

Singapore has a long history of integrating retired military personnel into the civilian workforce. Considering that most military members face a maximum retirement age in their early to mid-40s, it is no surprise they actively pursue second careers, and the civilian sector is happy to have them bring both the technical and the soft skills they developed during their years in uniform.

The gap, however, between the military world and the civilian workplace is getting wider. From structural elements like strict hierarchies and clearly defined roles, to day-to-day interactions such as following orders without question, many aspects of the military are very different from the rapidly changing civilian world. Civilian organizations get many benefits from the experience retired military personnel bring, but maximizing those benefits requires adaptation to the modern workplace. This session will introduce key issues that businesses and government agencies in Singapore have identified, and some thoughts on how to approach them, including:

THE REALITIES OF THE TALENT MARKET

This provides an understanding of *why* leadership approaches often need to be different in the civilian context. While some aspects of military-style leadership will be useful, certain practices must evolve to take into account the size of Singapore's talent market relative to the demand for talent; modern attrition challenges; and, employee preferences that drive recruiting and retention.

MAXIMIZING WORKFORCE PERFORMANCE

A leader's job is to get the greatest business value from employees, and in the civilian world, a leader often focuses more on supporting employees than on issuing orders. Getting the best performance requires enabling employees with resources and training; motivating them through internal and external means; and, evaluating them both informally – to improve immediate performance – and using performance reviews that align employees with emerging needs.

LEADING A DIVERSE WORKFORCE

Military leaders come from an environment that is predominantly male, largely young, and entirely Singaporean. Leading in the private sector, though, requires them to understand employees' unique needs and find ways to meet them; take advantage of the opportunities presented by diversity; and, build effective relationships to enable communication within the workforce.

TAKING OWNERSHIP OF THEIR OWN DEVELOPMENT

The military has career paths that are well understood and development opportunities at certain points throughout one's career. Now, leaders need to know how to identify their own development needs and seek out opportunities to meet them.

FACILITATOR

Dr William Thomas is the Chief Teaching Officer for Designing Leaders, where he creates and conducts leadership seminars for growing organizations. He retired from the US Air Force as a Lieutenant Colonel in 2010, after serving as a nuclear missile launch officer, a strategic planner for special operations, and an international affairs specialist at the Pentagon. Seven years of his 21-year career were spent as a professor at the US Air Force Academy, and he also deployed to both Iraq and Afghanistan. After retiring he taught as a Visiting Professor at Georgetown University in Washington, DC, and he has also taught as a Fulbright Scholar at Nanyang Technological University. From 2012 through the end of 2014 he was based in Singapore as the Executive Advisor for CEB Corporate Leadership Council, where he supported the Chief HR Officers at over 50 organizations across Asia, in such industries as airlines, banks, telecoms, government agencies, and more. He holds a PhD in Public Policy as well as an MBA.