

Staffing Industry **REPORT**

Wanted: a few good veterans

Excerpt:

A secure future

Evan Lesser is co-founder of **ClearanceJobs .com**, a Web site dedicated to matching job seekers who hold active or current security clearances to top defense industry employers searching for new candidates. ClearanceJobs, founded in 1997, was acquired by **Dice.com** in September 2004.

As of April, ClearanceJobs had more than 33,000 registered job seekers with active or current security clearances, and 1,500 active job postings requiring security clearance. Veterans or transitioners make up about 50% of the registered job seekers on the site.

Demand is great for candidates with security clearances. There are two catalysts fueling the need, according to Lesser. The first is the monumental \$450 billion defense and homeland security budget for fiscal year 2005, a record amount of spending. “[A] number of government contracts ... are coming out asking private industry companies to support the government with all sorts of things: security, installation, developing hardware and software – a gigantic range of products and services that the government is asking private industry to do.”

The second is the backlog for security clearances. It is still taking a year to two years for someone who does not have a clearance to obtain one. Two years ago, there were about 450,000 people waiting for clearances, Lesser said. That number has dropped to about 250,000, but the timeframe is still a year to two years to receive a clearance. “A lot of people are sitting around at desks waiting for clearance,” Lesser said.

All of the candidates in the Clearance- Jobs resume databases have security clearances; about 50% are active duty military, transitioners or veterans and the other half civilians who already have security clearances. ClearanceJobs, like other traditional job boards, is free to job

seekers. Employers pay to come into the database. Those wishing to view the candidate database must be screened first, due to the sensitive nature of the data on the resumes.

Hot clearance areas for transitioning military are information technology, intelligence analysis, military subject matter experts and security. “The interesting thing we have been seeing the last few years, since clearances are harder to obtain, is that employers are taking lower-skilled or less-experienced workers who already have a security clearance, and are training them for the specific position,” Lesser said.

Some positions are easier to fill: network administrators with about five years’ experience, intelligence analysts (reviews, analyzes, reports findings), and security guards for classified government installations.

Others can be more challenging. “A software developer, doing high-level programming like C++ or Java, is very hard to find,” Lesser said. “When one of those candidates comes into our database, they don’t usually last more than a week.”

Those highly skilled and highly sought-after candidates can also command a very high salary. “People with two to five years of experience are starting off at \$80,000 plus, and people with 10 years of C++ and Java programming experience are commanding \$150,000 or more a year,” Lesser said. And the higher the clearance, the higher the pay.