# Transcript

Brandon Henning talks about how he transitioned to a civilian job after service in Iraq

Veterans, especially veterans with disabilities who served this country at home and abroad, often find that transitioning into the civilian workforce after they leave the military can be challenging.

High-quality registered apprenticeship programs can provide a powerful boost to such a transition.

Apprenticeships accelerate the career transition for veterans by combining experience in the workplace with technical training in the classroom on parallel tracks.

Brandon Henning experienced the transition firsthand.

After 16 years of active duty and a deployment as a heavy equipment mechanic with a Stryker brigade in Iraq, he was medically discharged due to combat injuries.

For the last four years he has been working for US Fire Equipment in Sumner, Washington, where he finished his apprenticeship in May of 2020 as an inside sales engineer.

Here is his story.

So, my name is Brandon Henning.

I grew up in Florida and joined the National Guard and after a deployment with the National Guard, I decided to go active duty.

I did 16 years active duty and was medically discharged due to combat injuries.

So I got out in 2016, well the end of 2015, and in 2016 started to pick up jobs as a mechanic, which is what I was having trouble with in the military.

Then ended up working for this company, U.S. Fire Equipment, and went and got my certifications to test and work on fire engines and testing pumps and everything else and that led me into the apprenticeship program that I did with them currently.

What is your job now at US Fire Equipment?

We called it an Inside Sales Engineer.

It's a lot of customer service and dealing with...not so much soliciting sales, but when people call us and they want a particular solution to a problem that may or may not exist, I’m that liaison to try and put something together of items that are available to fit their solution.

Were there any accommodations that were necessary?

Well, I do still do a little bit of wiring and electrical work and very light maintenance work here and there. The job/position itself now takes me out of the constant work, and if there's something I’m not able to do, I can, you know, easily guide one of the other employees through it, you know or something like that- which is what I do in most cases, to try and teach the other employees anyways. But you know, I can still get down there and do stuff, it's just very limited capacity, so...

How important was the apprenticeship to your success with this job?

To me, this being an apprenticeship was very important because it built on a strong skill set that I already had, so I was able to continue in the mechanical field in the designing things.

It took a whole bunch of things that I’m already good at, and knowledge that I've acquired over my military career, and helped me combine that to continue in this field that I love working in- just in a different capacity.

And to get all the qualifications to fit what exactly it is that I do here would probably take eight to ten years, if I were to go to college and try and get all the different, you know, certifications and stuff like that. Whereas with the apprenticeship, it's a lot more detailed to what this company needs.

However, it would I could probably go to work for a different company in the same capacity and have the certifications and the knowledge that I need in those areas- being you know, logistics, transportation, engineer, cad drawing… you know and just the normal ins and outs of, you know, working in a business.

What is the most satisfying for you on your job?

I would actually say the biggest overall satisfaction is getting the department to come pick their truck up and they're just amazed that it not only meet certain expectations but it's better than they thought it would be.

For more information, please visit Apprenticeship.gov or contact your Veteran Readiness and Employment Office or your State Director of Veterans Employment and Training.

This video was produced by: Vinz Koller, Social Policy Research Associates for the LEAD Center.

Editing by: Aleixo Goncalves.

The LEAD Center is led by Social Policy Research Associates and National Disability Institute. It is fully funded as the WIOA Policy Development Center by the Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor, Contract No. 1605DC-19-F-00341.

This video has been funded, either wholly or in part, with federal funds from the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy. The content of this video does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of Labor, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement of same by the U.S. Government.