

# HIRING VETS

SIEMENS FINDS SUCCESS AND AN UNEXPECTED BONUS



BY MICHAEL RONEY

One great irony in today's economy is that while general unemployment remains high, companies often struggle to find technically skilled workers for open positions. Take, for example, technology heavyweight Siemens U.S.A., whose rapidly expanding businesses in gas-powered generation, wind, light rail and building technologies helped fuel an overall 12% increase in sales last year—three times the growth rate of the economy. In early 2011, the company had 3,400 available jobs, but was having trouble finding the skilled labor to fill them. What ultimately played out over the course of the year not only

addressed the dilemma, but provided Siemens with a powerful bonus.

## Tackling the Skills Gap

The skills gap for potential hires has long been front and center for Eric Spiegel, President and Chief Executive Officer of Siemens Corporation and CEO of the U.S. Region. "One of my most important roles as CEO of the U.S. is to make sure that we're attracting, developing and retaining the best people," he says. "If you're in the manufacturing industry and in a service business with high-technology equipment, you have to make sure that you've got a steady flow of qualified candidates. In fact, this is

one of our most important initiatives in the U.S.—making sure we find great new employees, and then keeping them happy, well-trained and motivated."

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that there are 2.4 million veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars with an unemployment rate hovering above 9%, higher than the national average. Still, there's real hope for better days ahead. Siemens and many other businesses have discovered that the unique training, skills and experience veterans bring to the table make them a great resource for ongoing corporate growth and success. "We have a real demand for skilled labor that understands technology, and



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**Eric Spiegel**  
President and CEO  
Siemens Corporation

the U.S. military is one of the most technically astute organizations in the world,” Spiegel notes.

### Joining Forces

Siemens’ veterans hiring program kicked into overdrive this past year. “Just as we were identifying our skills gap, we heard about the White House initiative called Joining Forces. Launched by Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden, it is designed to honor America’s service members and their families while matching them with good jobs,” explains Spiegel. “The timing was perfect. As a leading U.S. company, we thought it would be a really good thing for us to get involved.”

As things turned out, it was more than good. Since entering the program in April 2011, Siemens has smashed through its initial pledge of 300 hires, and by the end of 2012 will have hired close to 1,000 veterans in the energy, infrastructure and cities, industry and healthcare sectors. Their job categories range from field engineers and service technicians to sales and marketing roles with highly competitive salaries.

“Vets are a great fit for us since we are looking for highly disciplined people with technical skills who can work independently with tight deadlines when required,” Spiegel states. “For example, wind turbines are out in some pretty remote locations, so you need people who are dependable and can work on their own...and successfully interface with customers. We already had quite a few veterans serving as business unit CEOs, CFOs, heads of operations and so on, so we were just upping our game. What we didn’t fully anticipate was how wildly successful this would be.”

### The Unexpected Perk

Siemens has discovered that hiring veterans also boosts overall company morale. “This past year, I’ve probably done 25 or 30 employee town halls at facilities around the country,” says Spiegel. “Every time I talk about this program and show some clips of the people we’ve hired—pictures of them in uniform and then working at Siemens—I get groups standing on their feet and applauding, and then dozens of e-mails

afterwards from employees who think this is a great thing for us to be doing.”

He adds that when Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki recently referenced the company’s commitment when addressing the Siemens Government Technologies Symposium, the place erupted in cheers.

“I don’t think when we started that we really considered how powerful this aspect would be, but it makes sense,” Spiegel says. “The people we’re hiring are highly motivated and disciplined, so we’re injecting that kind of spirit into our company as well. It’s been a big positive boost.”

### The Win-Win

To help ensure a smooth and successful transition from military life to civilian careers, Siemens works with Orion International, a recruiting firm that has provided career assistance for more than 86,000 U.S. Army and Marine Corps vets since 2001. Siemens also provides extensive job training and transition assistance and mentoring through a number of other programs, including:

- The Siemens Veterans Network, which offers support through American Corporate Partners, community outreach events and other organizations
- The Hope For The Warriors initiative, a national nonprofit organization that supports the families of wounded and fallen service members
- Technology-focused summer camps for military families
- A leadership training program available to junior military officers

“The bottom line for us is that we’ve found a pool of people who not only can fill those skilled technical roles, but also can be transformed into business leaders over the next decade,” says Spiegel. “Veterans make great employees and leaders, and it’s good for our country. It’s a big part of our growth agenda here in the U.S. and a win-win for all of us.” ■

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[www.whitehouse.gov/joiningforces](http://www.whitehouse.gov/joiningforces)  
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