



American College of
Healthcare Executives
for leaders who care®

Transitioning From Military to Civilian Healthcare Careers

Observations From the ACHE
Executive Search Firm Day Discussion

November 13, 2007



American College of
Healthcare Executives
for leaders who care®

Background

- During ACHE's annual Executive Search Firm Day, an open-ended discussion was held regarding factors that may facilitate or hinder the transition of senior officers from military to civilian healthcare leadership careers
- Fourteen representatives of executive search firms were in attendance
- The discussion was led by Deborah J. Bowen, FACHE, CAE, executive vice president/chief operating officer, American College of Healthcare Executives with assistance from J. Larry Tyler, FACHE, FAAHC, FHFMA, CMPE, president and founder, Tyler and Company
- This summary reflects the opinions expressed by executive search representatives who participated in the discussion. It is not intended to be a comprehensive representation of the subject



American College of
Healthcare Executives
for leaders who care®

Myth...Reality...Solution

- The Myth
 - The experience and leadership of military candidates make them particularly competitive for civilian jobs & executive search consultants will get those jobs for them
- The Reality
 - Executive search consultants work for the organization—not the individual candidate—and search committees within organizations are hesitant to consider senior officers for C-suite leadership positions
- The Solution
 - Engage in sustained networking, including acquiring experiences outside military command and control structures.



American College of
Healthcare Executives
for leaders who care®

Myths vs. Realities



Myths vs. Realities

- Search firm executives report that when they present a military candidate for a C-Suite search, that individual may not be viewed competitively
 - Perceptions of reliance on command and control vs. collaboration/consensus-driven leadership styles
 - Limited experience with developing joint ventures, particularly with medical staff
 - Perceptions of limited skills/experiences needed to meet the challenges of a competitive environment
 - Assignments toward the end of the individual's military career may involve policy more than operations



AmericanCollege of
HealthcareExecutives
for leaders who care®

Myths vs. Realities

- Advantages that military officers can focus on
 - Leadership skills
 - Strategic focus
 - Perform well under pressure
 - Physically fit and high energy level
 - Technologically advanced and savvy
 - Goal- and results-oriented
 - Affordable (salary history relative to candidates from civilian sector)
 - Easier to relocate given military career experience and military relocation benefit available upon discharge/retirement



American College of
Healthcare Executives
for leaders who care®

Solutions



American College of
Healthcare Executives
for leaders who care®

Solutions

- Be realistic about the role of executive search firms
 - Understand that the client of the search firm is the employing organization, not the candidate searching for a position
- Be realistic about the level you are seeking
 - Be prepared for a multistep transition to first demonstrate effectiveness in the civilian sector before advancing to more senior-level positions



American College of
Healthcare Executives
for leaders who care®

Solutions

- Be realistic about the type of position you are seeking
 - Look for ways to get your foot in the door
 - Large systems may be seeking officers' expertise in supply chain management, executing large capital projects or other technical/functional specialties
- Be realistic about the impact of blind inquiries that have limited impact
 - Direct mailing of unsolicited resumes
 - Cold calling
 - Responding to ads or listings



American College of
Healthcare Executives
for leaders who care®

Solutions

- Gain experiences in the civilian sector
 - Involvement in ACHE local chapters when stationed in the United States
 - Voluntary organization leadership in non-command and control situations
- Learn the language of the civilian healthcare sector
 - Demonstrate that you understand the framework/ environment of the civilian sector by speaking its language
- Note involvement in continuing education outside the military (e.g., ACHE seminars; earning board certification as an ACHE Fellow)



American College of
Healthcare Executives
for leaders who care®

Solutions

- Translate your resume to a form that a civilian search committee will understand
 - Reflect measurable accomplishments, as well as leadership, problem-solving and change management skills/experiences
 - Highlight any collaborative “win-win” efforts with physicians
 - Numbers by themselves may not impress (budget, unit size); focus on relevant comparisons to civilian healthcare settings
 - Include awards/citations judiciously



American College of
Healthcare Executives
for leaders who care®

Solutions

- The most important key to success is sustained networking—beginning years before your planned separation from active duty
- Networking involves developing and maintaining ongoing relationships/communication—not just when you need assistance



American College of
Healthcare Executives
for leaders who care®

Solutions

- Network at multiple levels, seeking insight and advice and forming professional bonds
 - Network with former military officers personally known to you and who already have made the transition to the civilian sector
 - Network with former military officers not personally known to you and who already have made the transition
 - Network with civilians known to you, especially while on assignment in the United States
 - Network with civilians not already known to you



American College of
Healthcare Executives
for leaders who care®

Solutions

Networking: A Career Long Activity



American College of
Healthcare Executives
for leaders who care®

Addendum: Selected ACHE Resources

- Affiliates Only, Career Resources on **ache.org**
 - Online Employment Service
 - Mentoring & Networking Resources
 - Healthcare Competencies Assessment Tool
 - Job Search Skills Audio/Web Conference
- ACHE Healthcare Executive Career Resource Center Assessments and Workshops
- *Tyler's Guide: The Healthcare Executive's Job Search*, Third Edition by J. Larry Tyler, FACHE, FAAHC, Health Administration Press (includes materials on transitioning from the military)