



By BRYAN THARPE
ACAP Transition Services

So, you just looked at your countdown calendar, and in about a year, you're going to be parting company with the Army.

"Wow," you think, "that time will pass fast!" You're suddenly overcome with a gnawing feeling that you ought to be doing something to get ready for this major change in your life.

Then you remember one of your friends talking about how valuable ACAP services had been when she completed her military service, so you grab the phone and call ACAP. The voice on the other end of the line is friendly and gives you the answer you want to hear.

The ACAP staff member explains that transitioning Soldiers normally begin working with the Center 18 months to one year from ETS or two years from retirement.

"Hey," you think, "that's still a long way out to get started." Your first impulse is to voice that fact in no uncertain terms to the person on the other end of the line.

Fortunately, some of your human relations training kicks in, and you simply say, "Well, I guess by starting earlier I can better prepare myself for the transition."

If you see yourself in this scenario, read on – indeed, it may be too far out to start sending out resumes, but there are some things you can do while you're waiting for that separation or retirement date to draw closer.

The earlier you start using

Beginning transition...

ACAP services, the more latitude you have to schedule appointments around your unit mission requirement.

■ **Start networking.** You can get started networking (talking) with relatives, friends, and acquaintances to let them know you'll be looking for a job in about a year.

You'll probably be pleasantly surprised at just how helpful network contacts can be. Most people you talk to will be more than willing to help.

Of course, the more specific you can be in terms of what you want to do and where you want to live, the more valuable your network contacts can be. The value of networking in job search is illustrated by the fact that almost 80 percent of job seekers find their jobs through some form of networking.

■ **Attend an ACAP Job Assistance Workshop.** Knowing how and where to look for a job is half the battle.

You can never begin too soon to start learning all you can about the job search process, how to produce great resumes and cover letters, and acquiring excellent interviewing skills that make you look and sound polished while you are trying to market your abilities.

■ **Take advantage of all the services the Education Center offers.** Of course, the obvious thing here is to further your education and training to make you more marketable. You may wish to work on a degree or brush up on your computer skills (computer classes and skills are especially good for your resume).

Either way, the Education Center can help you. Additional training and education will usually increase your options for employment. And, if you aren't sure what you want to do when you finish your military service, the Education Center can help you complete an interest inventory that will indicate what types of occupations you appear be best suited for.

■ **Gather information.** Once you start your job search, you'll need a great deal of information to accurately complete job applications and to develop an effective resume. You can start gathering that information now.

This will include such things as the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of previous supervisors and where you worked and the inclusive dates you worked there for at least the last 10 years.

Additionally, gathering other documents, such as personnel records, training certificates, diplomas, etc. will make it much easier to write an effective resume and to answer interview questions. If you wait until you're out of the military to start gathering this information, the task will be much more difficult.

■ **Research.** You can start researching companies, salaries, and cost of living in particular areas of the country. Researching companies can help you decide if you really want to send a resume to a particular company and can help you shine when you go for an interview with the company.

Additionally, you can get started researching the salaries for the kinds of jobs you're interested in as well as the cost of living in areas where you might relocate. This research can pay big dividends for you.

One major benefit is that it will help you decide if salaries in the industry and area you're considering are adequate. Of course, to make a good decision on salary, you'll need to know how the cost of living in one area compares with other areas. The information regarding salaries and cost of living will also be very valuable if you have the opportunity to negotiate salary.

■ **Develop a positive "I won't procrastinate" attitude.** Perhaps the best thing you can do between now and the time you start working with ACAP is to develop a positive attitude that includes a determination not to procrastinate.

Get started on all the things mentioned above. Allow yourself to be positive about your worth in the marketplace--it's a fact that employers are looking for people like you who have a good work ethic, who are motivated, and who know how to work as a team member.

■ **Resolve that the first day you're eligible to work with ACAP, you'll stop by the Center and sign up for ACAP services.** Additionally, resolve that you'll take advantage of all the services ACAP offers with the knowledge that individuals who work with ACAP generally get jobs sooner and get higher starting salaries than soldiers who do not use the full range of services.

For more suggestions, contact the Ft Rucker ACAP Center at (334) 255-2546, or drop by the ACAP Center, Soldier Service Center, Bldg 5700, Room 185. Soldiers assigned to Camp Shelby and surrounding area may contact the Camp Shelby ACAP Counselor at (601) 558-2298. Additionally, you can register for ACAP services by going to <https://www.acap.army.mil>.



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Michael Williams, CSJFTC Public Affairs 4-75TH ACTIVATION... Col. Timothy Damico, Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center deputy commander-mobilization, left, and Col. Joseph D'Costa, 2nd Brigade G Division, 75th Training Command brigade commander, cut a cake Jan. 4 to symbolize the activation of the 75th Training Command at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center. The unit's primary focus will be to train unit's command staffs before deployments.

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