



Kessler Foundation Podcast Transcript: GI GO Fund and JobPath - Disability Employment

Recorded June 2019. [Listen to it here.](#)

- JUSTIN CONSTANTINE:
00:01 [music] Celebrate military service, not just because it's the right thing to do, but because it affects your bottom line and these people can grow to be leaders at your company.
- ANNOUNCER: 00:11 Recently, we had the opportunity to visit one of our grantees, the GI Go Fund in Newark, New Jersey. The mission of the GI Go Fund is to support veterans and their families by connecting them with services they need to lead fulfilling lives in the civilian sector. In 2018, the GI Go Fund held a ribbon cutting for the opening of the Jackson Drysdale Veterans Center, a veteran incubator where veterans receive support for starting and growing their own businesses. The center itself was launched through a community partnership of Kessler Foundation, Prudential, Panasonic, and JobPath, the innovative employment tool developed at the GI Go Fund for job seekers transitioning from military service. Today's podcast is being brought to you from the Drysdale Veterans Center where we interviewed Jack Fanous, GI Go Fund founder, and Justin Constantine, the first veteran to use resources of the Drysdale Center. Justin is a former Marine lieutenant colonel, an attorney, and is now an inspirational speaker and leadership consultant. He survived a gunshot wound to the head while serving in Iraq. Justin is the author of *My Battlefield, Your Office: Leadership Lessons From the Front Lines*. Let's listen in as senior writer CarolAnn Murphy of Kessler Foundation hosts this interview.
- JUSTIN CONSTANTINE:
01:36 Hi, I'm Justin Constantine, retired Marine Corps lieutenant colonel. I served on active duty and reserves with the Marine Corps for 16 years. I was medically retired in 2013. I suffered a serious gunshot wound to the head during a deployment to Iraq in 2006. As you mentioned, I was a lawyer for a while and I also have an advanced law degree from Georgetown, but now I spend all my time working with JobPath. I'm in charge of business development, so focusing specifically on veteran employment and helping veterans with transitioning and helping HR professionals understand the business case for hiring veterans.
- CAROLANN MURPHY:
02:15 Jack, please introduce yourself to our listeners today.
- JACK FANOUS: 02:18 Sure. It's great to be with you again, CarolAnn, and I appreciate the opportunity to talk about not only the incubator space and the stuff that GI Go Fund works on and focuses on, but really highlighting some of incredible work Justin's been doing as a part of the incubator and abroad and beyond some of the work that we do here in the incubator. We founded the GI Go Fund. My brother and I and a group of our friends founded the GI Go Fund 13 years ago after one of our best friends was killed in Iraq. His name was Lieutenant Seth Dvorin, And since then we have made it our mission to help veterans transition home, whatever that means. If they're facing homelessness, if they're facing mental health issues, and primarily, most importantly in our line of work-- and if they're facing unemployment. We help them find jobs. We help them transition home and put their lives back together.

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- CAROLANN MURPHY:
03:03 Thank you, Jack. And that dovetails with the mission of Kessler Foundation where we feel that employment is key for people with disabilities. It's fundamental to leading productive, independent lives in the community. Let's talk a little bit about employment and veterans today. Today's labor market offers opportunities for job seekers and employers are seeking good workers. How should employers view the potential for veterans to join their workplaces?
- JACK FANOUS: 03:34 Well, I have said this many times before in the past. I think it's becoming truer and truer now. In the HR space, people are starting to realize that veterans-- Justin talks about this all the time. The business case for hiring veterans is that veterans actually help your bottom line, right? This isn't a charitable endeavor. One of the reasons why we went out and created JobPath in addition to GI Go Fund is because we don't believe veteran hiring is a charitable endeavor. It's not something that should come from your corporate foundation. You're not doing good for the veteran community because it's the right thing to do. You're actually hiring veterans because they help your company. They help your bottom line. They show up to work on time. They work hard. They stay late. They follow instructions. They are very trainable. One veteran said something to me that really changed my life close to 10 years ago, that veterans are trained to be trainable, and that's something that's very valuable in today's day and age. As the labor market continues to change with the technologies that we're using, you want somebody who is able to be trained, someone who's willing to be trained, so that as they move forward and as they move up your company's ranks, they're willing to be trained and learn the new technologies that you're using. So when bringing a veteran into your company, you're bringing someone in who's hardworking and dedicated, mission driven, and will help the bottom line on a daily basis.
- CAROLANN MURPHY:
04:48 So there are advantages to the experience in the military for today's workforce.
- JACK FANOUS: 04:53 Oh, for sure.
- CAROLANN MURPHY:
04:54 And what leadership lessons from the front lines should employers be aware of, Justin?
- JUSTIN CONSTANTINE:
04:59 Well, that's the title of the first book I wrote, My Battlefield, Your Office: Leadership Lessons From the Front Lines. And in that book I was taking practices [inaudible] Marine Corps leadership lessons and applying them to mid-level managers in the private sector. But employers should be aware-- and HR professionals, recruiters, managers, everyone involved in some sort of management capacity-- a company should know that veterans, no matter what they did in the service-- first of all, 75% of the jobs they did in the military have a direct civilian translation or counterpart. And so every day in the military we are taught leadership skills. We are taught advanced training based on whatever is we do. I was a lawyer in the Marine Corps. My friends were doctors, engineers, key professionals somewhere in recruiting, which is marketing communications, admins. We do it all. And so people should know that when-- as Jack often says, when they're hiring someone from out of the military, they're hiring from another company, essentially, not from this weird thing where we're just-- all we do is go off to war. But we are a bunch of professionals who, day in

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and day out, do our jobs and do it very well. So we've all advanced training in whatever field we're in. We do show up for work on time. We are drug free. We are encouraged to take the initiative when appropriate and comfortable doing so, but also come from a strong background of teamwork and collaboration, which is critical in today's economy.

CAROLANN MURPHY:
06:28

All right, Justin. Why does transition to civilian employment remain a challenge for many veterans? In your recent book, *From We Will to At Will*, we learned that many veterans succeed in finding civilian jobs, but more than half leave their first job within a year. What are the causes of poor retention and what measures can we take to solve the problem?

JUSTIN CONSTANTINE:
06:49

Sure. And that is a complicated question, so I'm going to unpack it a little bit. Currently, the program that the transitioning service members go through when they're leaving active duty is called-- the acronym is TAP, which stands for Transition Assistance Program. So it's only a week-long course to learn everything they need to know about transitioning and setting themselves up for success in the private sector. Obviously, that's not really enough time, and to date, the resources available to them are very simplistic. And so that's something we concentrate on very heavily on here at JobPath and the GI Go Fund. And we've researched and built a whole suite of tools for veterans - they're all free for them - but also for HR professionals, because it's a two way street. Veterans need to know how to talk to employers and translate their skills into language that private sector employers are used to hearing, and HR employers need to learn about the veterans as well. So when you asked about transition and retention, this is all part of that. It's a big picture there. And so yes, it's true that approximately 50% of veterans leave their first job within their first year. But frankly, that's somewhat consistent with what millennials are doing now anyway. So it's not just a veteran issue. It's a generational issue.

JUSTIN CONSTANTINE:
08:12

But for veterans in particular, they're leaving those jobs-- and surveys bear this out. Pay is part of that. There's only so much employers can do about that. But also the next few reasons are that veterans don't find that that company has a strong mission that they're used to. Like, when they worked in the military-- again, very hard to recreate anywhere else. But there are steps you can do to make sure every one of your employers appreciates the mission of your company and gets behind it. And also they feel like they are underemployed. They're underutilized. They're not working to their potential like they were in the military, which again may be hard to do, but employers can-- that's something they can control. They can give more responsibility to a sergeant who had eight years in the Marine Corps who's used to leading 13 people at a time and so on. So there are steps that employers can take. Veterans need to take their time through tools, like at JobPath or other places, to find the right career for themselves. Not just take the first job that they come across, or not wait until they're out of the military before they start working on this so it's move out of desperation, but find the right job that's good for them that they can grow with that company and stay for longer periods of time.

CAROLANN MURPHY:
09:22

So the workplace culture is a factor. That's something that employers need to be aware of and work on their end.

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- JUSTIN CONSTANTINE:
09:31
- Yeah, workplace culture is important. And if you do want to-- if you do want to be military friendly and really military ready-- if you want to-- if you have a press release that says that about your company, then there's a lot to that. And that means creating a culture where you celebrate military service, as Jack said, not just because it's the right thing to do, but because it affects your bottom line and these people can grow to be leaders at your company. And that culture includes celebrating military holidays, acknowledging people's service, giving veterans a chance in the company to talk about their experience if they want to do that, and so on. There's a number of ways to do that.
- CAROLANN MURPHY:
10:11
- Thank you, Justin. Let's circle back to JobPath and have Jack Fanous tell us exactly what JobPath is and how it differs from other services available for job seeking veterans.
- JACK FANOUS: 10:25
- Sure. So JobPath is a program that grew out of some of the work we've been doing with GI Go Fund that focuses on several criteria that help a veteran transition more successfully. So some of the other services that exist out there, they're just traditional job boards, right? A veteran goes and looks for a job on a website and there's no real resources that explain to them exactly where they might end up or where might be a good fit for them. So one of the things that we did-- Justin I believe mentioned MOSes, which is an acronym that stands for military occupational specialty. Your job in the military is usually broken down into some form of an alphanumeric code. Justin, for instance, as an attorney, his MOS was a 4402. Others are 11 Bravo, 88 Mike. These are all terms that don't mean much to civilian recruiters. They are also terms that are difficult for a veteran to transition into civilian language. So we've built a tool. We sat down with heads of HR at Fortune 500 companies and we built a tool that translates every single one of those military occupations into civilian language and then maps them back to actual civilian jobs for the 21st century. So a service member can come in and tell us, "Hey, I was an 88 Mike," or, "I was an 11 Bravo." Those are two different MOSes in the military. We will show them that, if you're 88 Mike, well, that means you were a truck driver in the military. There are certain steps that you can take to move forward to become a truck driver in the civilian world. Take advantage of certain benefits and resources that exist on the civilian world to get your CDL for free. That's a \$10,000 benefit that service members usually don't-- that most people don't ever take advantage of.
- JACK FANOUS: 11:52
- We also provide them the ability to write resumes right there on the platform. So going through their profile data, we generate a resume made from their profile automatically that works with all applicant tracking systems. We have job training. As we're sitting here in GI Go's training center, something that we've been passionate about for years-- Kessler's been a supporter of ours since the beginning about training, and we have over 250 training courses for service members to take on the platform to get them job ready. Give them the business skills that they need. Over 250 of them, completely for free. So it's a technology platform that actually takes the services of a nonprofit and puts it online so that we can scale and reach thousands and thousands of veterans on a daily basis. And it's working, right? The GI Go Fund, on a day to day basis, we might see three or four veterans walk in the door, right? But on a monthly basis, JobPath gets 24,000 new veterans. It's because we're online. We're able to scale. We're able to help veterans with the services and resources that GI Go's

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been doing in person for years, now being able to provide it online, and that's something that's been missing in this space forever. There's a lot of nonprofits out there who provide these resources, but there's not many technology companies out there that realize that these are the resources that are required. So we've married the two.

CAROLANN MURPHY:
13:03

Let's talk a bit about those impressive statistics regarding JobPath. How are these veterans finding JobPath and accessing the services? Are they finding out through TAP, or--?

JACK FANOUS: 13:17

So there's some TAP classes that talk about this, but not many. So it's not really coming from the traditional ways most people would think. Most of the time, people would assume that we would have some type of an official relationship with the Department of Defense or the VA and they're funneling all their veterans to us. That's not what's happening. We're targeting veterans online for their search terms, their keywords, things that they're looking for. Jobs after the military, jobs near Fort Drum, jobs near Fort Dix. So we're targeting those search terms so that veterans who search those things find out about JobPath. That's helped us build our base of veteran users. Obviously, then, once they get on the platform and they see the resources that are there, that message spreads like wildfire through the veteran community. Their veterans will tweet these things out. Share it on LinkedIn. That's a great resource. That's another way in which we're growing our database. But what I think is the most important way in which we've grown our database is-- again, GI Go Fund is our nonprofit. JobPath is the company that built the software. I was lucky enough to be approached by an investor who gave us a giant investment to build this software technology as a director of a nonprofit, right? So my nonprofit and the veterans I work with now have this incredible technology to work with.

JACK FANOUS: 14:28

I recognize that there are other veterans organizations around the country who want to do the same good work that we do but don't have the ability to go out and build this type of software. So what we've done is we turn around and white label or license the software out to those veterans' organizations. So the United Way, for instance. Paralyzed Veterans of America. And there are dozens more. Hope for the Warriors, and several other-- Blue Star Families, which focuses on military spouses. We provide them the software. So ultimately, their users, their veterans, their military spouses use the tool under their brand, but it ultimately ends up into our pipeline, which is important for employers, right? Because employers are always saying to us, "Where do we go to find veterans?" Right? "Our company wants to hire veterans." Panasonic, for instance, or Prudential. They'll come and say, "We want to hire veterans. Where do we go?" If you're not building one giant network of nonprofits and veterans organizations that are working together, you're ultimately going to be dealing with a very small population of veterans, right, because each nonprofit might be helping a couple hundred veterans a year or maybe a couple thousand veterans a year. So if you're working with just one of those veterans' organizations, you're only going to be getting a very small sampling of the military when you go to hire. Now we're giving the employers the opportunity to do outreach to the entire military community, essentially, because every veteran's organization will be using this type of software. They're all falling into the same type of database. And now the employers,

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the Panasonics, the Prudentials of the world, have the opportunity to go and source from a larger database.

S2: 15:50

Justin, let's talk about the employer piece and how employers are finding out about JobPath and signing on.

JUSTIN CONSTANTINE:
16:00

Well, there's a number of ways employers are finding out. We're lucky that we have a lot of champions out there who talk about this. Jack and I give demos of the platform through contacts I have or through contacts friends have. We've also spearheaded a number of initiatives around the country to try to develop this pipeline. But for instance, just this week I spoke here in New York City to the New York City chapter in SHRM, to 75 HR professionals about the business case for hiring veterans. And of course, we highlighted JobPath as part of that. Then that night, actually, down to Atlanta and talked to 65 chief human resource officers about leadership and overcoming adversity, but also about hiring veterans and showcased JobPath. So just in one day I talked to 130 HR professionals. We also have a strong partnership with SHRM, the Society for Human Resource Management, which is the largest association of HR professionals in the country. They have over 350,000 individual members, so a massive organization. When Jack talked about our solution for some nonprofits, SHRM is also one of those that we have, and it's called the SHRM's Hire Vets platform. So now, any of SHRM's members who want to turn to SHRM as a trusted resource to hiring veterans, they're coming into our system on the back end. So that's critical.

JUSTIN CONSTANTINE:
17:24

But also we are talking to folks at a state level, like to Virginia right now, and also to Texas. We're talking to New York City about white labeling our solution for them and all the employers they work with. We've done the same thing for eight counties altogether who came together around Albany, the capital region here in New York. They white labeled our solution, so all their employers are actually seeing our system. So it's not just-- although I started out by mentioning individual contacts I've had which are through my business as a motivational speaker, we have just bumped into so many groups that want to utilize what we're doing, and success begets success. I spoke at Apple last year on Veterans Day with Tim Cook to Apple employees about veterans. Well, they're our newest, largest client as of just couple weeks ago, and that's just-- we put in some work at the beginning to talk to them about veteran employment, and they really liked our platform. Now they're a new client. I'm confident a number of Apple vendors will be our clients in the future. And that's how that works.

CAROLANN MURPHY:
18:30

Tell us about how Apple came to be onboard with JobPath.

JUSTIN CONSTANTINE:
18:36

Yeah, it's an interesting story. I've played in President Bush's Warrior Open golf tournament for wounded warriors. I've played in it twice, 2013 and 2014. And I also worked very closely with the Fisher House Foundation who's always there. One year I played with a woman named Christy Smith who was then at Deloitte and very close to the Fisher House. She had done a TEDx talk in Boston and she recommended I do the same thing. So she called her friend in Boston, and that was my first TEDx talk I did was out there. We stayed in contact. She is now in charge of diversity and inclusion at Apple. So last year, they were looking for an incredible speaker, and so instead they brought me out there. And so I went out there. There was also a Navy SEAL who had

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been shot in the leg during the recovery mission for Sergeant Bergdahl, who was one of our soldiers who went UA while over there. And we met in the green room with Tim Cook, and then we spent about 10 or 15 minutes talking to about 200 Apple employees who really want to learn more about veterans. Just about some challenges we've been through and related topics. Overcoming adversity.

JUSTIN CONSTANTINE:
19:54

Since then, I stayed in touch with Apple. And there's also a guy I met out there who is also a Marine officer who had worked in Northern Virginia, where I used to live as well. And so we talked generally back then - this was back in November - about Apple having a veteran hiring program. They followed up with us a couple months ago. So it's been-- coming up on eight months or so. And now we are-- they have never hired veterans as part of a formal program before. Now we are helping them. We are their only partners in creating a true veteran hiring program for Apple and all their retail stores and all their management positions as well. And so it's a really exciting prospect for us because we're helping them, soup to nuts, on that whole program. They're not just advertising jobs or looking through our database. We're helping them create true content.

CAROLANN MURPHY:
20:42

Very interesting. Jack, Justin was the first veteran to utilize the resources of the Drysdale Center. Tell us a little bit about the scope of the supports that are offered there.

JACK FANOUS: 20:56

Sure. So obviously we provide office space as a part of the center, but we also offer AV support. So one of the things Justin works on-- as a part of his book, he developed e-learning that goes along with the book, *From We Will to At Will*. So it's an e-learning guide for HR professionals to come online and learn some best practices about hiring veterans and military spouses. Using the technology in this space, in this center, we were able to film and edit Justin's e-learning series. That's a service that costs a lot of money, right? Now we're able to do that in house and produce that type of video and e-learning series for Justin and his business and for the book. Obviously, this is available for JobPath as well. But wraparound services that we offer other veterans is - in addition to the AV, we're also providing the office space, but legal services, accounting services, website assistance and services there as well. And really whatever else a veteran may need. One of our other veteran incubators is a gentleman named Mike Steadman who runs a really powerful wellness workshop with companies where he goes in and teaches them boxing and different types of physical fitness to keep their day going and keep their energy levels high. We've been able to help Mike make some introductions and meet some companies. Even give him a platform to shoot a podcast of his own here in the center. So really providing a lot of wraparound services.

JACK FANOUS: 22:22

But I would like to say that one of the reasons why I find a lot of value in having an incubator here is because-- veterans are incredible individuals, and we benefit more from the veterans that are sitting here in this building being our incubators than they benefit from us, right? And I'll elaborate on that. While we're providing a lot of services to these veterans and giving them the platform to do the great work that they're capable and able to do, the things that they bring back-- Justin mentioned some of the things that he's working on with us. Some of the contacts that he brings. Some of the discipline he's brought to the entire team just being here with us is

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incredible. Mike, in another way, some of the creative things that he brings to the table are really incredible. So we are benefiting from the incubatees, the veterans that are coming and using our service, more than they're benefiting from us, right? I just want that to be clear, and I want that message to get out to any employer who might be thinking about a veteran. You're going to benefit. They went through so much training and so much discipline that they come out incredible individuals. And Justin and Mike and other veterans that I know don't like to talk about it that way, but it's true. And we benefit so much from them being here that I encourage other companies and other employers to do the same. Bring veterans into your fold and see what they bring to you. I mean, you might think you're helping a veteran out by providing them a paycheck or us by providing them space, but you'll see, you'll learn, that what you offer them pales in comparison to what they bring back to you.

CAROLANN MURPHY:
23:50

Thank you, Jack. So Justin, you worked on the e-learning modules at the Drysdale Center. Tell us about the type of support that you received to develop and promote them, and what do you feel the potential impact will be on veteran employment?

JUSTIN CONSTANTINE:
24:11

Yeah, I like talking about the e-learning because it's an exciting extension of what we're already doing. So in this particular series about veteran employment, it's, again, for HR professionals and roughly tracking on each chapter of the book I wrote. And the idea is that people don't have to go to a workshop. They can watch this and learn from the comfort of their own home or their office space on their computer. And because I'm a recertification provider for SHRM, they'll get one hour of a continued HR credit for every hour of the e-learning that they take and participate in. And so whether it's how to hire veterans, how to interview veterans, better how to onboard - you talked about culture. So I have a whole section on creating a military friendly and military ready work environment. And so on. And about retention as well. So those are modules where-- I'm leading them, but we interview other experts in each module as well, whether it's on military spouse employment, or again, have someone show the audience how to do a great interview. Things like that. So it's not just me. It's collaborative in nature. So those are all for HR professionals. We also have a series we're working on right now that will be for the veterans and military spouses themselves so they can watch and learn how to get great jobs and find the careers they're looking for. I know later in this podcast we're going to talk about other demographics we're working with, but just as a precursor to that, we are also going to be providing the same sort of e-learning for employers who want to hire people with disabilities and formerly incarcerated people. And also, again, provide resources for people from those groups too. So right now we're focusing on the veterans, and I'm very lucky that I have JobPath and GI Go Fund supporting me in that because there's no way I could do this without them. But we're aiming for really [inaudible] to these other demographic as well.

CAROLANN MURPHY:
26:06

I think that's an important point. So the tools that are being developed here are applicable not only to veterans with disabilities, but to-- actually all veterans. But most importantly, to the larger group of Americans with disabilities, the largest minority in the United States. It's more than 50 million people. So I think it's really important to note that these tools are potentially scalable to that community.

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JUSTIN CONSTANTINE:
26:35

Yeah. I'd like to chime in and add-- and then Jack may have some comments as well. But JobPath has built these tools and resources so-- as we say, plug and play. So if a company wants to use part of them or all of them - Jack mentioned MOS translator - they can license that and put it on their website. Or maybe they don't want that. Maybe they just want to search our huge candidate database of 200,000 veterans looking for new jobs, or they want to just post their jobs on our site, which they can do, or all those. So it's plug and play. And the same is-- because one thing that was missing in the veteran space is one place, truly a one stop shop, where veterans and HR professionals could go to to learn everything they need know, whether-- on the HR side, about what people in the military did, how to find them, and more. And for the veterans, to be able create resumes that will work with every applicant tracking system out there, which is a critical differentiator for us. But also participate in our very robust mentorship portal. Also to take the 250 training courses Jack mentioned, and those are growing every day. All that under one roof. We just saw that-- and SHRM also asked us to do this. There's no reason why this should be limited to veterans. Take out the part about military jobs. But the mentorship, resumes that get through applicant training systems, training courses, everyone needs that kind of stuff. So that's why we're creating specialized content for people for disabilities. And we've talked with Kessler about this before, but as you said, 50 million people fall in that category. So we're taking what we've learned in the veteran space now from a really intelligent-- in an intelligent way and with six years of experience under our belt, taking it to this much broader population as well.

CAROLANN MURPHY:
28:28

Jack, would you like to wrap up with some comments on the importance of the funding that you've received from your community partners to launch these initiatives?

JACK FANOUS: 28:38

Absolutely. I mean, I was going to piggyback on what Justin just said and really give credit to our community partners for being able to do this, right, because otherwise it's just an idea, right? If we don't have partners who come in and help us fund these things and put these pieces together, put all these things in motion, it's just an idea. So without the support of Prudential, Panasonic, PSE&G-- and I will say, honestly, most importantly Kessler, because Kessler has been here since the beginning. You have funded some variation of our training centers since 2008, I believe, and you have you have helped us grow to where we are today. And our pivot towards disabilities-- we've been thinking about it for quite some time, and I'll just say this. Recognizing that Kessler focuses on people with disabilities but took the time out to say, "You know what? We want to put a special focus on veterans with disabilities." Recognizing that that's a specific demographic within the disabled space really opened up our eyes to say, "All right. Well, how can we give back?" Right? How can we turn around now and say, "All right. We've built some incredible stuff for veterans with disabilities. How does this apply to people with disabilities? How can we make that work?" So basically, giving back to the way Kessler gave us, we can give back now. So I can't think Kessler enough. Obviously the other funders as well. They've done so much for us. But Kessler, Elaine, you, CarolAnn, and so many other people over there in the leadership have believed in what we have been building here for almost 10 years, and where we are sitting now is a result of that type of commitment, that type of belief in not only what we're doing, but in the cause and the veterans that we're trying to

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serve. And we believe that we are now able to take what we learned and help other groups in other demographics and give back and pay it forward in that way.

CAROLANN MURPHY:
30:22

Thank you, Jack. Justin, let's wrap up with a message from you to veterans with disabilities who are transitioning.

JUSTIN CONSTANTINE:
30:34

Sure. I can give my thoughts. As that as a backdrop to this, I recognize that every single person is different and there are a wide variety of disability. So I have physical wounds. Obviously I was shot in the head and that took a long time to recover. But I also have the invisible wounds of war which are the signature wounds from Iraq and Afghanistan of PTSD and traumatic brain injury. I went to counseling for 18 months for the PTSD, one-on-one weekly sessions with a psychologist, which was the best decision I could ever make. So if there's a disabled veteran out there with mental health issues and you're still listening, I really encourage you to get the help that you deserve and you need, and maybe your family needs you to do that as well. But the point is, I surrounded myself with good people. I had layouts and goals of where I wanted to get to. I tried really hard. I recognize that our lives could be changed or over in an instant, and so I want to use my time extremely effectively, and so I don't try to boil the ocean, as they say. I focus on a handful of things I think I can do, and I want to be good at each one of those. So for disabled veterans or veterans or service members leaving the military, quickly try to identify what it is you want to do. And that list could change, but-- and be okay asking for help, reaching out to others. Everyone wants to help us, and take advantage of that help and then push forward. Dust yourself off and keep going, because there is nothing that we can't accomplish. We are all capable of doing amazing things. I have those I look to for inspiration, and hopefully you have some as well.

CAROLANN MURPHY:
32:11

How about a message for employers and their hiring managers?

JUSTIN CONSTANTINE:
32:14

Sure. I just can't stress enough the business case for hiring veterans. Don't hire us because you think it's the right thing to do, although it's nice. Hire us because you sat down and thought about it and made an intelligent decision. We can help your ROI and we can help your company grow. Please consider JobPath as your platform and choice for joining us. And keep us in mind when you're trying to find solutions to challenges in the veteran employment space, because we work with hundreds of companies already and we really want to keep growing. I'd like to just add one more point about employment and why it's so important to me what Kessler focuses on about employment, because that's probably the biggest part of my recovery, getting back to work and feeling like I was providing value to American society and contributing to the well-being of my family. And so that's why veteran employment is so important to me, because I know getting a good job out of the military is a challenge, but when you do, a lot of other issues you may be facing seem to go away for one reason or another. And that's why it's so critical for me, and I hope other folks recognize that as well.

CAROLANN MURPHY:
33:21

Well, that's exactly why employment is so central to Kessler Foundation's mission. We feel everything else hinges on that.



Kessler Foundation Podcast Transcript: GI GO Fund and JobPath - Disability Employment - Continued

JUSTIN CONSTANTINE:
33:28

Yes. I agree.

JACK FANOUS: 33:28

For sure. 100%. That's why we spend our lives doing the exact same thing. [music]

ANNOUNCER: 33:33

For more information about Kessler Foundation's commitment to finding employment solutions and creating awareness to the high unemployment and underemployment of Americans with disabilities, go to www.KesslerFoundation.org/GrantPrograms. That's www.KesslerFoundation.org/GrantPrograms.

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