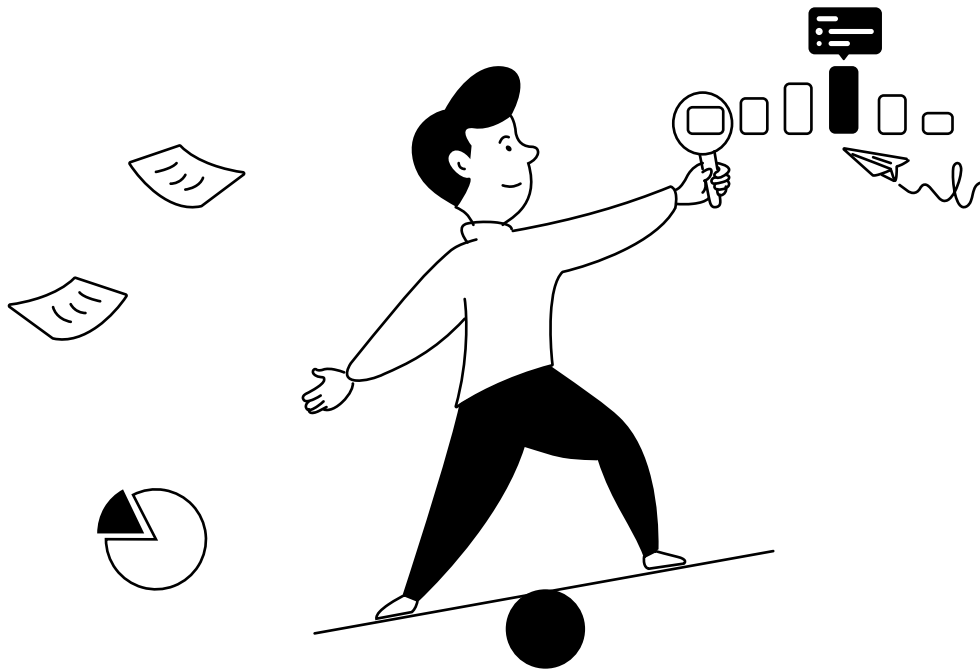# The AI Career Shift: Where Veterans Should Focus in 2026

Data-driven insights from Redeployable and Hire Heroes USA on veteran career satisfaction and the high-growth fields that match military experience

Redeployable   **HIRE HEROES USA**

Executive Summary:
The Veteran Advantage in 2026

As artificial intelligence reshapes how work is done, veterans face a critical moment of opportunity. The roles changing fastest in today's economy are often those built around routine, task-based work — while the roles showing the strongest growth and stability demand judgment, leadership, and complex problem-solving. This shift uniquely favors veterans, whose military experience prepares them for precisely the kinds of roles that remain resilient and in demand.
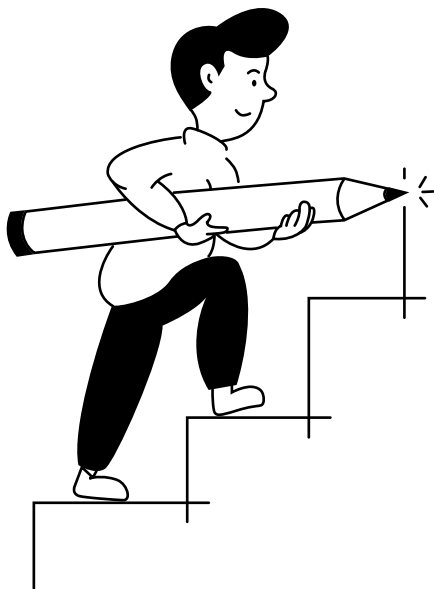
This analysis shows that veterans experience their strongest long-term success in careers that combine three factors: alignment with military skills, sustained growth and opportunity, and lower exposure to automation. In these fields, veterans not only remain employed longer, but report higher satisfaction and clearer pathways for advancement.

To understand where those opportunities exist, this report draws on Hire Heroes USA's data, which Redeployable analyzed to identify long-term employment and retention patterns across industries and job levels. By tracking 2+ year retention with the same employer and pairing those outcomes with U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics growth projections and AI-impact analysis, the data offers an evidence-based view of where veterans are most likely to build stable, fulfilling careers.

The findings point to clear career "sweet spots" in fields such as cybersecurity, healthcare, skilled trades, engineering, logistics, and operations management — roles that offer both long-term demand and meaningful impact. Importantly, the data also reflects that many veterans begin in transitional roles as they explore new industries, and naturally gravitate over time toward work that offers greater responsibility, purpose, and complexity.

The Three Pillars of Veteran Career Success

Pillar 1:   Proven Veteran Satisfaction (Retention Data)

Exclusive retention data from Hire Heroes USA reveals a clear pattern: veterans consistently stay longer in careers that engage their judgment, autonomy, and technical ability, and they exit quickly from roles dominated by routine work. This aligns with broader labor research showing that workers are most likely to remain in roles that provide both purpose and mastery.

Significantly, veterans demonstrate the highest 2+ year retention rates in the following career groups:

1. Information Security / Cybersecurity

2. Healthcare Professions

3. Installation, Maintenance & Repair

4. Engineering

5. Supply Chain / Logistics

6. Management roles (Project, Program, Operations)

Veterans tend to transition more quickly out of roles that are highly repetitive or routine, positions that are also undergoing significant transformation due to automation. However, these roles remain valuable entry points for many veterans. They can serve as effective stepping-stones to more complex work that better aligns with individuals' skills, experience, and motivations.

1. Administrative/Clerical
2. Customer Service
3. IT Help Desk/Support
4. Entry-level Analysts

This data reveals a natural alignment: veterans gravitate away from routine, repetitive work (which AI is automating) and toward complex, judgment-driven roles (which remain human-essential).

Pillar 2: Strong Growth Projections

Public labor market projections reinforce the same conclusion. Roles where veterans already excel are also those expected to grow substantially over the next decade:

- **Information Security:** Projected 33% growth from 2023–2033 (BLS, 2025).
- **Healthcare:** Approximately 1.9 million openings annually, driven by demographic shifts (BLS, 2025).
- **Installation, Maintenance & Repair:**

  1. **Wind Turbine Technicians:** Among the fastest-growing U.S. occupations with ~50%+ growth expected (BLS, 2025).
  2. **Electricians:** Projected 11% growth through 2033, driven by infrastructure and energy transition demands (BLS, 2024).
  3. **HVAC Technicians:** Projected 9% growth through 2033, boosted by efficiency and climate-control demand (BLS, 2025).

These sectors are expanding because they solve real-world needs: cybersecurity resilience, healthcare staffing shortages, electrification, and national infrastructure upgrades. Notably, these same forces create upward mobility far beyond entry-level work. To build on these opportunities, many veterans pair experience with certifications or apprenticeships, accelerating advancement in high-growth fields.

Pillar 3: Automation Resistance (AI Impact Analysis)

While AI is transforming many early-career white-collar jobs, roles requiring human judgment, physical presence, or complex coordination remain resilient. Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei warned that AI could eliminate half of all entry-level white-collar jobs within 1–5 years (Axios, 28 May 2025), but emphasized that advanced roles involving ambiguity and leadership are far less exposed.

- **Information Security / Cybersecurity:** Very high automation resistance (adversarial thinking, ethical decisions, crisis leadership)
- **Healthcare:** Very high automation resistance (physical presence, empathy, emergency judgment)
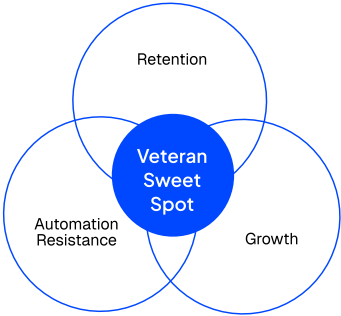
- **Healthcare:** Very high automation resistance (physical presence, empathy, emergency judgment)
- **Installation, Maintenance & Repair:** Very high automation resistance (unpredictable environments, diagnostic judgment, physical dexterity)
- **Engineering (Senior-Level):** Very high automation resistance (systems architecture, creative   problem-solving)
- **Supply Chain/Logistics:** High automation resistance (crisis management, human negotiation, adaptive planning)
- **Strategic Program Management:** High automation resistance (stakeholder management, complex decision-making, leadership)

(WEF, 2025)

Across industries, the jobs that survive, and grow, are those that depend on human strategic reasoning. The training and experience gained during military service often equip veterans to step into roles that demand quick judgment, operational awareness, and leadership, capabilities that remain central in an AI-enabled economy.

The Sweet Spot:
Where All Three Pillars Converge

The following careers score high across all three dimensions, proven veteran satisfaction through exclusive retention data, strong Bureau of Labor Statistics growth projections, and high automation resistance. These represent the ideal transition paths for veterans in 2026.

1. Information Security / Cybersecurity

RANK #1	33%	VERY HIGH
in Veteran Retention	Growth through 2023	Automation Resistance

Why Veterans Excel Here: Veterans excel here because military security clearances provide immediate access, threat awareness training translates directly, and the adversarial mindset required mirrors military strategic thinking. The work feels mission-critical, protecting infrastructure and data against increasingly sophisticated attacks.

Key Roles: Information Security Analyst, Security Engineer, Security Architect, Penetration Tester, SOC Analyst

Many veterans begin their technology journey in related support, networking, or systems roles before advancing into cybersecurity. That progression remains an important pathway, and the retention data highlights how veterans who move into security-focused positions often find a strong sense of purpose and long-term fit.

2. Healthcare

RANK #5	12.6%	1.9M	VERY HIGH
in Veteran Retention	Growth through 2023	Annual Openings	Automation Resistance

Why Veterans Excel Here: Healthcare provides the mission-driven purpose veterans seek, saving lives and serving others. Combat medics transition naturally into EMT, paramedic, and nursing roles. The structured hierarchy, clear protocols, and high-stakes environment feel familiar. Veterans consistently report high satisfaction in patient care.

Key Roles: Registered Nurse, Licensed Practical Nurse, EMT/Paramedic, Surgical Technologist, Respiratory Therapist, Diagnostic Medical Sonographer

For many veterans, the path into healthcare begins with entry-level or transitional roles, such as patient care technician, EMT, or administrative support in medical settings. These stepping-stone positions provide exposure and foundational skills that can lead to more advanced clinical or technical roles over time.

3. Installation, Maintenance & Repair

RANK #4	11%	60%	VERY HIGH
in Veteran Retention	Growth (Electricians)	Growth (Wind Turbine Techs)	Automation Resistance

Why Veterans Excel Here: Military technical training translates directly, electricians, HVAC technicians, and mechanics perform similar work in uniform. Veterans appreciate tangible results, problem-solving under pressure, and the respect skilled trades command. Physical work in unpredictable environments cannot be automated.

Key Roles: Electrician, HVAC Technician, Wind Turbine Technician, Industrial Maintenance Technician, Avionics Technician

Veterans often start in apprentice or junior technician positions as they pursue licenses, certifications, or union training. These early-career roles offer hands-on experience that builds toward long-term advancement in high-demand trades.

4. Engineering

RANK #6	STRONG	VERY HIGH
in Veteran Retention	Growth across specialties	Automation Resistance

Why Veterans Excel Here: Systems thinking from military operations translates into engineering systems architecture. Veterans understand complex, interconnected operations and excel at mission planning, skills directly applicable to engineering project management. The work involves solving real-world problems with tangible impact.

Key Roles: Systems Engineer, Civil Engineer, Biomedical Engineer, Electrical Engineer, Aerospace Engineer, Manufacturing Engineer

Many veterans transition into engineering through project coordination, technical support, drafting roles, or technician positions while completing degree or credential requirements. These on-ramps allow veterans to build toward engineering career paths that offer strong satisfaction and long-term stability.

5. Program/Project/Operations Management

RANK #3, #7, #8	RAPID	HIGH
High across all management types	Growth across sectors	Automation Resistance

Why Veterans Excel Here: Military leadership experience provides immediate senior-level capability. Veterans have led teams through complex missions under pressure, exactly what project management requires. The combination of leadership, planning, and adaptability makes veterans natural fits, and in many cases allows them to progress more quickly into roles with greater responsibility.

Key Roles: Project Manager, Program Manager, Operations Manager, Construction Manager, IT Project Manager, Scrum Master

Some veterans enter civilian organizations through coordinator or specialist roles before stepping into full project or operations management positions. These transitional roles often provide valuable organizational context and industry-specific knowledge that accelerate future leadership opportunities.
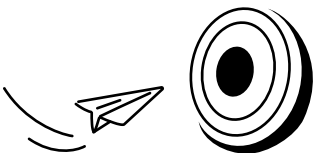
6. Supply Chain & Logistics

RANK #15	RAPID	HIGH
in Veteran Retention	growth as supply chains become more complex	Automation Resistance

Why Veterans Excel Here: Military logistics operations, moving equipment, personnel, and supplies under time constraints, translate directly. Veterans understand the critical nature of supply chain operations and excel during disruptions. This work feels mission-essential and provides clear, measurable impact.

Key Roles: Logistics Analyst, Supply Chain Manager, Logistics Engineer, Operations Research Analyst, Transportation Manager
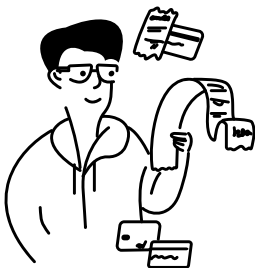
In practice, some veterans begin in dispatcher, coordinator, or analyst roles that help them learn industry systems and processes. These entry points frequently lead to higher-level logistics and supply chain management positions where their operational experience shines.

Careers in Transition: How These Fields Are Evolving in an AI-Enabled Economy

Veteran retention data highlights a handful of career areas where people tend to move on more quickly. Importantly, these aren't "bad" jobs, rather, they are rapidly changing due to automation, shifting employer expectations, and evolving career ladders. Understanding how these fields are transforming helps veterans make more informed choices about whether these roles serve as a meaningful stepping-stone or if a different path may align better with long-term goals.

Administrative/Clerical

Administrative careers remain essential across nearly every industry, but their day-to-day responsibilities are changing as organizations adopt more AI-enabled tools. Many veterans in these roles report that the routine nature of the work doesn't always align with their preference for autonomy, problem-solving, or mission-focused impact, reflected in lower long-term retention in our dataset. At the same time, AI is reshaping clerical workflows, streamlining tasks like scheduling, documentation, and data entry (BLS Occupational Outlook, 2025).

For some, administrative roles can serve as a valuable introduction to a new industry or company culture. Veterans considering this path may want to look toward versions of these roles that emphasize coordination, operations support, or project administration, where judgment and ownership are increasingly important.

Customer Service

Customer service is another field in active transition. Veterans often excel in roles that involve clear advancement paths, problem-solving, and mission importance—attributes that aren't always present in frontline service jobs, which can contribute to lower retention.

Meanwhile, many companies are integrating AI systems to handle high-volume, repetitive customer queries (Zendesk CX Trends Report, 2024). This is shifting the nature of customer service toward more complex, relationship-driven interactions where human skills matter most. Veterans drawn to this environment may find that roles in client success, operations, or technical support offer clearer growth trajectories and more alignment with their strengths.

IT Help Desk/Support

IT help desk roles remain an important entry point into the technology sector, and many veterans start here as they build foundational technical experience. Retention data shows that veterans often progress out of these positions relatively quickly, not because they're poor roles, but because veterans typically gravitate toward work that provides higher strategic responsibility, complexity, and advancement.

As AI handles more first-line troubleshooting and ticket resolution, the skill requirements for help desk roles are evolving. Today, veterans who begin in help desk positions tend to find the greatest long-term success when they pair that experience with targeted training—cybersecurity, networking, cloud, or systems administration—to access more resilient, higher-growth opportunities.

Entry-Level Analyst

Analyst roles—data, business, finance—remain important across many industries, but the nature of early-career analyst work is undergoing structural change. Where junior analysts once built skills through repetitive reporting, spreadsheet work, and data preparation, AI now handles many of these foundational tasks (WEF, 2025).

For veterans, whose strengths often lie in leadership, operational judgment, systems thinking, and problem-solving, the traditional early-career analyst track may not fully leverage their capabilities.

Veterans considering analyst paths can still thrive, but may benefit from pairing analytical foundations with domain expertise, certifications, or roles that incorporate decision-making and cross-functional coordination. This combination creates greater differentiation and long-term stability as the field shifts.

The Veteran Advantage: Why This Moment Favors Military Experience

AI is reshaping many of the roles that used to form the foundation of early civilian careers, but veterans are uniquely positioned to navigate this shift.

1. Entry-level jobs are changing.

AI is increasingly automating routine components of many early-career white-collar roles: : customer support, data prep, basic IT troubleshooting, clerical processing, junior analysis. Challenger, Gray & Christmas reported **696,309 job cuts in the first five months of 2025**, most affecting entry-level office roles.

These traditional apprenticeships are changing shape for many workers. Veterans, however, often bring experience that allows them to advance more quickly when paired with targeted training or credentials.

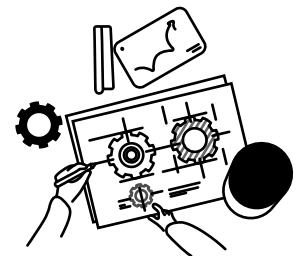## 2. Veterans enter the workforce with senior-level capabilities.

Military service produces competencies employers struggle to find:

- Crisis leadership
- Operational discipline
- Systems thinking
- Technical problem-solving
- Clearances and security experience
- High-stakes judgment under pressure

These skills map directly onto the mid-skill and high-skill roles that remain resilient in an AI-driven economy.

3. The strongest labor-market opportunities today are judgment-first, not task-first.

The jobs growing fastest, cybersecurity, healthcare, skilled trades, engineering, logistics, require human interpretation, physical presence, or mission-critical decision-making. These are the exact environments where veterans' training and experience are especially valuable.

4. The data proves it: veterans stay longer in high-demand roles.

The Hire Heroes USA × Redeployable retention dataset shows veterans thriving in the very fields that are expanding and resisting automation. They often transition quickly out of more routine roles and build long-term careers in work that offers greater complexity, responsibility, and purpose.

5. Employers are waking up to this advantage.

As automation reshapes the economy, employers increasingly seek workers who can navigate ambiguity, lead teams, and manage complex operations. Veterans already do this, often bringing a shorter ramp time because of their experience leading teams, managing complex operations, and making decisions under pressure.

In an economy where AI is reshaping many early-career roles, veterans often bring the experience and judgment to step more quickly into positions that offer greater stability and long-term opportunity. That is an advantage no other demographic brings into the modern labor market.

Data-Driven Recommendations for Veteran Career Transitions

1. **Target the Sweet Spot:** Prioritize careers scoring high across all three metrics: retention data (veteran satisfaction), BLS growth projections, and automation resistance. These represent proven paths to long-term success.

2. **Trust the Retention Data:** Veterans who came before you vote with their feet. High retention careers indicate strong cultural fit, successful skill translation, and genuine satisfaction. Heed the warning of low-retention careers.

3. **Leverage Senior-Level Skills:** Military experience provides judgment, leadership, and crisis management capabilities that bypass entry-level requirements. Consider mid-level roles that align with your military experience, and pursue the training or certifications that help bridge the transition.

4. **Prioritize Mission-Driven Work:** Retention data shows veterans thrive in careers with clear purpose and tangible impact: protecting infrastructure (cybersecurity), saving lives (healthcare), solving critical problems (engineering), keeping systems running (skilled trades).

5. **Avoid the AI Trap:** Entry-level white-collar administrative and support roles show both low veteran retention AND high automation risk. Be mindful about investing heavily in roles that are rapidly changing due to automation, and look for pathways that offer clearer long-term growth.

6. **Consider Skilled Trades Seriously:** Despite stereotypes, skilled trades offer high veteran satisfaction, 11-60% growth, excellent pay, and   near-zero AI threat. Military technical training translates directly.

7. **Pursue Healthcare for Purpose:** Healthcare combines mission-driven work, exceptional job security (1.9M annual openings), and high veteran satisfaction. Combat medics have natural transitions; others can pursue accelerated programs.

8. **Use Security Clearances Strategically:** Active security clearances provide immediate advantage in cybersecurity careers showing 33% growth and top-tier veteran retention.

Conclusion:
Navigate With Confidence

The career advice veterans received even two years ago is evolving .
AI has accelerated changes in many entry-level white-collar roles faster than experts predicted, fundamentally changing the employment landscape.

But this disruption reveals opportunity for those who navigate strategically. The convergence of three data sources, veteran retention rates, Bureau of Labor Statistics growth projections, and automation resistance analysis, identifies clear paths to success.

Veterans possess precisely the capabilities that survive automation: crisis leadership, systems thinking, adaptability, and judgment under pressure. The careers highlighted in this report aren't just jobs, they're mission-driven paths where veterans consistently find purpose, satisfaction, and long-term success.

As veterans navigate transition in an evolving economy, understanding retention trends, industry growth, and automation exposure can help them make informed, strategic career decisions. The data is clear: when veterans align their strengths with high-growth, judgment-driven fields, they don't just adapt to an AI-enabled economy, they lead and succeed in it.

Data Sources and Methodology