

Military- to-Career Transition Inventory™

MCTI

Introduction

This brief guide was written to provide additional information for professionals using the *Military-to-Career Transition Inventory (MCTI)*. The *MCTI* helps individuals effectively transition from the military to a civilian career.

More specifically, it helps military personnel explore their skills in transition management, knowledge of veteran's benefits, career transition, job search basics, writing resumes and cover letters, and interviewing and negotiating. This knowledge can then be used to make more informed career choices and better prepare for the transition itself.

The *MCTI* is designed to be self-scored and self-interpreted without the use of any other materials, thus providing immediate results for the respondent and/or counselor.

Background

A thorough review of the literature was conducted to support the development of the *Military-to-Career Transition Inventory*. The strength of the *MCTI* is rooted in a review of the literature related to

- sociological reasons why there are more military personnel transitioning into the civilian workforce;
- difficulties in the transition for many people; and
- ways of coping with the transition from military life to civilian life.

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The Military-to-Civilian-Career Transition

Leaving the military and entering a civilian career can be a challenge. Many people are facing this transition from military service to non-military jobs in the civilian workforce. In most respects, it is much more complex and difficult for military personnel to change jobs than it is for civilians to change jobs. Military personnel are faced with a variety of issues that include developing effective transition-management skills, transferring skills learned in the military to civilian jobs, identifying comparable work in the civilian workplace, learning and using a variety of new job search skills, writing a resume and cover letter that translate skills learned in the military to jobs in the civilian world, and interviewing and negotiating for jobs in the civilian workplace.

The military-to-civilian transition can be difficult for many people leaving the military. According to the latest statistics about veterans searching for jobs, it is becoming harder for ex-military personnel to find jobs after making the transition. As the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2011) notes, the jobless rate of the general population was 9.2 percent in June 2011, while the jobless rate for veterans who have served in the post-9/11 era was 13.3 percent—up from 12.1 percent the month before. Given that the jobless rate of veterans was 11.5 percent in June 2010, it is easy to see that it is getting harder for military personnel transitioning from the armed forces to find work in the civilian workplace.

REASONS FOR A DIFFICULT TRANSITION

Smith (2011) suggests that changing careers can be a stressful experience for anyone, but perhaps even more so for people leaving military service. Some of the reasons for this stress among military personnel transitioning to the civilian workforce include the following:

- They will be moving from a culture that is regimented to an unstructured environment.
- They will be moving from a culture that stresses loyalty and dedication to duty to one in which loyalty is not always recognized.
- They will be moving from a culture in which career stability is well established into one in which downsizing and cutbacks are prevalent.
- They will be moving from a culture that stresses rigidity of military discipline to one that stresses flexibility, creativity, and risk taking.
- They will be moving from a culture in which accomplishment of the mission is the ultimate concern to one in which profit and loss is the ultimate concern.
- They will be moving from a culture in which teams are the focus to an environment that focuses more on individuality.
- They will be moving from a culture that has heavy restrictions to one that has much more freedom.
- They will be moving from a culture in which career choices are restricted to one in which people have much more input in managing their own career development.
- They will be moving from a culture in which they have rank or grade as an aspect of their identity to one in which this rank or grade will not be formally recognized.
- They will be moving from a culture in which merit of rank and time in grade assured challenging assignments and orderly career progression to one in which job title does not assure challenging assignments and career progression is often at the whim of others in the organization.

Murray (2010) suggests that military personnel often find themselves outgunned in the job market. He says, "While the men and women of the American armed forces are driving tanks, fixing jet engines, and steering battleships into tight turns, many of their competitors for civilian jobs are going through the rigors of honing their resumes, interviewing for positions, and learning the nuances of networking and office politics" (p. 1).

REASONS FOR MORE MILITARY PERSONNEL TRANSITIONING

Peterson and Gonzalez (2004) suggest that there will be even more military personnel forced to transition into the civilian workplace as there is growing globalization in the workplace. They argue that the following changes in the public and private sectors will result in a shift away from military competition to economic competition:

1. Countries are already experiencing being part of the global marketplace.
2. Employees, customers, suppliers, and investors are increasingly participating in the international economy.
3. The transitional enterprise is on the rise.
4. Overseas markets are often more profitable than domestic ones.
5. The rise of the global marketplace provides a vast new opportunity for business in other countries.
6. Military and political conflicts are de-escalating.

COPING WITH THE MILITARY-TO-CAREER TRANSITION

Smith (2011) argues that, for military personnel to be successful in the transition from a military to a civilian career, they need to develop coping skills in the following areas: dealing with the anxiety related to leaving part of their career behind, developing an individualized transition plan, assessing interests, exploring the world of work, translating skills, developing new skills, finding support in the transition, exploring their benefits, learning how to find a job, and learning to use the various agencies on and off base.

Prengel (1999) suggests that it can be difficult for members of the various military branches because they do not have work experience in the civilian world of work and tend to be most familiar with careers in the military. She argues that the length of military service has the most impact on the success of people transitioning from a military to a civilian career, with people who have been in military service for a long time having the most difficulty. She suggests that the majority of military personnel who use military career-transition programs need guidance in career exploration, understanding transferable skills, assessment of available resources, writing resumes, developing interviewing skills, and securing a position in the civilian world of work.

Need for the *Military-to-Career Transition Inventory*

A measurement of military-to-career transition competencies is needed now more than ever. Given the changes occurring in the military and the civilian workplace, there is a tremendous need for an assessment instrument that could provide military personnel transitioning into the workplace with greater knowledge of their employability strengths and weaknesses.

Storlie (2011) conducted a survey of veterans, employers, government officials, and educators related to the value of translating military skills to help military veterans succeed in their transition from military to civilian careers. He found that 90 percent of survey respondents felt that it was essential that veterans learn how to translate their military skills to the civilian workplace. Respondents felt that leadership, planning, ethics and morals, and strategic thinking were skills that military personnel possessed and needed to be able to articulate to prospective employers. Unfortunately, respondents also felt that less than ten percent of military veterans transitioning into the workplace were highly skilled in doing so.

While military life can be dangerous and difficult, transitioning to civilian life can pose specific challenges for men and women who have served in the armed forces. According to Morin of the Pew Research Center (2011), since the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, 44 percent of all veterans have said that re-entry and re-adjustment to civilian life was difficult for them.

Smith (2011) suggests that, although the various branches of the armed services and the Department of Veterans Affairs have active roles in providing transition-assistance programs to people being discharged or retiring from active duty, many of these services are offered during extremely stressful times. Indeed, “many leave these services with unanswered questions and uncertainty” (p. 1).

Purpose of the *MCTI*

The *MCTI* was developed as a reliable and valid way to measure the level of readiness to enter the civilian workplace when transitioning into civilian jobs. It is designed so that people can explore their readiness to be successfully employed in the workplace. The *MCTI* also enhances awareness of specific employability skills and provides suggestions for enhancing job employability even more.

More specifically, by using the information provided by *MCTI*, respondents can

- Learn more about their strengths and weaknesses as they transition from the military to civilian life and jobs.
- Learn more about their strengths and weaknesses as they enter the workforce.
- Identify ways to enhance their weaknesses and be better prepared to be successful employees.
- Experience enhanced self-esteem and feel better prepared to be competitive in the job market.
- Learn additional skills for transitioning from the military.

The *MCTI* is intended for use in a variety of settings, including the following:

- College, university, and community college student centers that provide career counseling, coaching, and job search assistance for military personnel transitioning back to college
- One-stop and other career and employment counseling programs that work with military personnel who will be transitioning to the workplace
- Vocational rehabilitation agencies that provide career counseling and job search assistance to former military personnel searching for a job after active duty
- Military transition centers helping military personnel with their transition to civilian life and the civilian workplace

Murray (2010) suggests that, although the Department of Defense has set up an extensive network of career services designed to make sure service members are up to date on current job-hunting practices when they make the transition to civilian life, there is still a need for more civilian resources to supplement existing transitioning programming. The *MCTI* was designed to be used by military transition centers as well as civilian career and job search services.

Administration and Interpretation

The *MCTI* is simple to take and can be easily scored and interpreted. Each assessment contains 60 statements that are related to the skills that military personnel need as they transition from the military to the world of work. Each item asks the test taker to rate how well the statement describes him or her on a four-point scale ranging from “Very Much Like Me” to “Not Like Me.” The *MCTI* also includes scoring directions, a scoring profile, and an interpretive guide that helps respondents to connect their results to strategies for further developing their employability transition skills. In addition, a space is provided for respondents to develop an action plan for strengthening transition weaknesses.

The *MCTI* can be administered to individuals or to groups. It is written for individuals at or above the 8th-grade level on the Flesch-Kincaid scale. Because none of the items are gender specific, the *MCTI* is appropriate for men and women transitioning from any branch of military service to the civilian workplace.

Administering the *MCTI*

The *MCTI* can be self-administered, and the inventory booklets are consumable. A pencil or pen is the only other item necessary for administering, scoring, and interpreting the inventory. The first page of the inventory contains spaces for normative data, including name, date, gender, and age. Instruct each respondent to fill in the necessary information. Then read the description on the first page while all respondents follow along. Test administrators should ensure that each respondent clearly understands all of the instructions and the response format. Respondents should be instructed to mark all of their responses directly on the inventory booklet. The *MCTI* requires approximately 20–25 minutes to complete.

The *MCTI* uses a series of steps to guide respondents. In Step 1, respondents mark their answers for each of the 60 statements. Respondents are asked to read each statement and then circle the response that best represents how well the statement describes them based on a four-point Likert scale.

In Step 2, respondents add their scores for each color-coded scale. Each of the six scales is made up of 10 items that represent necessary military-to-career transition skills as identified through the literature search. Step 3 provides a chart for respondents to profile their scores from 10 to 40. Respondents place an X on the profile for their scores on each of the six scales. This profile helps respondents to compare their scores. Scoring ranges are provided so that respondents can identify those employability skills that require the most attention.

Step 4 helps respondents to interpret their scores. It provides descriptions of the six scales, as well as tips, exercises, and strategies to help respondents explore and improve their ability to make a successful transition from the military to a civilian career. Respondents should concentrate on those scales on which they scored in the low or average ranges—though, if there is time, they should be encouraged to review the information for all six scales. Step 5 encourages respondents to develop an action plan and apply what they have learned to assist them in further developing their skills in transitioning to the civilian workforce.

Understanding and Interpreting *MCTI* Scores

The scales for the *MCTI* were structured around the transition-competency areas identified in the review of the literature. For more information about the correlation between the DOD competency areas and the scales on the *MCTI*, please refer to Table 1 in the next section. Following are descriptions of the six scales identified for inclusion on the *MCTI* that you can use as explanations to personnel taking the assessment:

1. TRANSITION MANAGEMENT SKILLS

Skills for managing the transition from military to civilian life are critical for your success. High scores on this scale indicate that you have a flexible transition plan for making the transition from military to civilian life. However, regardless of how accomplished you are, you can still improve in these skill areas.

2. VETERAN'S BENEFITS

As a veteran, you are eligible for a variety of potential benefits offered through different agencies. High scores on this scale indicate that you are knowledgeable about your options and have made a plan to begin utilizing some of these benefits. However, regardless of how accomplished you are, you can still improve in these skill areas.

3. CAREER TRANSITION SKILLS

It is important for you to develop a comprehensive career plan for your transition to a civilian job. High scores on this scale indicate that you understand your strengths and weaknesses, have identified a career option, and have developed a career plan. However, regardless of how accomplished you are, you can still improve in these skill areas.

4. JOB SEARCH BASICS

Finding a job after being in the military is definitely possible, but you will need to be proactive. High scores on this scale indicate that you are prepared to search for employment in a civilian job. However, regardless of how accomplished you are, you can still improve in these skill areas.

5. WRITING RESUMES AND LETTERS

Writing effective cover letters and resumes will be important in your search for civilian employment. High scores on this scale indicate that you know how to develop effective civilian cover letters and resumes. However, regardless of how accomplished you are, you can still improve in these skill areas.

6. INTERVIEWING AND NEGOTIATING

Interviewing is the most important 60 minutes of your civilian job search. High scores on this scale indicate that you are knowledgeable about employment interviews and negotiating for your salary and benefits. However, regardless of how accomplished you are, you can still improve in these skill areas.

The Scores

The *MCTI* yields content-referenced information in the form of raw scores. A raw score, in this case, is the total of the numbers circled for each of the ten self-report military-to-career transition statements for the six scales. The performance of individual respondents or groups of respondents can only be evaluated in terms of the mean scores on each of the scales. For each of the scales on *the MCTI*,

- Scores from **10 to 19** on any of the six scales are **LOW** and suggest that respondents are not yet prepared for their transition from military to civilian life.
- Scores from **20 to 30** on any of the six scales are **AVERAGE** and indicate that respondents are somewhat prepared for their transition from military to civilian life.
- Scores from **31 to 40** on any of the six scale are **HIGH** and indicate that respondents are very prepared for their transition from military to civilian life.

Respondents generally have one or more areas in which they score in the low or low-average categories. Each respondent should concentrate on exploring his or her strengths and weaknesses within these areas first. However, respondents should also look for ways to use their scores to enhance their chances of employment success in the civilian workforce. This is best accomplished by having respondents complete all of the activities in Step 4. This will help them to think about the employability skill strengths and weaknesses, learn more effective strategies for strengthening weaker employability skills, and be better prepared to exhibit their employability skills in the workplace.

Keep in mind that it is not necessary to score high on *every* scale on the *MCTI*, nor do high scores on all six scales ensure successful employment. This assessment is designed to help people transitioning out of the military and entering the workplace explore their employability skill strengths and weaknesses. However, every person's readiness for this transition is different, and each may require different skills or skill levels of varying degrees. Alternatively, some respondents may score in the average or low ranges for most or all of the six scales. If this is the case, the person may need to do a lot of work to prepare to develop more effective skills for transitioning out of the military to a civilian job.

Illustrative Case

Craig is a 48-year-old military police officer who has been in the service for 20 years. He earned a bachelor's degree after high school. While in college, Craig graduated with a psychology degree and was in Army ROTC. He earned his master's degree in counseling while on active duty. He loved his work as a military police officer, but he would like to find a job in a counseling setting upon transitioning out of the military. He is actively preparing for his transition from the military to the civilian workforce, but he says he feels very anxious. He has not been in the civilian workplace for 20 years and does not know what to expect. Before he begins his transition, he is interested in identifying his military-to-career transition strengths and weaknesses. His scores on the MCTI include the following:

Transition Management Skills:	26
Veteran's Benefits:	25
Career Transition Skills:	30
Job Search Basics:	26
Writing Resumes and Letters:	26
Interviewing and Negotiating:	21

As can be seen, all of Craig's scores are in the average range, which suggests that he could use some assistance in all six areas measured on the MCTI. Craig scored highest on the Career Transition Skills scale (30), which is understandable in that Craig really has a pretty good idea of the types of jobs he has interest in pursuing in the civilian workforce. He feels prepared to apply his skills and education to civilian occupations and has set some career goals. Craig says that he has a career plan, but he is worried about everything else.

Craig also scored average on the Transition Management Skills scale (26), Job Search Basics scale (26), and Writing Resumes and Letters scale (26). Craig says that in all of these areas he feels pretty comfortable and is pretty well prepared for the transition. He feels like he will be able to effectively search for and find a job in his area of interest.

The two areas Craig feels least prepared for is taking advantage of his veteran's benefits (25) and, especially, interviewing and negotiating (21).

The counselor working with Craig suggested that, because he was in the Average range on every scale, Craig needed some assistance with each of the areas. The counselor suggested that Craig work with his military transition center to identify and be able to use all of the benefits he has available as a veteran. He also began helping Craig with various aspects of his job search, beginning with learning skills for transferring his military experience onto a resume and into an interview situation.

Research and Development

This section outlines the stages involved in the development of the *MCTI*. It includes guidelines for development, item construction, item selection, item standardization, and norm development and testing.

Guidelines for Development

The *MCTI* was developed to fill the need for a quick and reliable instrument to help military personnel in their transition from military service to civilian careers in the world of work. It also provides counselors and teachers with information that they can use to help their clients develop the requisite skills people need to transition effectively into the civilian workplace. The *MCTI* was developed to meet the following guidelines:

1. **The instrument should measure a wide range of military transition skills.** To help people identify their strengths and weaknesses in making the transition from the military to a civilian job, six scales were developed that were representative of the primary skills being taught in military transition programs.
2. **The instrument should be easy to administer, score, and interpret.** The *MCTI* uses a four-point Likert question-answer format that allows respondents to quickly determine their military-to-career transition skill strengths and weaknesses. The consumable format makes it easy to complete, score, and interpret the assessment and helps people explore their strengths and weaknesses related to skills needed to become successfully employed upon making the transition from the military to the workforce.
3. **The instrument should apply to both men and women.** Combined norms have been developed for this version of the *MCTI*.
4. **The instrument should contain items that are applicable to people of all ages.** Norms developed for the *MCTI* show an age range from 35 to 59.

According to Yonkman and Bridgeland (2009), military veterans are a vulnerable population, especially during the transition home after their service. They suggest that this population faces significant mental and physical challenges, a suicide rate that is estimated to be between two to four times higher than among civilians of the same age, a lack of hopefulness and purpose, unemployment rates higher than the overall adult population rate, and difficulties in their family life.

MCTI administrators need to keep in mind that the assessment results are based on self-report data provided by the person completing the assessment. It is not designed to be a quantitative assessment of actual success and failure, but a guide to highlight strengths and weaknesses to be worked on. The *MCTI* is a valid and reliable measure of the transition skills of military personnel returning to the civilian workplace upon leaving the military. The assessment should be used as a means to identify skill strengths and identify skills that need to be further developed for the test taker to be effective in the civilian workplace.

Scale Development

Scale development for the *MCTI* was based primarily on a review of the literature related to critical transition skills for people leaving military service. The review of the literature identified six skill areas needed to be successful in the transition from a military career to a civilian career. Table 1 shows the correlation between the six competencies identified in Prengel's (1999) model based on the competencies developed by the Department of Veterans Affairs and the scales on the *MCTI*.

Correlation Between Prengel's Model and <i>MCTI</i> Scales	
Prengel's Competencies	<i>MCTI</i> Scales
Exploring Transition Concerns	Transition Management Skills
Exploring Family Support	Transition Management Skills
Exploring Veteran's Benefits	Veteran's Benefits
Exploring Values, Goals, & Interests	Career Transition Skills
Reviewing Career Background	Job Search Basics & Writing Resumes and Letters
Exploring Accomplishments & Job Skills	Interviewing and Negotiating

Item Selection

A large pool of items that were representative of the six major scales on the *MCTI* was developed and later revised, using the research studies and reviews of the literature cited above.

The items used for the *MCTI* were designed based on many of the existing military transition programs. In addition, the items selected for inclusion on the *MCTI* were representative of the basic competencies used by successful people transitioning from military to civilian employment.

A pool of items was identified and then subjected to a split-half statistical study (see Table 2) to eliminate items that did not cluster well. The subjects used for this study were military personnel, from all branches of service, in the midst of transitioning out of the military. This analysis enabled the elimination of items that did not correlate well with the other items on the scale.

In developing items for the *MCTI*, the author used language that is currently being used in the literature related to military transition skills. After the items were developed, they were reviewed and edited for clarity, style, and appropriateness for identifying military transition skills that are critical for people to possess in order to be successful in the civilian workplace. Items were additionally screened to eliminate any reference to sex, race, culture, or ethnic origin.

Table 2: <i>MCTI</i> Internal Consistency (Split-Half Correlations)*	
Scales	Correlation Coefficients
Transition Management Skills	.82**
Veteran's Benefits	.96**
Career Transition Skills	.89**
Job Search Basics	.85**
Writing Resumes and Letters	.86**
Interviewing and Negotiating	.88**

* N = 25

**Correlation was significant at the 0.01 level.

Item Standardization

The *MCTI* was designed to measure a person's skills that are required to be successful in transitioning from the military to the civilian workplace. Military personnel in the midst of making their own transition were then administered the first draft of the *MCTI* to gather data concerning the statistical characteristics on each of the items from the six scales. From this research, a final pool of 10 items was chosen which best represented each of the six scales on the *MCTI*.

This initial research yielded information about the appropriateness of items for each of the *MCTI* scales; reactions of respondents concerning the inventory format and content; and reactions of respondents concerning the ease of administration, scoring, and profiling of the assessment. Experts in the field of employment counseling were used to eliminate items that were too similar to one another. The data collected was then subjected to split-half correlation coefficients to identify the items which best represented the six scales on *MCTI*. The items accepted for the final form of the *MCTI* were again reviewed for content, clarity, and style. Careful examination was conducted to eliminate any possible gender or race bias.

Reliability

Reliability is often defined as the consistency with which a test measures what it purports to measure. Evidence of the reliability of a test may be presented in terms of reliability coefficients and test-retest correlations. Tables 2 and 3 present these types of reliability information. As can be seen in Table 2, the *MCTI* showed very strong internal consistency validity with split-half correlations ranging from .82 (Transition Management Skills scale) to .96 (Veteran's Benefits scale). All split-half correlation scores for the six scales were significant at the 0.01 level.

Then, approximately one month after the original testing, 25 people in the sample population were re-tested using the *MCTI* (see Table 3). Test-retest correlations for the *MCTI* ranged from .87 (Transition Management Skills scale and Job Search Basics scale) to .91 (Veteran's Benefits scale). All of these correlations were also significant at the 0.01 level.

Validity

Validity is often defined as the extent to which a test measures what it purports to measure. Evidence of validity for the *MCTI* is presented in the form of means and standard deviations. Table 4 shows the scale means and standard deviations for all military personnel completing the *MCTI*.

People completing the *MCTI* scored highest on the Writing Resumes and Letters scale ($M = 32.45$), the Career Transition Skills scale ($M = 31.35$), and the Job Search Basics scale ($M = 31.14$). All of these means are in the lowest quarter of the High range. This suggests that military personnel transitioning from the military to the civilian workplace feel most competent in searching for a job, writing an effective resume and cover letter, and understanding the career transition ahead of them. They probably have worked on a civilian resume and cover letter, begun developing a job search strategy, planned their career options, and set short- and long-term career goals.

On the other hand, people completing the *MCTI* scored lowest on the Interviewing and Negotiating scale ($M = 28.60$), the Veteran's Benefits scale ($M = 28.79$), and the Transition Management Skills scale ($M = 30.49$). All of these means were in the high quarter of the Average range. This suggests that military personnel transitioning from the military to the civilian workplace feel least competent in effectively interviewing for civilian positions, exploring and

understanding the various veteran's benefits available to them upon leaving the military, and thinking about money management and social support needed in their transition. They probably have not thought about the types of career options they have available and do not feel comfortable in being able to find adequate housing, dealing with the stress associated with their transition, and being able to deal with their mental and physical health during the transition.

Table 3: MCTI Stability (Test-Retest Correlation)*+

Scales	Correlations
Transition Management Skills	.87**
Veteran's Benefits	.91**
Career Transition Skills	.90**
Job Search Basics	.87**
Writing Resumes and Letters	.88**
Interviewing and Negotiating	.90**

* N = 25

+ 1 month after original testing

**Correlations were significant at the 0.01 level.

Table 4: MCTI Means and Standard Deviations

Scales	Total (N = 220)	
	Mean	SD
Transition Management Skills	30.49	3.3
Veteran's Benefits	28.79	3.9
Career Transition Skills	31.35	3.2
Job Search Basics	31.14	4.8
Writing Resumes and Letters	32.45	4.7
Interviewing and Negotiating	28.60	5.2

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