

# Arming the construction industry for the future

Recruiting from the military into construction





## CONSTRUCTION NEEDS THE ARMED FORCES

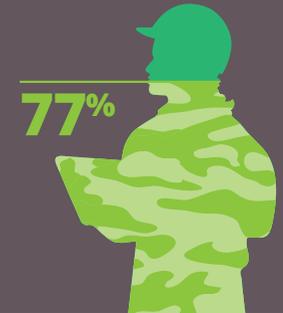
The construction industry is one of the most vibrant economies in the UK. Three quarters of contractors are operating at or near full capacity.<sup>1</sup>

Consequently the sector has an escalating demand for recruits, not only for trades, but increasingly those with leadership and management skills.

**Overall, the construction industry needs more than 230,000 new recruits by 2020.<sup>2</sup>**

Every year, around 20,000<sup>3</sup> men and women leave the armed forces. Many have worked in challenging environments, demanding strong collaborative and leadership skills. Their experiences often make them ideally suited to careers in construction.

In a recent survey, **77 %** of construction professionals said that ex-service personnel could help to plug the management skills gap in the industry.<sup>4</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> Build UK, *State of Trade survey Q1 2016*, June 2016

<sup>2</sup> CITB, *Industry Insights, Construction Skills Network Forecasts 2016-2020*, January 2016

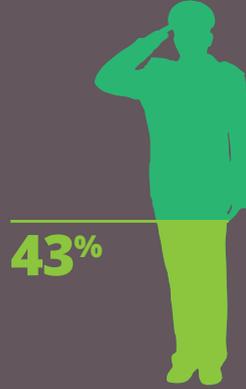
<sup>3</sup> The Howard League for Penal Reform, *Leaving Forces Life: The issue of transition*, 2011

<sup>4</sup> BuildForce and CIOB survey answered by more than 700 construction professionals, May 2016 – visit <http://policy.ciob.org> for a full set of results

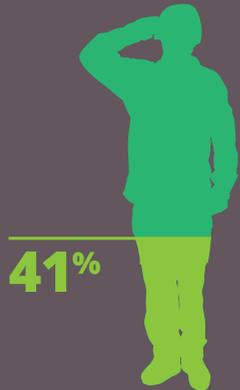
Most valued skills that ex-military personnel bring to the construction industry<sup>5</sup>



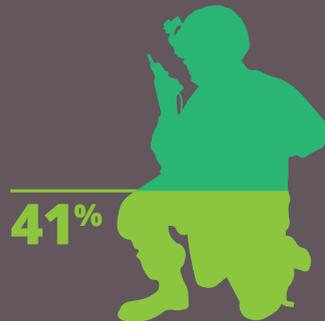
TEAM WORKING (77%)



LEADERSHIP (43%)



ABILITY TO FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS (41%)



COMMUNICATION SKILLS (34%)

<sup>5</sup> According to more than 700 construction professionals in the BuildForce and CIOB survey, as above

SECTION

2

## THE PARALLELS BETWEEN THE ARMED FORCES AND CONSTRUCTION

On the surface, working for the armed forces may appear to be very different to life in construction, but the sectors share many similarities.

### For example, in both sectors

- teams are required to work together to a tight timescale
- work is task focussed and goal oriented
- people are often working out of doors

### Both non-commissioned officers and construction managers

- are responsible for the safety and wellbeing of large numbers of workers
- manage diverse teams
- demonstrate flexibility, responding to a rapidly changing environment
- show strong leadership
- understand and handle complex operations
- problem-solve
- have strong interpersonal skills, building trust with local communities and stakeholder groups



Ex-military personnel from all armed services have highly sought after skills, even if they do not have specific construction experience. **There is a natural fit between the sectors.**

## MYTHS AND MISUNDERSTANDINGS

The construction sector is clearly a natural fit for many men and women coming out of the armed forces, allowing them to adapt the skills they honed whilst serving.

The choice of career paths within the sector is wide-ranging. At the professional management level, specialisms and disciplines include surveying, planning, engineering, design, construction management, logistics, facilities management and health and safety.

But at present there are few clear pathways of transition. A recent survey carried out by CIOB and BuildForce uncovered several misconceptions that could be creating barriers to entry.

### **There is a lack of understanding about roles and skills from both employers and recruits**

- 68 % of respondents believed ex-military personnel were unclear whether their skills and experience were transferrable to construction<sup>6</sup>
- 21% said that employers' lack of knowledge about the military acted as a barrier
- anecdotal evidence suggests that some employers are undervaluing the leadership skills of ex-military personnel

### **There is not enough promotion of the construction industry**

- 57% of construction professionals were unaware of any projects or schemes to help ex-military personnel transition into the industry
- 36% of respondents who had a background in the armed forces came to construction without any careers advice or guidance

<sup>6</sup> BuildForce and CIOB survey, as above

## WE CAN DO BETTER

### **Changing perceptions**

Creating stronger and recognisable routes out of the armed forces into the built environment sector would benefit both employers and service leavers.

**Benefits to employers:** a pipeline of resilient, motivated leaders-in-waiting, comfortable with taking on responsibilities and stepping up to challenges.

**Benefits to service leavers:** a fulfilling career, the opportunity to lead and inspire, working on dynamic projects and undertaking a broad mix of activities day to day.

### **BuildForce**

BuildForce is an industry-backed initiative that helps to bridge the gap between industry and people leaving the armed forces.

From June 2016, BuildForce will offer a support and brokerage service to military veterans and those in the process of exiting the services.

### **The organisation will**

- raise awareness of careers in construction through industry events and careers fairs
- offer one-to-one career consultations tailored to each individual's rank and experience
- find work placements and work shadowing opportunities
- offers dedicated training
- place people into jobs
- mentor industry newcomers to ensure a comfortable career transition

Following a successful 21-month pilot programme, BuildForce is expanding to include more industry partners.

**Over the next 18 months BuildForce aims to:**

- Work with at least 50 UK companies to enhance and/or build more effective recruitment pathways from the armed services
- Sign up 150 industry champions to promote military recruitment within their organisations
- Engage directly with more than 1,500 ex-service personnel
- Deliver tailored, flexible support, training and guidance for 300 candidates
- Develop an operational self-sustaining business model

**BuildForce is part-funded by the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) and led by a group of founding companies:**

Carillion, Crossrail, EY, Lendlease, Morgan Sindall, Wilson James

**Organisations supporting BuildForce include:**

Brookfield Multiplex, Carey Group, Chartered Institute of Building, Constructing Excellence, Electrical Contractors Association, Hare Construction, HE Simm, Home Builders Federation, HS2, Institution of Civil Engineers, Joint Industry Board for the Electrical Contracting Industry, Laing O'Rourke, National Federation of Roofing Contractors, Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, Sir Robert McAlpine, TfL and Tideway.

[www.buildforce.org.uk](http://www.buildforce.org.uk)

For organisations interested in joining the BuildForce project, please send enquiries to [transition@ethosvo.org](mailto:transition@ethosvo.org)

**CIOB: supporting the journey from military operations to professional qualifications**

CIOB offers a wide range of routes into professional construction management, depending on experience and qualifications.

For example, ex-military personnel that have built environment degrees and have worked on construction-related projects within the armed forces for at least three years could immediately be eligible to apply for chartered membership.

For graduates with non-built environment degrees, the transition from military operations to site may be swifter and easier than anticipated. CIOB offers a part-time graduate conversion course which is a fast way of building up practical site management skills. Other routes include the Chartered Membership Programme or CIOB-accredited National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs).

CIOB also recognises a wide range of military qualifications, offering tailored support and advice to people entering the industry.

[www.ciob.org/routes](http://www.ciob.org/routes)





## CASE STUDY I

### JORDAN TOY Construction Manager, Lendlease

Jordan previously served as a captain in the Parachute Regiment. Having joined Lendlease just over a year ago, he is currently running a refurbishment project at White City Place for client Stanhope.

“On leaving the Army I spent 18 months as a management consultant. This mostly involved spreadsheets and staring at the computer screen. It wasn’t for me. I like to be on my feet dealing with people.

Since joining Lendlease I haven’t looked back. The first few months were spent shadowing a company director. He helped me map out a career path and put me on a number of courses to get me up to speed with the industry.

Despite having no prior construction experience, Lendlease quickly gave me responsibility on site. I love being thrown in at the deep end. A lot of my learning is on the job, although I’m still being closely monitored by my boss and mentors.

Many of the skills I’m using were first developed in the Army and there are lots of parallels between the two roles. Much of my time in the Parachute Regiment was spent enabling people do their jobs as effectively as possible. There was lots of forward planning, problem solving and ensuring scenarios reached their logical conclusion.

“Many of the skills I’m using were first developed in the army and there are lots of parallels between the two roles.”

As in the Army, I really enjoy working with people from all walks of life and working with them to adapt to and overcome obstacles.

Construction has great appeal for people coming out of the armed forces. There are definitely parallels between the sectors: the roles within the industry tend to map out in a similar way to an army unit, so it’s easy to get to grips with the hierarchies. You also have the satisfaction of working towards clear goals, and have something tangible to show at the end.

I’d estimate that 20% of my job is construction knowledge-based, and I’m picking up those competencies as quickly as I can. The other 80% of my time is spent on management, utilising skills I developed during my time in the Army.”





## CASE STUDY 2

### ANDY RHODES

#### Director of Construction Logistics, Wilson James

Andy spent 18 years in the Royal Logistics Corps, rising to the rank of Major. His last job was Deputy Chief of Staff of 16 Air Assault Brigade. He joined logistics and security specialist Wilson James in 2010.

“A major focus of my final military role involved planning and executing the deployment of 9,000 people along with provisions and equipment from 30 locations in the UK to 20 sites in Afghanistan.

Experience of running this kind of large-scale operation fits well with construction logistics. Although systems in the army are very different to those in construction, the core principles are the same. On joining Wilson James I was given the job of running logistical support for Heathrow’s £1 billion build programme. The only specific action I had to take to get into construction sector was to apply for a CSCS card.

You can train someone to operate equipment and be safe on-site, you can give them commercial knowledge, but it takes much longer to develop the inherent qualities of leadership, confidence and integrity that are honed in the armed forces.

“Two of our main board directors are ex-military, as are several managers and supervisors within the business.”

Our recruitment strategy at Wilson James draws heavily from the services. Two of our main board directors are ex-military, as are several other managers and supervisors within the business.

The men and women that we recruit from the armed forces can deal with complexity. They are good at seeing the big picture, and managing lots of moving parts simultaneously to ensure that tasks are delivered efficiently and safely.

I would urge employers not to underestimate the leadership qualities that ex-military personnel can bring to construction operations. Former junior officers and captains often slot well into manager and senior manager roles. Ex-majors or colonels are comfortable in director positions. And we should not forget the wealth of experience and skills that wounded and injured veterans also have to offer.”



## FINAL THOUGHTS

Construction is a people-based industry, and it needs leaders just as urgently as those with technical skills. For ex-military personnel, there has never been a better time to join the sector. Technological advances are creating new and exciting opportunities.

But without a pipeline of new decision makers, the UK construction sector's growth and global competitiveness will be severely under threat. It's important that we act together to establish and strengthen recruitment paths across the armed forces, tapping into this very valuable resource, supporting our ex-military personnel and boosting the UK economy.

**Chris Chivers**, President, CIOB

[www.buildforce.org.uk](http://www.buildforce.org.uk)    [www.ciob.org](http://www.ciob.org)



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