



The Deloitte On Cloud Podcast

David Linthicum, Managing Director, Chief Cloud Strategy Officer, Deloitte Consulting LLP

Title: Hiring Our Heroes—easing the transition from military to the private sector

Description: Military personnel serve our country in countless ways, but sometimes the transition to private life can be difficult. To help ease that transition, Deloitte participates in Hiring Our Heroes—a collaboration with American businesses to create job opportunities for veterans post-service. In this episode, David Linthicum talks with three veterans who are participating in the program with Deloitte to find out how they're faring during their transition and what lessons they've learned.

Duration: 00:24:08

David Linthicum:

Welcome back to the On Cloud podcast. Today in the show, I am joined by Evan Ray, Zosia Bober, and Harshal Gujarathi, looking forward to learning more about you folks. So, let's have you introduce yourselves. This is our record. We have three guests on the podcast. I think the most I've ever had is two. So, Evan, I'm going to start with you first, going in order. So, how did you come to Deloitte, and what's your story? In other words, going to the Army and then making your way here to Deloitte. That should be an interesting journey.

Evan Ray:

Sure. Yeah, so I'm a field artillery officer the last seven years in the Army, and there's a program that is sponsored with the command sponsorship program in the military that essentially helps military members transition into the civilian world. The one I went through, and my fellows here with me, is called Hiring Our Heroes, and, so, we went through an interview process to get selected when we applied for the program, and once that happened, they had multiple rounds of interviews with a whole host of companies nationwide, and all of us did it from different installations across the United States. I came from Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington State, but I applied for it through the Tampa, Florida, region, and, luckily, I got picked up by Deloitte, as did my fellows here, and now we're in a three-month corporate fellowship where we get to learn and get some hands-on experience and help prepare us for the civilian life.

David Linthicum:

Yeah, we're glad to have you here, so Zosia, same question. What's your story? What's your journey?

Zosia Bober:

Hi, David. Thank you so much for having us here. We really appreciate Deloitte supporting Hiring Our Heroes and just continuing to support veterans. I am an Atlanta-based member of the cloud engineering team through Hiring Our Heroes, and I got my Bachelor's in journalism and then my master's back in 2013 in nonprofit organizational management. So, I worked a little bit in Atlanta local nonprofits doing some strategic planning, program management, budgeting, and then I transitioned over to local law enforcement and did a little bit of data analytics there. And then I joined the military as a military police officer. So, I was in the Army for a few years and really enjoyed my experience there, got a lot of leadership experience, some experience planning trainings for up to 900 personnel, and just a lot of experience building cohesive teams. So, really enjoyed that, and now it is time to start a new chapter, so really excited to be here.

David Linthicum:

Excited to have you. So, Harshal, same question.

Harshal Gujarathi:

Hi, everyone. Thanks, David. I don't know, you weren't there last time. You were kind of a celebrity for us. We've been listening to a lot of your learning videos back in the day. So, about me, my background is in mechanical engineering, and after finishing my master's, I ended up joining the enlisted side of the Army. I did that for the last six years. To be precise, I worked on Chinooks. It's the medium lift aircraft. And halfway through, I decided to look into what I'm going to do next, and I looked at cloud computing as a career I wanted to pursue, and I ended up doing some certification and then applying to Hiring Our Heroes and joining Deloitte for a corporate fellowship.

David Linthicum:

It's great to hear your journeys, and say on behalf of Deloitte and myself, thank you very much for your service, and we're glad to have you here. So, let me get a volunteer to kind of explain as what Hiring Our Heroes is, and Evan, I'm going to volunteer you.

Evan Ray:

Sure. So, Hiring Our Heroes, like I said before, it's a program—it's a nonprofit that works to essentially successfully transition military veterans into a corporate career. And that's their mission. They work with active-duty veterans in their last six months of service, and like I said before, they go through multiple rounds of interviews to get selected, and then all along the way, they're getting help and just kind of coaching and mentorship advice along the way. We—us three got selected by Deloitte, but there's a bunch of companies nationwide that all partner with Hiring Our Heroes as well, so there's really any possibility that you could dream of in a career change. Hope that answers your question, David.

David Linthicum:

It does. It's a great program. I'm really glad that we have something like that in place because, number one, it's a huge asset to reach out to this talent pool, and like Zosia said, basically you're in the accelerated course for leadership, in the accelerated course for discipline, so your ability to kind of move into new challenges seems like a natural progression. So, Harshal, I'm going to go to you first. What was the motivation that led to a career change?

Harshal Gujarathi:

Motivation was—so I've been doing—as enlisted, I've been working on Chinook for the last six years of my life, but I was looking for something exciting to do. Not that the Army wasn't exciting. I had an amazing time in the Army. I was stationed in Korea, stuff like that. But I was looking for something challenging, and I found cloud computing to be—it's emerging. It's not really emerging; it is established today. Most of the stuff we do today is on cloud, so when I was looking at it—as I told you, my background is in mechanical, and choosing cloud is like starkly different, but since I'm starting a new chapter, I thought about different fields, like going back into manufacturing and mechanical, or going into computer science. And I do have some relatives and friends who work in the industry, so looking at and hearing from their experience, it kind of gave me motivation to choose cloud as a career field.

David Linthicum:

So, Zosia, what was your motivation to move into this career?

Zosia Bober:

Yeah, so I knew that consulting would be a great way to leverage some of the skill sets that I had built up in the military and then my civilian career before that. I was looking into getting a PMP, so project management professional certificate through PMI, and I was also doing some online analytics courses before I decided to come on with Deloitte. I knew that IT would be a great field for me to kind of fill into because there's such a huge gap in personnel there, so I knew that I would always have a job. and I knew that I could leverage my passion for people I'm training, and then that interest in IT at Deloitte through the cloud program.

David Linthicum:

So, Evan, what motivated you to kind of shift from the Army to Deloitte or shift from the Army to a career in cloud computing?

Evan Ray:

So, I've really enjoyed my career in the Army, but it just wasn't something I wanted to do for the rest of my life, I guess. So, when I was searching for different career options, I knew that IT and information and technology has always, since college, really just been a particular topic of interest. So, I started looking into that and just really communicating with people I knew in the field, and cloud kept coming up and how much it's changed the industry, and, so, when I was doing my personal research, I ended up getting directed to a certification, which is a pretty basic level introductory certification. I worked on that. I got that from one of the main cloud providers, and in doing so, I validated to myself my own interest. So, that's kind of how I got here.

David Linthicum:

So, Zosia, I'll go back to you. What, ultimately, lessons have you learned during this process? In other words, if you're able to go back in time and talk to yourself before you got into this program, what advice would you have to yourself in terms of what you need to do more, how you need to affect the program differently, how do you need to take advantage of the learning opportunities, things like that?

Zosia Bober:

Well, I think the number one lesson that I would tell myself is make an Excel spreadsheet for networking. Networking at Deloitte is so important, as it is in your entire transition. Just making those connections, they always say that it's not what you know; it's who you know. And I think that is something that's tried and true and continues to be true in Deloitte. I think that I would also tell myself not to sweat the small stuff. Being in the military, we definitely have bigger stakes. Safety, people's lives, I've done live fire shoots where people are doing movement and shooting real bullets. And coming into this, I think I came with the same sort of enthusiasm, that everything was super important and I had to worry about it. But now I've just been jotting down every single thing that I mess up in a notebook, and then I look back on all of those things that I thought were super important, and I see that they haven't made that much of an impact in my life. So, it's been really helpful to me.

David Linthicum:

Yeah, I think that's great advice in general. You don't sweat the small stuff, certainly when you're moving into IT, because ultimately the strategic direction is probably more important than many of the details. The details are going to change, the technology's going to change, but how you apply the technology is way more important. So, Harshal, same to you. If you could go back and talk to yourself before you got into the program, what advice would you give yourself?

Harshal Gujarathi:

That's an interesting question, David. I would probably tell myself to prepare for the virtual world, because my job the last six years has been hands-on. And the technology, the way it's used in Deloitte, or in the IT industry in general, I wasn't prepared for that. and I'm getting to know a lot of small details which you end up missing like a PowerPoint or Excel and how they can play an important role being a consultant. Because one of your jobs is to present to the client in short and concise terms what are the recommendations. So, this was one of the learning curves which I would go back and tell, okay, this could be something—soft skills you could learn when going into IT.

David Linthicum:

Evan, the same question. Batting clean-up. So, what advice would you give yourself before you entered into the program if you could go back in time and talk to yourself?

Evan Ray:

Sure. I like that answer, Harshal. Preparing for the work-at-home life has been quite a change. But in addition to that, I would simply reach out to people at Deloitte and start getting my foot in the door in a networking sense way earlier than I did. I think that pretty much all the support I've got up until this point has been from people I've met in just the last couple of months, and my network has continued to grow at a pretty rapid rate, it feels like. So, just having candid conversations with people who are in the know and can give you a different outlook and just a little bit more insight into what it's like to work with Deloitte and what it's like to work in cloud would definitely be what I would do.

David Linthicum:

Yeah, and also the differing opinions. It's funny you'll never get the same answer twice. Everybody's smart, and ultimately people have different takes on how technology is leveraged and how to leverage technology effectively, and I think that's healthy. I think, ultimately, you have to have the ability to descend on use of different technologies, and, so, we can kind of hone the skills and make sure we're keeping everything honest in how we're weaponizing, leveraging this technology such as a force multiplier for our clients. So, Harshal, I'm going to go back to you and ask you what support are you getting from Deloitte, your family, others, friends as far as moving through this program?

Harshal Gujarathi:

Good question, David. Let's start with Deloitte first. So, Deloitte has—even though the department we are part of, CBO, as I said it's the first time accepting Hiring Our Heroes. They have set amazing targets as far as our training is concerned, both soft and technical skills. So, they gave us a lot of different third-party—I'm not going to name names—but third-party tools which we should be familiar with going into cloud, because cloud is not just a platform base but a kind of integration of multiple technologies. So, that's going well. And then on the consulting side, soft skills like interviewing, presentations, familiarizing with business chemistry, some of the topics I named. So, Deloitte—I have no complaints, so to words I can use as a feedback.

David Linthicum:

So, Zosia, kind of same question, but a little bit—can you tell us a story in terms of some event that occurred and how someone supported you that you're very happy to see? You don't have to mention names.

Zosia Bober:

Sure. I actually have a couple of specific ways that Deloitte has really supported me. One of the ways is that I have started a blog about my experience here through the Hiring Our Heroes program, and it was something that I didn't think was every going to really take off the ground, and my team lead has really kind of latched on and really helped me every step of the way in trying to get this published, so really excited about that. Additionally, I think we had a simulation where we were doing basically a mock consulting project, and I kind of took the lead, as I do, because I'm in the military, so emergent leader, right. And I felt like I wasn't doing a good job. So, I felt like my team just wasn't hitting the mark because we were a little disjointed. And after the project was over, I had our team lead come to me, our Deloitte person who's supposed to be evaluating us, and she said, "Zosia, you did an incredible job." She's

like, "There were a couple times where I wanted to step in, but I knew that you had it." And she's like, "You were the glue that held your team together." And it's that sort of support that you really can capture. I didn't receive as much of that as I would have loved to have in the Army, and, so, having those positive leadership mentors has been really priceless for me.

David Linthicum:

That's great. Great story. So, Evan, same question for you.

Evan Ray:

Sure. So, I think the biggest help that I've received from Deloitte thus far has been just setting up a rigorous training program to kind of get the certifications and technical knowledge that I'm going to need to be successful, because I didn't really come into this with an IT background as a field artillery officer, so getting the technical background is kind of vital in order to be successful in this field. From friends and family, I would say the most support has just been kind of giving me a corner of the house to use as a home office and being quiet when I'm in meetings and stuff like that, but honestly, everyone's been very supportive and I'm very happy with Deloitte.

David Linthicum:

So, Harshal, you're kind of an interesting case, because you kind of went from working with your hands in a very technical field. I mean, maintaining helicopters, there's nothing more technical than that, into something that's more abstract in nature. So, how have you found the transition, and what things has Deloitte done to kind of make the transition easier for you or friends and family, people who support you?

Harshal Gujarathi:

Interesting question, David. So, first couple of weeks was challenging, mainly getting used to the work culture. In the Army, it's kind of different, everything is managed and set in a schedule.

Not like it's not at Deloitte, but you kind of have to do it on your own, so that was one of the things to get used to virtually, to how to manage your time and life and everything. And right now, since we're getting started in the cloud, so it's a lot of learning, you constantly have to keep on learning new things, new technologies. Familywise, it was—since I'm here alone, so they're helping me virtually through WhatsApp and whatnot. My Army is helping in a great way as in they check up on me, like is everything going good, are you having any difficulties, problems we can solve. So, all-in-all, from Army, family, and Deloitte, everyone's been great in this journey of transition.

David Linthicum:

Yeah, you just hit on a couple big points. Number one, you do learn discipline when you're in the military, and bringing those skills forward, that's going to get you a lot of the way down the road that people typically have to develop over a longer period of time. But, also, the ability to be a continuous learner, an autodidact, the ability to kind of understand that, even though the initial skills will be given to you, people are going to train you and get you off the ground with what cloud is and different components are and how to put things together, you have to be motivated to continue to learn or else you just can't keep up in this field. I mean, if you're not a continuous learner for a couple of years, you're going to miss out. You're going to miss where the technology's evolving and how to give clients the best advice, things like that. So, Harshal, I think you're spot on with that. So, Evan, I'm going to go to you first. How has your perception changed around cloud computing since you joined this program? What do you know now that is different than what you anticipated when you got in?

Evan Ray:

I think in cloud computing, the perception that I've got that has changed so far is just the different levels of knowledge amongst the consulting project teams. Everyone's kind of got their specialty and leans on everyone else to work as a team to attack the situation and come up with a solution. So, everyone has kind of their own experiences, and it's an ever-changing industry, so amongst all the team members, it's really everyone learning together to solve the problem for a client, and I kind of thought going in that everyone would just have so much technical knowledge and basically be their own SME, but that's just not the case.

David Linthicum:

No, it's not. I mean, ultimately, and as people get deeper into the path of cloud computing, they end up picking a particular category, so they focus on networking, they focus on databases, they focus on security, governance, things like that. And as cloud is getting more complex, I think that people need to take a specialty. I think that's the only way you can make this thing scale, and, so, people talk about what knowledge you need to be an architect. Well, you need to have general knowledge of lots of things, but the best skill you can have as an architect is recruiting people to your team that are going to be able to take on certain components, so certainly security, governance, things like that that really are the foundation of cloud success. I think you kind of hit on a very valuable point there. So, Zosia, going to you, how has your perception changed around cloud computing since you got in and now?

Zosia Bober:

I definitely feel like cloud computing is not nearly as intimidating as I originally anticipated, but I will say that I came in with very little knowledge. I don't know that I could have pointed out the elements of a basic PC before I joined this program, and now I can kind of tell you the difference between an on-prem system and then that transformation into cloud and all the different elements that go with that. One of my specialties now is going to be organizational change management. How do we prepare these roles that are on-prem and take those skill sets, incorporate training plans, and then put them in these cloud positions? So, I think that, like everything, cloud computing takes that certain level of dedication and learning, but like anything, once you put that time and effort in, you can learn it. So, don't be intimidated.

David Linthicum:

So, Harshal, batting clean-up. So, how's your perception changed around cloud computing since you got into this program?

Harshal Gujarathi:

Significantly, David. So, when I came in, I did have a prior—like I told you I did a certification in one of the platforms, so I was kind of thinking that everything we would do would be based on this platform but going into as a part of a project—so I'm part of a project. I'm shadowing one of the persons. So, the way they are doing it and the third parties, too, that are involved into making it a reality. So, it just blows my mind. You are not limited to a platform, and you

have to have knowledge. And as you said, you have to constantly keep on learning. Every day is a new day, and technology is constantly evolving, so that's one of my advices. Every day you have to keep on learning. And that's what excites me about cloud computing and this career change. In the Army, everything is set. Like you have a problem, you go back to the book and there's the answer. Go to contact and where to send the part. In cloud computing, you have to keep scratching your head, keep talking to people who are experienced around you. Doesn't matter what position you are in. It may be the senior level or may be junior level. Someone might know something you haven't encountered yet.

David Linthicum:

Yeah, the solutions are always evolving, and I think that's what's interesting about this thing. People say, "Why're you in technology as a career path?" and the reality is people in technology embrace change. In other words, they understand it's going to be ever-changing, they understand that their learning task is never going to end, and they love that. The fact of the matter is the way we build a solution now, today in 2022 is going to be very different than we did back in 2010, and extremely different than how we're going to do in 2025. Your ability to kind of understand what the trade-offs are and how to create an optimized solution is really how you win this game.

So, in recruiting people like yourselves—and again, thank you for your service and coming into these programs—it's not only having the ability to get people trained up and get them staffed up and working productively, but also finding folks who have the self-discipline and the ability to be a continuous learner that's ultimately going to define success, and I think that that's an attribute that all of you have, and that's I think why they got you into this program. We're happy to have you in the program. So, again, Google away for Hiring Our Heroes. It's a great program. Lots of programs here at Deloitte that we leverage to recruit people and give them an opportunity to get into a career line they may find rewarding, and we're certainly happy to have them.

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