

How Veterans Can Translate Military Leadership

Into Business Language

A sample blog post by Russell Gullo

SAMPLE

You led a team under pressure, kept equipment ready, and made decisions that mattered. Then you sit down to write your company's website or a capability statement, and it comes out as "served as NCOIC of a 12-person section."

To a fellow veteran, that says a lot. To a civilian customer or a contracting officer who has never worn a uniform, it says almost nothing. The experience is real, but it hasn't been translated.

Here is how to fix that.

Why military language doesn't land

The military runs on acronyms, ranks, and shorthand because they save time among people who share the vocabulary. Customers don't share it. They are reading quickly, looking for one answer: *Can this person solve my problem?*

If they have to decode your background to find the answer, many won't try.

Start with the result, not the title

A rank tells a reader where you stood. A result tells them what you can do. Replace titles and duty descriptions with what you led, how many people or how much money was involved, and what happened.

Military phrasing	Business phrasing
Served as maintenance chief for an aircraft squadron	Led a team of 40 technicians responsible for keeping a fleet of aircraft mission-ready
Responsible for training junior personnel	Trained and mentored new team members, building a team that could operate without constant supervision
Managed inventory of tools and equipment	Tracked and accounted for equipment worth over \$2 million, with no losses
Briefed command on readiness status	Delivered regular status reports to senior leadership to support decisions
Planned and executed maintenance cycles	Scheduled and managed complex work on tight deadlines while meeting strict quality standards

The numbers above are examples. Use only figures you can verify.

Swap acronyms for plain words

If a term needs a footnote, replace it. "SOP" becomes "written procedure." "OPSEC" becomes "protecting sensitive information." "Mission accomplishment" becomes "getting the job done on time." When a military term truly matters, such as a security clearance, explain it once in a short phrase.

Translate the values, too

Veterans often talk about discipline, integrity, and accountability. Those are strong, but customers hear them from every company. Show them in action:

- Instead of "We value integrity," try "We give you a written estimate before work begins, and we call before changing it."

- Instead of “We bring military discipline,” try “Every job follows a checklist, and every checklist is signed off before we leave.”

Keep your service, but choose how much to use

Your military background is a strength, and many customers will respect it. Use it as proof of the qualities you offer, such as reliability, training, and calm under pressure. Then spend most of your words on what the customer gets.

A simple test: after reading your page, can a stranger finish this sentence? *“This company helps me by...”* If not, tighten the message.

A quick checklist before you publish

- Did I replace every acronym a civilian wouldn’t know?
- Does each claim include a result or a specific detail?
- Did I describe what the customer gets, not just what I did?
- Would my least military-savvy friend understand this?
- Is every number accurate?

Your next step

Pick one paragraph on your website or capability statement, the one that describes your background, and rewrite it using the table above. If you’d like a second set of eyes, I’m happy to look at it with you.

Russell Gullo, retired U.S. Navy Senior Chief Petty Officer, writes capability statements, white papers, and marketing content for veteran-owned businesses. [linkedin.com/in/russell-gullo](https://www.linkedin.com/in/russell-gullo)