Written by Michael J. Putz, President/CFO, Energy Veterans, Inc.
Wednesday, 21 March 2012 15:45

I am trying to make a living. A decent one, if I can. One I can be proud of, if I'm lucky. At Energy Veterans, Inc.©, we're just a small player in a big job market trying to do the right thing—hire veterans—while assisting building owners in saving energy cost-effectively. If I can make it all come together, I think I've got a chance to be exceptionally lucky.

Our core competency is building an accurate and effective energy model of a building. This model can then be used either to (a) assess the effectiveness of various energy cost-reduction measures developed during a building audit, or (b) certify, for purposes of a tax deduction, the level of energy efficiency realized for building owners who have purchased and installed energy-saving products in their businesses.

My most recent hire was a 10-year Navy Seal from the Vietnam era, who brings decades of experience in the HVAC industry to the table. Dan comes with a strong grasp of mechanical systems, load analysis and energy modeling. So while we're helping building owners save some kWh and therms, we'll also be helping a good guy earn a paycheck. Along with countless other small businesses, I'm hoping our organization can have an impact on lowering the unemployment rate for veterans.

These days, as most people talk about putting veterans to work, they're typically (not inappropriately) alluding to those returning to civilian life after serving in either of the two Gulf Wars, Iraq or Afghanistan. To a great extent, that's as it should be: According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate for all veterans, 18 years and over, is an abysmal 8.1% as of September 2011. Worse yet, the Gulf War II-era veterans (defined as those who served from September 2001 forward), suffer from an unemployment rate of 11.7%.

In contrast, veterans from the WWII, Korean War and Vietnam eras have an unemployment rate of only 6.7%. That's great, right? Well… I'm not so sure.

You see, there's another statistic, known as the *participation rate,* that's not as commonly discussed: It refers to the number of people who are employed or actively looking for work. While the participation rate of Gulf War II-era veterans is 82.3%, for those of earlier conflicts, it's only 33.7%. To be sure, many of these individuals are legitimately retired. Others, at least in my experience, have "settled" on retirement because of how disastrous the current economy is for job seekers— *veterans and non-veterans alike—* in the higher age groups. It doesn't really have to be like that, does it?

On the larger stage, as this magazine goes to press, the Veterans Opportunity to Work Act is in the U.S. Senate, after having been overwhelmingly passed in the House of Representatives. Let's hope this legislation can be finalized soon. If what's now being reported about our withdrawal from Iraq is true, we'll soon have roughly 40,000 troops returning home—*impacting our already appalling unemployment rate.*

On the smaller stage, I had a job opening and found an older veteran who fit the bill. I wish I could always be this lucky (and that you and your operations could be, too). **MT**

*MPutz@EnergyVeterans.com*

**For more info, enter 03 at www.MT-freeinfo.com**

**The opinions expressed in this Viewpoint section are those of the author, and don't necessarily reflect those of the staff and management of *Maintenance Technology* magazine.**