, leveraging only that approach may find you endlessly seeking. Finding a new job should be approached with as much forethought and strategic planning as any project you would tackle at work, or in your personal life.

### Identify Your Skillset

It is easy for us to identify skills that are directly within the scope of our role, but you need to think broader and start correlating your experience to skills outside of your position. Think about experience and expertise that you have beyond the job description – what do you really bring to the table?

### Target Position Keywords

Being organized can save you critical time when you get a callback. Keeping track of the opportunities that you pursue will help you gauge your true effectiveness, tell you when it's time to expand your strategy, and be prepared when you get a phone interview.

Take note of the position title, company, the job description and key highlights, where you found it, when you applied, and how you followed up. I use a simple spreadsheet, but this has saved me a time or two – I knew exactly what was important for the recruiter, even after a job description was no longer listed.

### Applying Isn't Enough

I know, I know – we keep telling you to follow-up and network. As much as some of us loathe these steps, they are key components in your job search strategy. Create a follow-up strategy that works for you, and stick to it. After you apply, commit to following up in specific ways to get the most out of each application and increase your chances.

Above all else, strategize before you start applying. Taking a day or two to plan out your steps to success for your job search, will save you time and energy in the long-run, not to mention, increase your chances of landing an interview.

What's your job search strategy?

## WHO READS YOUR RESUME AND WHAT ARE THEY LOOKING FOR?

You want to believe that when you submit your resume to an employer, someone on the receiving end reads the whole document and thinks...*“How can we best use this person in our organization?”*

Wrong.

**The reality is that your resume will most likely never be read in its entirety.**

Too often the real thought process when reading is...*“Is there anything in here that will allow me to eliminate this person from further consideration?”*

In today's competitive job market, employers are overwhelmed with the number of applicants, most of whom aren't even remotely qualified. **An employers' only hope of getting to the viable candidates is to reject as many as possible, as quickly as they can.**

The better you know how recruiters read your resume, the more you increase your chance of getting noticed. First, however, it helps to understand how a typical resume is processed by an employer:

Larger Companies: Think ATS

Well-established companies and recruiters typically use ATS's (Applicant Tracking Systems) to gather and track all applicants.

- When someone applies, the resume and application go into a database (not to someone's desk or email)
- Periodically, a recruiter or hiring manager will search the database by keywords, and the corresponding applicants will pop-up.
- They scan the resume and application for a few seconds to determine if this is someone that they might want to check out further, or disregard.
- If someone's resume didn't pop-up from the keyword search, no human eyeballs ever see the resume at all!

For larger companies, write your resume assuming an ATS is being used. Keep your resume concise, clean and full of keywords.

Smaller Companies: Think Humans

Smaller organizations typically have a more manual procedure, reviewing resumes individually.

- Resumes typically arrive by email and a human reviews at each one
- Due to volume, they make a preliminary judgment in a very few seconds
- Decisions are often made on confidence, soft skills such as problem solving, quantified statements showing success and potential fit with the existing team

**The real key: at both large and smaller employers: the reader decides if you are worth further consideration from a very brief scan.** If they don't see a connection with you immediately, they move on; there are plenty of additional resumes to review.

Judgment Time: 7 Steps in 7 Seconds

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## WHO READS YOUR RESUME *CONTINUED*

How do they make the judgment in that quick scan? Typically, recruiters approach resumes like this:

- They scan summary and functional information at the top to make sure you may be a good fit
- They review work history to see if the person has had a related career background
- Specifically, they look for company names, titles, appropriate number of years of experience in the field and a stable work history
- Next, they search for related keywords that show you have the technical skills and knowledge of the tools and processes to get the job done
- Preference is given to recent experience vs. history from years ago
- They scan for appropriate education, certifications and other required criteria
- If all looks good so far, they put this resume in the “maybe” pile with a plan to re-evaluate... and decide if you are worth an interview

Is the employer being cruel and heartless? No.

Is the system flawed? Certainly... however, there is no other way to deal with the volume of applicants more effectively. **How long would it take to thoroughly read dozens, hundreds, or sometimes thousands of resumes?** How long would it take a human to compare each of them to find the 3 most qualified?

## How Do You Get Your Resume to “Maybe”?

So how do you make sure your resume gets past the 7 steps in 7 seconds test? Make sure your resume screams “I’m a fit!” in that initial scan!

- Clearly state a summary of your skills (technical and soft)
- Make your relevant work history clear
- Make appropriate skills, experience, and certifications jump out (bold works)
- Use appropriate terminology from *their* job description, not *yours*
- Write in brief, concise (easily digested in a scan) phrases, not long sentences or paragraphs

Understanding the typical process for reviewing resumes can help you be more strategic in crafting your resume. This is how you create the best possible chance of being selected!



**LinkedIn offer a one-year free "Job Seeker" account to transitioning veterans**

If you already have a premium account, you can cancel the remainder and give a prorated refund, when you swap to the veterans account.

## MEA 2013 Board Membership

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Vice President and Quantico Networking	David Wills	VP@MarineEA.org Quantico_Luncheon@MarineEA.org
Secretary and Newsletter	Dan McLean	Secretary@MarineEA.org Newsletter@MarineEA.org
Treasurer	Eric Gonzalez	Treas@MarineEA.org
General Counsel	Herb Harmon	GeneralCounsel@MarineEA.org
Deputy General Counsel	Dave Jonas	DeputyGeneralCounsel@MarineEA.org
Members at Large	Name	
Chapter Development	Lester Niblock	Chapters@MarineEA.org
Henderson Hall Networking	Tim Kibben	HendersonHall_Luncheon@MarineEA.org
Henderson Hall TAP	Vacant	HendersonHall_TAP@MarineEA.org
Webmaster & HotJobs/Email	Will Donaldson	Webmaster@MarineEA.org
Marine Seniors Representative	Frank Pulley	seniors@MarineEA.org
WWR/M4L Representative	Len Ludovicio	m4l@marineea.org
Wounded Warrior Representative	Bill Peters	WWR@MarineEA.org
Walter Reed Coordinator	Frank Wickersham	fgwickersham@vsecorp.com
Public Relations	Jeff Landis	publicrelations@marineea.org
Résumé Assistance	Chuck Anderson	Resumes@MarineEA.org
Bethesda Breakfast	Vacant	
Chapter Representatives	Name	eMail
Camp Pendleton Chapter President	Steve Fisher	pendletonchapter@marineea.org
New York City Chapter President	Adam Treanora	newyorkchapter@marineea.org
Atlanta Chapter President	Vacant	atlantachapter@marineea.org
North East Ohio President	Matt Wojtecki	NEOChapter@MarineEA.org
Camp LeJeune Chapter President	Vacant	lejeunechapter@marineea.org

## Upcoming Events



**August 9, 2013**  
**MEA Networking Luncheon**  
**Quantico**

**September 12, 2013**  
**MEA Networking Luncheon**  
**Henderson Hall**

**August 21, 2013**  
**Camp Pendleton Chapter**

The MEA Camp Pendleton Chapter meets the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of every month, 1800, Pacific Views (formerly the South Mesa SNCO Club) on Camp Pendleton

**View a listing of events and  
job fair on the MEA Calendar**  
[www.marineea.org](http://www.marineea.org)

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT *CONTINUED*

**Bottom line:** Reach out to MEA members who are currently working for Small Businesses and see what they think.

Hang in there, do your due diligence and continue to utilize the MEA – we are here to help you in any way possible.

Semper Fi

*John*

*Photos below of members and business owners networking at recent MEA events.*

