



THE 5 BIGGEST MISTAKES MADE WHEN TRANSITIONING OUT OF DEFENCE

AND HOW YOU CAN AVOID THEM TO FAST TRACK
YOUR NEW CAREER



MISTAKE #ONE: LOCK OUT

Failing to gather career evidence before leaving Defence

We have heard it time and time again: "I left my documents in the defence. I can't gain access to them now. Is that a problem?" The answer is YES. Unfortunately it is a problem. The documents that represent your service are gold in the transition process.

Leaving it too long to gather those documents leaves you at risk of getting yourself locked out from accessing the documents that demonstrate your full defence career.

This is the very first mistake people make in transitioning.

In a world where you must prove your worth, having evidence of your skills and experience is priceless. Too many defence personnel have found out the hard way - having missed the opportunity to gather their evidence. Then having to accept lower level qualifications than they would have otherwise been eligible for.

So, what are the negatives that come with not collecting your evidence?

1. It is harder to get the official documents once you are no longer serving.
2. You forget what you have as a resource; that is, work product.
3. You end up with gaps in your proof of your career.

The end result of not collecting the best evidence is that you end up with lower level, and fewer qualifications than you are worth. You can even be forced back to study for qualifications that your mates, who were savvy enough to collect their documents along the way, were awarded through RPL.

But the good news is that there are loads of positives that happen because of collecting of your evidence ...

1. You can get the highest level of qualification you can so that you are highly competitive in the job market
2. You give yourself a whole pool of options to choose from, both in available qualifications and in jobs.
3. Through Recognition of Prior Learning, you can reduce your preparation and study time to get to graduation quicker.

Get Collecting! It's all about the Six Ps: Proper Preparation Prevents Piss Poor Performance.

Collecting is a mindset. You need to always have in the back of your mind a couple of simple questions. How do I show other people I am capable of doing what I am doing now?

This is because it is perfectly legitimate to use verbal conversations as evidence. We are happy to discuss your work with you and map that to qualifications. The way to get the most out of that sort of conversation is to keep hints for yourself.

Make sure you collect all the documents and examples that paint the highest level of your skills and experience in the military before you leave.

Here are the immediate steps to take:

1. Find a PMKeys or Record of Service Long - get one copy as early as possible and another copy just before you leave, both will be a great resource in planning out your transition and in making your whole service work better for you once you are out
2. Pull your personal/personnel file - drag out copies of any qualifications, internal training and PARs (performance management reports). Make sure you keep a minimum of two recent performance management reports.
3. Obtain Special PARs or supplemental PARs that illustrate special performance or performances on operations.
4. Record of Attainment / Course Reports (ROAs) to detail your leadership courses and specialist skills.
5. Pay slips which confirm rank and pay station if on operations.
6. Commendations – they are all good!

So, that's the most important list ... sounds pretty straight forward, doesn't it? Get collecting!

With your documents in your kit, you are ready to tackle the next stage: what to do with your life, post-defence?

MISTAKE #TWO: LEAVING MONEY ON THE TABLE

Make the most of available funding and support



Don't leave money on the table by jumping out of defence without identifying the funding available to aid in transition to a new career before you leave.

Veterans who haven't looked at the funding before leaving all tell us they made these three mistakes:

1. They needed to find all the money to fund career transition out of the family budget.
2. The pool of funds available to defence personnel shrinks dramatically after you exit.
3. Down the track, you realise you missed out on the entitlements that others used to their advantage, and this puts you behind in the long run.

The end result is that you walk away with fewer qualifications, it takes longer to get the qualifications you need, you are not as well prepared for applying for jobs and completing interviews, you miss the opportunities that arise for a better paying / higher classified job and ultimately this all impacts what you can bring home for your family.

But you can have better options by simply taking the time to think about what funding is available for you and your family.

Get the cash!

There are different types of funding that you can tap into and they come with different time lines so you can start planning your transition well in advance:

1. Funding for when you are still in Defence – check out the defence assisted study schemes that can be available to you and your partner.
2. Funding that you can access immediately prior and after your discharge date – check out the Career Transition Assistance Scheme (CTAS).
3. Funding and support that will ease your pocket offered by support services such as the RSL.

Then, you can look at payment plans and Study Loans to distribute some of the investments you are making over a period of time.

By investigating your funding options you can get yourself well placed for your career ahead, with:

1. The biggest pool of qualifications available at the smallest personal cost.
2. Make strategic choices to get the most value for accessing support services to match your individual needs.
3. Give your family access to any funding that exists before you leave.

MISTAKE #THREE: LOST IN THE LABYRINTH

Get a clear plan so you can transition smoothly



Transitioning a career where, for years, you have been told where to be and when, it is a big ask to walk out the door and stand looking at your future, wondering what's next?

There's so many doors, so many turns to take, and it can feel like you are about to enter the labyrinth.

Too many people head out the door and just start running - entering the labyrinth of "what now" without stopping to make any plan at all.

When you take the approach of hurling yourself straight into the labyrinth without getting a clear plan of attack, you're going to strike these problems ...

1. There will be higher levels of stress and anxiety for you and for your family.
2. You'll have no clear direction to work towards – where you end up is anyone's guess. You'll waste your time and your energy.
3. You appear less together to employers and end up presenting as uncertain and scattered, and opportunities will pass you by.

Instead, before you start running, you want to spend some time thinking about what it is exactly that you want to do with your life.

Get Clarity! There is no point spending time or money on anything until you have a plan for where you want to head after leaving the military.

Getting clear does not mean you get every answer right – but it does mean you get a start in the first steps to taking positive action for your future.

When you get clarity, you'll find that:

1. You have a clear direction to work towards.
2. You'll be able to concentrate your energy, time and funds on the tools that will boost your career in the direction you want to travel.
3. You'll appear professional and composed, and people will respond to that confidence.

So, what should you get clear on?

This is where talking to a Military Mentor can really help. The team at Churchill are always here to help with these conversations.

Start by thinking about these general questions:

1. What have you enjoyed most in the jobs you have done? For example, when Randall Smith, Churchill's Co-Founder was exiting the Queensland Police Service with PTSD, he had no idea what he wanted to do next. But he knew that he had enjoyed the training he had delivered in dealing with illicit drug laboratories. He even had his Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, so he started to look for work as a trainer. And sure enough, work came his way. The sort of work you want to do helps you look at particular industries and scope by job titles or duties.

2. Would you prefer to work for the public sector (the government)? Or the private sector? Or do you think keeping your options open would be a better option?

This gives you the direction in selecting the qualifications that will speak to that sector, and more importantly that will travel with you through the progression of your career.

3. Where do you want to work geographically? Are you an onshore or offshore candidate? Would Fly In Fly Out work for you? That will help you rule out the jobs that don't fit your criteria.

4. What level of responsibility do you want? Do you want to be responsible for other people? Or do you want to end your work day and not take home any responsibilities, leaving work at work?

5. How much learning are you prepared to do? Do you want to learn something completely new? Or are you happy to build on an existing skill set?

This will start to give you a plan for a career after Defence.



MISTAKE #FOUR: LABELLING YOUR CAREER

You need to translate your experience into civilian terms



Now, it is easy to take for granted but you have worked in the biggest training organisation in the country. You have learned things and built up a set of skills that would be an asset in a workforce outside the defence.

But too many people getting out of the defence just expect civilians to understand their defence career, and the reality is that people just don't understand it.

They label their career in military terms: military ranks, military skills and military qualifications.

When you stick to labels that only Defence know, you're going to strike these problems:

1. It makes it almost impossible for civilians to understand your experience.
2. Labelling puts you behind in the race for positions because you are categorised too easily by your past employer rather than your skills and knowledge.
3. Computerised recruitment and resume readers will give your applications the three strikes and out because they won't be able to find the terms they're programmed to search for.

The end result that comes with labelling your career in military terms is that you are going to miss out on the interview for the job you are perfect for, and instead you'll end up taking a job that is below what you are worth, or even worse, end up back in the military doing exactly what you are doing now - going backward, not forward.

Instead, you want to put your defence service through a translation machine – take the defence labels and turn it into labels that make sense on Civvy Street.

Get Converting! When you convert your experience and years of military service into something recognisable and valuable in the civilian sector, you:

1. Level the playing field by presenting your defence experience in its best light, particularly using your experience to gain civilian qualifications.
2. Effectively put your experience through a translation machine so that the languaging on your resume and cover letters is understood by civilian employers.
3. Open up maximum opportunities in the job market.

The end result is that it puts you in the driver's seat. After years of being told what to do and where to go, you are calling the shots. With all the best options available to you.

When it comes to converting your defence experience, there are three paths to take:

1. **The Long Way** - do it yourself. Lots of research, lots of time. You can choose to gather your evidence and then work your way through the process of mapping that evidence against a qualification you would like to gain. This can be an arduous process and you will need a thorough understanding of RPL assessment and the qualifications. Then you will present it to a Registered Training Organisation and they will have to review your assessment before your qualification could be issued.
2. **The Defence Accreditation process** - The Defence has certain qualifications on scope that they may be able to offer you. They will not, however, be able to show you the full range of qualifications you could gain with your experience. They have the qualifications that suit defence work (which makes sense) but if you are looking to part ways you need to find the qualifications that the civilian world is looking for. Feedback on the defence accreditation process is that it is long and slow, and often gives you accreditation at a level below what you really deserve.
3. **The Short Way** - tap into experts who will do the work for you, and understand what your career means in the civilian world. This is where organisations that specialise in working with Defence really come into their own – from the work we do at Churchill in getting ADF personnel qualified, to resume and recruitment experts, we know the right questions to ask and give you the best path through to successfully convert your career. Even better, when you work with us, you know you are getting a prompt service that puts you in the hot seat, ready for launch to any job opportunity you have your eyes on.

MISTAKE #FIVE: LIMPING OUT OF THE GATE

Take the time to be as prepared as possible



Preparing to enter a new career requires new skills - resume, applications, interviews, LinkedIn profiles and building connections in a totally different world, a civilian world.

It means building a good team around you focused on helping you transition.

When you haven't taken the time to look at your resume, get that interviewing advice, talk to specialists who understand what qualifications are opening doors or setting standards in which industries, well, you are going to be limping out of the gate while other people run for the prize.

Not understanding how to present yourself, what the employment market looks like and lacking that career preparation means that:

1. You'll be unprepared for the opportunities that are out there.
2. You'll be overlooked or underestimated for jobs you would excel in.
3. Your confidence will take a knock.

So, instead start assembling your team and head for the starters' line.

Get Career Expertise!

And there's good news ... there are some great career experts available to help veterans transitioning to Civvy Street. These services have come a long way in the last few years and even the Prime Minister has jumped behind a big push to see veterans employed in the civilian world.

It's just a matter of choosing the best providers, and we're happy to make some introductions for you. The team here at Churchill has been around since 2006 so we know the ones to work with and the boost they can give you.

The smart money is on the veterans who get help with:

- Your **resume** needs to be specifically targeted to the role you are going for.
- Setting up a strong **LinkedIn profile** (we can give you some advice on this one).
- Your **qualifications** need to be appropriate for the role (Churchill can help you with this too.)
- Putting your **application** and **resume** into a language that can be understood by the civilian world – no acronyms!
- **Interview skills** – remembering that first impressions count, and helping you learn how to address the question in a non-military way.
- Tapping into job opportunities through specialist recruitment services, including tapping into the networks of:
 - Mates4Mates
 - Soldier On
 - RSL.

DON'T MAKE THE BIGGEST MISTAKE OF ALL...

Don't go it alone - We're on your team, and we're here to help

Avoiding these Mistakes is Simple ...

You are not the first person to transition out of Defence and you won't be the last.

So, avoid these mistakes by tapping into the best support you can get.

At Churchill, we are all about giving you the best support, solutions and service available. We have a number of staff members who have made the transition themselves, so we understand where you're at, where you've come from, and how to get where you want to go.

If you'd like to speak to us about smoothly transitioning to Civvy Street, give us a call on 1300 793 002 to get the best advice for your situation.

If you're not ready to speak to someone just yet, and prefer to do a bit more research on your own first, we have a range of information resources on our website which will help you understand more about the process of RPL ...

ARTICLE: The Top 4 Defence RPL Qualifications

(www.churchilleducation.edu.au/top-4-defence-rpl-qualifications)
We've been helping military personnel to transition for the past 12 years. Based on this, we have put together what we have found to be the most useful qualifications, and the types of careers these can open the door to.

VIDEO: What's Involved in Churchill's RPL Process?

(www.churchilleducation.edu.au/blog/video-rpl-process)
Co-Founder Randall Smith explains what's involved in gaining nationally recognised RPL qualifications through Churchill Education.

CASE STUDY: How Military RPL Helped Ken Transition

(www.churchilleducation.edu.au/blog/client-case-study-military-rpl)
After a 30 year Military career, RPL helped Ken to not only secure civilian employment, but also a better quality of life for himself and his family.

CASE STUDY: Service, Recognition & A Fair Go

(www.churchilleducation.edu.au/blog/recognition-and-a-fair-go)
After 10 years in the Army, with multiple Middle Eastern deployments under his belt, Special Forces Combat First Aider CFA – Phillip was eligible for six RPL qualifications.