

# SEARCH & EMPLOY



Getting  
Down to  
Business

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You Have the Skills, but What  
About the Confidence?

**MYCOMPUTER  
CAREER**

TRAINING FOR A BETTER LIFE

# A Few Steps Ahead

**K**IRK PETTY HAS ALWAYS BEEN A PLANNER. AS A CHILD, HE PLAYED COMPETITIVE CHESS, BECOMING STATE CHAMPION AT AGE SEVEN. TO THIS DAY, PETTY LIVES HIS LIFE IN A SIMILAR MANNER TO PLAYING THE GAME – BY THINKING A FEW STEPS AHEAD.

Originally from New Orleans, he joined the U.S. Marine Corps in 1998, where he worked as a helicopter mechanic until 2007, when he transitioned out as a sergeant.

Now, Petty is the senior vice president of manufacturing at Capstone Turbine, where he has worked for 12 years. “I was in the transition workshops when I heard about a Bradley-Morris hiring conference,” he said.

He went to the conference, where he was pleasantly surprised. “There were 40 or 50 employers that were specifically looking for military veterans,” Petty said. “I got three job offers as a result of the conference. That made the thought of transitioning out more comfortable.”

He chose Capstone for a number of reasons. “I liked the culture represented by the company and the nature of the product itself,” Petty said. “Green energy technology is something that, in the future, will be a bigger industry. I was looking for job security.”

Unlike many veterans who take the first opportunity or choose the best-paying job for that sole reason, Petty thought long-term. “If the only thing you consider about a job is the pay, that job will probably not motivate you every day.”

But he didn’t start out as the vice president – or even in a supervisory role. “I started out as a test technician on the production floor. After 12 years and various role transitions, I moved into my current role.”

ing is handed to you. You have to reset your expectations and humble yourself.

“The fact that you served in the military should not be the only interesting thing on your resume. Make sure you have other skills listed.”

Petty finds his job motivating, especially when he looks at the bigger picture. “Every time we build and ship a product, it’s the equivalent of taking 20,000 cars off the road or replanting thousands of acres of forest. There’s an element of the greater good, which I find rewarding,” Petty said.

“But my biggest motivator is being able to lead people. I have 61 people on my team, and I know that every day, they’re depending on me. Doing my job correctly makes their jobs easier, more efficient, and gets them home to their families safely and on time. That’s no different than a leadership role in the military. You’re just trying to get your people home safe.”

One of the reasons Petty was able to work up the ladder at Capstone was because he planned ahead, did his research, and used his benefits. “I used every bit of my GI Bill®. I finished up my Bachelor of Science in Organizational Leadership from Penn State, but there were additional steps in between. I researched the types of professional certifications needed for a role in the quality department. When a job opened in that department, I was ready. That was six months after I had joined the company. It was a fast process.

“I used my GI Bill for those and then put the remainder towards finishing my master’s degree. I don’t understand when people don’t use their GI Bill. You paid for it; you should get your money back.”

When it comes to finding your dream job, Petty has a few pieces of advice:

## 1. Find a Good Culture Fit.

“In the military there is that camaraderie that can be difficult to replicate in a civilian environment. Try to look for a place where there are other veterans. The military experience is a commonality that can help you create meaningful connections in the workplace.”

## 2. Diversify Your Skills.

“Remember that from day one at any job, including the military, you’re building your resume. If military experience is the only interesting thing about you, you aren’t doing



KIRK PETTY

yourself any favors. Learn other skill sets.”

## 3. Plan a Few Steps Ahead.

“Figure out the role(s) that interest you early on and begin to put measures into place that will help you get there. What kind of qualifications, certifications, or experience is needed? If you want to be a hedge fund manager, research what professional certifications are needed. Military experience alone is not going to cover that.”

## 4. Don’t Underestimate the Competition.

“The people applying for jobs with you have been in school, they’re certified, and they understand the business aspect to these roles. Some people might say, ‘A degree is just a piece of paper,’ but there are years of knowledge and skill sets behind that piece of paper.”

## 5. Check Your Entitlement.

“Don’t walk into an interview like they owe you something, just because you served in the military. I know this is hard to accept, but there are a lot of veterans out there. The ones that that are successful are the ones that go into new environments humble, willing to learn, willing to work, and prove themselves once again.”

## 6. Apply the Skills You Learned in Service.

“The military forces you into uncomfortable and even stressful situations, not only through basic training, but throughout your career. But in those environments, you learn to be adaptable, to overcome, and to motivate other people. Bring those skills with you into your civilian career. They will help you in every scenario imaginable.”

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To hear more about Kirk Petty’s journey, check out his guest appearance in the Veteran Influencer Podcast here: <https://www.bradley-morris.com/podcasts/episode-129-kirk-petty-marine-sergeant-to-senior-vp-of-manufacturing-at-capstone-turbine/>.



▲ SERVING WITH MALS-16 AT AL-ASAD AIRBASE IN AL ANBAR PROVINCE, IRAQ IN 2006 IN SUPPORT OF OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM. Photos courtesy of Kirk Petty

Going from a leader in the Marine Corps to an individual contributor was a challenge. “I prepared myself mentally for that transition, but it’s difficult to know that you worked your way up in the military and have to do it again in the civilian world,” he said. “But you have to earn trust. Noth-