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Bob Parsons
A LEGACY IN SERVICE

Building a Veteran-Friendly Workforce: Insights from AAR

AAR CORP. (AAR) has established itself as a leader in veteran support through strategic initiatives and dedicated programs that make the company a top choice for veterans transitioning into civilian careers. Nick Gross, senior vice president of integrated solutions for AAR, says nearly 20% of the company's U.S.-based workforce is comprised of veterans through its strategic recruitment and retention efforts. *U.S. Veterans Magazine* spoke with Gross about AAR's mission and values, its veteran-focused programs and its dedication to supporting veterans in the workplace.

Strategic Recruitment & Retention

Gross says AAR's commitment to veterans begins with its strategic recruitment efforts, particularly through the Skill-bridge program in partnership with Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. "This initiative provides a clear pathway for transitioning service members to pursue careers in aviation, and we worked with Congress to make this transition easier," he said. Once veterans join AAR, the company's Veteran Resource Group (VRG) plays a crucial role in helping them integrate into the workforce. "This community and the alignment of AAR's mission with their mission in uniform foster a positive employee experience and support retention," Gross says.

Continuous Improvement

AAR takes a data-driven approach to measuring the success of its veteran-friendly programs. By closely monitoring applications, retention rates and attrition among veteran employees, the company gathers critical insights into how well its initiatives are working.

In addition, AAR conducts focus groups and surveys to directly understand veterans' needs and levels of satisfaction in the workplace. The VRG serves as an essential communication channel between veterans and senior leadership, offering a platform for feedback and suggestions. "We regularly receive recommendations from our veterans on how to continuously improve our veteran resources, and we thoughtfully consider how to implement them for an enhanced team member experience," Gross said.

Community-Building Initiatives

The company hosts various engagement events, such as "Bring Your Own Veteran to Breakfast" and bike assembly

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events for donation to the veteran community. AAR also organizes Memorial and Veterans Day celebrations and fundraisers supporting military families and veteran causes. "Recently, our VRG held a seminar with a local VFW that was extremely well received," Gross said. "During the seminar, our veterans learned about benefits they were previously unaware of and enjoyed connecting with a larger veteran population."

Recruitment & Engagement

Gross says AAR is proud to be recognized as a Top Veteran-Friendly Employer by *U.S. Veterans Magazine*. This recognition will be prominently featured in AAR's recruitment campaigns, tradeshows, customer proposals and veteran

employee spotlights. "It conveys our unwavering commitment to veterans and instills a level of trust when joining our team and doing business with AAR," Gross says. "By sharing this accolade, we hope to continue attracting veteran talent and enhancing our ability to engage with and support the broader veteran community."

Veteran-Friendly Practices

Veteran support at AAR is championed from the top down, with veterans represented at all levels. "This is personal for me," Gross said. "I began my career as an enlisted U.S. Air Force service member, and AAR and others have provided me opportunities to excel in my career." With 20%



Senior Vice President of Integrated Solutions for AAR Nick Gross.

Juan Irizarry, a global functional manager at AAR WASS, expressed his gratitude for AAR's support, which extends to his family. AAR provided him with the opportunity to advance from a crew chief instructor to a managerial role, allowing him to engage with multiple facets of the company's operations. "I appreciate AAR for giving me the opportunity to grow and I hope to remain with the company for many more years," Irizarry said.

Looking Ahead: Expanding Support for Veterans

"I am honored to have served our country, and I am proud of the work AAR does to continue to support the warfighter and their families," said Gross, who emphasized that AAR enhances its support for veterans through continuous engagement and exploration of new opportunities. "Engagement around these initiatives is supported at every level of the organization," he said, "and I am proud to be both a veteran and a champion of veteran initiatives." As the company continues to serve its government customers and the broader veteran community, AAR remains focused on making sure that veterans are valued, supported and empowered to succeed in their post-military careers.