

Mission Automotive: Harnessing military talent for the UK automotive industry



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Launched in 2019, it is delivered by Mission Motorsport, the Forces' Motorsport Charity in partnership with the Royal Foundation and the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT), with the support of the Ministry of Defence.

Since its launch, the Mission Automotive initiative has paved the way for forces friendly engagement within the automotive industry. Fostering mutually beneficial relationships between industry leaders and Defence, collaboration is the life blood of the initiative. The partner structure including SMMT, MOD and the Royal Foundation is vital to the Mission Automotive objectives:

- to help companies to harness the expertise and support of their industry body

- to tap into support from peer organisations

- to source and retain mission critical skills and extraordinary people in second careers after they have left the armed forces

- Advocacy from the industry's leading body

The recent Armed Forces Covenant (AFC) signing by the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders highlights the positive impact that veterans and service leavers bring to the industry. The pledge demonstrates SMMT's commitment to promoting best practice, fostering a culture and ethos of inclusivity, and making the commercial case for automotive companies to also sign up to the Covenant, making informed pledges that reflect their company values.

James Cameron, Mission Motorsport CEO, said:

“The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise - a commitment - to ensure that those who have served in the Armed Forces, and their families, should not be disadvantaged by their service to the country. Service leavers and veterans are a national resource, and SMMT has been innovative in helping its members to share best practices, to support each other, and harness that human potential. By helping to make the commercial case for companies, SMMT’s engagement and advocacy through its Mission Automotive initiative is encouraging not only members, but other industry bodies to follow suit and this should be celebrated.”

Mission Automotive is committed to facilitating pathways into employment. Through collaboration with Defence Relationship Management and the Career Transition Partnership (the MODs official provider of Armed Forces Resettlement), Mission Automotive works with employers to foster new behaviours to attract and retain service leaver talent, as well as access to the UK’s highly skilled veteran community and their families, who are at times overlooked.

Sourcing extraordinary people

Following 5 years of service as an Aircraftsman in the Royal Air Force, Jo Parker left the armed forces. Having worked in a variety of roles, Jo found it difficult to settle and lacked job satisfaction. Signposted to Mission Motorsport, Jo was introduced to the Mission Automotive initiative and enrolled in Toyota GB’s first Armed Forces Engagement Programme, developed with the help of Mission Automotive and Jaguar Land Rover. He completed his Toyota Level 2 Technician’s course held at the Toyota Academy in Burnstanton, Derbyshire securing fulltime employment with a dealership in his home town of Birmingham.

Speaking about the initiative Jo said: “Being able to be part of the Mission Automotive initiative has changed my life. I am now in secure full-time employment with an employer who recognises the talent that ex-service personnel can bring to a team”.

Able to combine his passion for cars and setting out on a new, successful career pathway, within four months of starting his new role, Jo was promoted to Workshop Foreman where he now manages the dealership's workshop, a small team of technicians and reports directly to senior management.

Industry leaders setting the gold standard

Through Mission Automotive's advocacy of the AFC and MOD Employer Recognition Scheme, the initiative has supported a growth in industry leaders who are mentoring other organisations on the benefits of signing the Armed Forces Covenant and partnering with Defence. Jaguar Land Rover signed the Armed Forces Covenant in April 2014 and established an active Armed Forces Engagement Programme resulting in an Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award in 2015. Since October 2014 they have employed over 1,000 veterans and service leavers globally, including over 40 wounded, injured and sick and over 50 into the UK retailer network. JLR are proud to have been the Presenting Partner for Invictus Games since the inaugural games in London in 2014.

In November 2019, Jaguar Land Rover formerly launched their Armed Forces Community Network, bringing together veterans, reservists, military spouses and partners, Cadet Force Adult Volunteers and military parents employed by the company within the UK. During the Covid-19 pandemic, JLR supported 5 reservist employees mobilised as part of Op RESCRIPT, the MOD's support to the fight against Covid-19 in the UK. In July 2020, the company successfully revalidated their ERS Gold Award and in February 2021 the newly appointed Chief Executive Officer, Thierry Bolloré and Executive Director, HR Dave Williams re-signed the Armed Forces Covenant, reaffirming JLR's commitment with updated pledges.

Jaguar Land Rover continues to play a leading role within the UK in advocacy for the Armed Forces Covenant as a founding member of the Mission Automotive Initiative and active member of the ERS Gold Award Association at both regional and national levels.

Success pathways

In two years and in spite of a global pandemic, the Mission Automotive initiative has grown and diversified. By listening to the needs of businesses, in the first two years the initiative has worked alongside more than 80 companies of all sizes helping them to recognise the benefits that Service Leavers, Veterans and their families can bring to their business. By fostering positive new behaviours, and helping employers to navigate culture, ethos, brand and HR areas; companies have found new talent, orchestrating Armed Forces Covenant signings and supporting those advancing on the Employment Recognition Scheme, the Mission Automotive initiative is helping the industry to create new supported pathways to employment, and making Automotive an industry of choice for service leavers, veterans and family members.

Next steps

For the UK automotive industry, now is the time to access service-leaver talent.

As the UK automotive industry looks to the future, it's more important than ever for companies within the sector to recognise the transferable skill set of ex-military personnel.

Find out more about the Mission Automotive initiative today.

Become a Forces-Friendly organisation

Take the first steps to becoming a Forces-Friendly organisation by signing the Armed Forces Covenant today.

Support and guidance: Start your journey on the MOD Employer Recognition Scheme.

Defence Relationship Management supports employers to recruit and retain members of the Armed Forces community so that businesses can access the transferable skills that Armed Forces personnel bring to the workplace. Our relationship management team are on hand to offer guidance and support as you begin your journey on the MOD Employer Recognition Scheme.

Become a CTP preferred supplier and join the thousands of other employers who already benefit from access to the growing ex-military talent pool.

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