

Wanted: **LEADERS AND MORE**

Military veterans find a warm welcome in hospitality.

BY WARREN DUFFIE



As seen in the May 2014 issue of *G.I. Jobs* magazine.

Jason Naper joined the hospitality industry out of desperation, but stayed for the job satisfaction.

In 2009, at the height of the Great Recession, Naper was working with an X-Ray service company when he got laid off. The former Navy petty officer wasn't worried. He had some money saved and was sure he'd find a new job quickly. But months passed and bills piled up, draining Naper's savings and filling him with a sickening fear.

"I was absolutely desperate," says Naper, "so when a friend offered me a job as a front desk clerk at a Pittsburgh hotel, I jumped at it. I thought it would be temporary, but I really enjoyed the work. I liked serving people and providing a great travel experience. I thought I could make it a career."

Naper's quick rise at La Quinta Inns & Suites proves there are second acts in life. He soon was promoted to assistant manager and then took a general manager job in Georgia. Last year, he took over as general manager of the La Quinta Inns & Suites Albuquerque Journal Center Northwest in New Mexico.

"I encourage veterans to consider a career in hospitality," Naper says. "They pay attention to detail, understand hard work and have had a lot of responsibility given to them. Also, there's great job security – people are always going to travel."

A DYNAMIC CAREER FIELD

Mention hospitality jobs and what comes to mind? A restaurant cook? The person at a hotel front desk or someone on the cleaning staff? Maybe a resort bartender who makes those yummy, buzz-inducing umbrella drinks?

All of these jobs are important, but hospitality career opportunities are truly limitless – and diverse. Think of a hotel or resort as a military base. You need people skilled in maintenance, finance, human resources, marketing and more. Whatever your job was in the military, you can use your military skills in hospitality.

Here are some more reasons why hospitality might be for you. ▶



JASON NAPER
 General Manager
 La Quinta Inns & Suites Albuquerque Journal Center
 Northwest
 Age: 42
 Military Service:
 Petty Officer
 Third Class,
 Navy (1990-1993)
 Rating: Aviation
 Ordnance (AO3)



▶ **What are your main duties?**
 The most important thing I do is help provide an excellent experience for our guests. I'm responsible for everything at my hotel. Safety and security are my number one duties to my guests and employees.

▶ **What's the coolest thing about your job?** The people. Hospitality is nothing but people. We see people from all walks of life in hospitality, we get to interact and learn from them, share moments in their lives, and we get to see the smiles when they're satisfied with their visit.

▶ **What surprised you about the civilian workforce?** When I came back to the civilian workforce, it was disappointing because I felt like some companies just didn't have an efficient structure or "chain of command." This was hard on me and I felt in the dark and unappreciated as a worker. That was until I discovered La Quinta. This company truly values and embraces the service of veterans and what they bring to a job.

▶ **What would you have done differently in your job search?** I would have gone into hospitality a lot sooner.



 What They Do: La Quinta Inns & Suites is a limited-service, mid-price hotel chain.	 Top Jobs for Veterans: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance • Front Desk • Accounting • Sales • Management Positions 	 Top Regions for Hiring in 2014 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texas • Florida • Georgia • South Carolina • Utah
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• **No 9-to-5 here.** If you hate the thought of working the same schedule each day, this is the career for you. Some days you might have to report for work early, while others you might have to work a night shift. But you're used to that, right? When did the military have traditional hours?

• **It's a global industry.** Every country has its hospitality industry, and there are great opportunities for those with an adventurous spirit and strong work ethic. Hey, travel was one of the best perks of military life. You don't have to give that up as a civilian.

• **Many opportunities for advancement.** A number of hotel and resort executives began as front desk clerks or dishwashers. You can work with a company for a long time, in a variety of jobs. If you decide to get into

management, many hospitality companies will help you get your degree – or they offer in-house training and certification programs.

BOTH JOBS AND CAREERS.

When it comes to hiring military, La Quinta Inns & Suites is a double threat – a 2014 Military Friendly Employer and a 2014 Military Spouse Friendly Employer. La Quinta has more than 10,000 employees nationwide and wants to add to its ranks. Top jobs include maintenance, front desk, accounting, sales and management positions.

The hottest hiring areas include Texas, Utah, South Carolina, Virginia and Colorado. Not sure where you'll put down roots when you leave the military? That's cool. You can apply at more than 800 La Quinta locations around the country.

That flexibility is one of the reasons La Quinta is a great place for veterans, says Derek Blake, vice president of marketing and military programs. "If you just want an hourly job to work until you figure out your next move, we can help. If you want to make hospitality your career passion, we can help with that, too. We offer both jobs and careers."

Full-time employees enjoy benefits like medical, dental and vision insurance; employee assistance; flexible spending accounts; 401(k); and discounts on room rates. Those wishing to advance can take courses via in-house learning portals such as LQUiversity.

"We're looking for people who are adaptable, hard-working, team players, and proven leaders," says Blake, "the perfect description of military veterans." 