

Service, Loyalty, Honesty, and Integrity

An Interview with Josue (Joe) Robles Jr.,
President and Chief Executive Officer, USAA

EDITORS' NOTE Joe Robles was a USAA board member from 1990 to 1994 while on active duty and joined USAA in 1994 as Special Assistant to the Chairman after retiring from the U.S. Army as a major general. He was named CFO and Controller later that year, and added Corporate Treasurer to his list of responsibilities in 1995. He assumed his current post in 2007. Born in Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico, Robles joined the U.S. Army in 1966. For the next 28 years, he served in a variety of command and staff positions, including active duty posts in



Josue (Joe) Robles Jr.

Korea, Vietnam, Germany, and Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm in the Middle East. Most recently, he served as the director of the Army budget and as commanding general of the 1st Infantry Division ("The Big Red One"). Robles has received the Distinguished Service Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, the Legion of Merit with two Oak Leaf Clusters, the Bronze Star with Oak Leaf Cluster, and the Meritorious Service Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster. Robles holds a bachelor of business administration degree in accounting from Kent State University and a master's degree in business administration from Indiana State University.

COMPANY BRIEF USAA (usaa.com) is one of America's leading financial services companies. The association has been serving military families since 1922 and offers its 10.1 million members a comprehensive range of insurance, banking, investment, and retirement products; financial advice and planning; and services designed to help them meet their financial needs. Headquartered in San Antonio, Texas, with offices throughout the United States and Europe, USAA owns or manages assets of \$198.5 billion.

Would you discuss the importance of hiring veterans and military spouses to the culture of USAA?

USAA was founded by military for military in 1922. When we say, "We know what it means to serve," we mean it. Our employees must and do understand the financial and other challenges that are unique to military families because so many have served themselves or are the spouses, sons, daughters, mothers, fathers, brothers, or sisters of someone who has served in the U.S. military.

It's important that we preserve this culture. Military families have all the best qualities you could ever want in customers or employees. They live their lives according to values like service, loyalty, honesty, and integrity.

How does veteran hiring align with USAA's business strategy?

Great employees make up successful companies, and veterans and military spouses make great employees. The skills they've learned while serving our country are the skills that companies need. They're honest, loyal, willing to lead or follow, and mission-oriented, and they bring their strong values to work every day. They're eager to learn and have received some of the best training available: military training. Beyond the right thing to do, hiring veterans is a smart business decision, especially as competition for great talent escalates.

What is your approach to hiring veterans and helping them make the transition?

Veteran hiring isn't a new commitment for USAA, but we've only recently begun tracking it. From 2006 through 2013, we hired more than 8,100 veterans and military spouses. Today, they account for more than one out of five USAA employees. Last year, we raised our commitment so that 30 percent of all new hires must be veterans or military spouses. I'm happy to report that we exceeded that goal.

More important than just hiring is how a company on-boards, trains, develops, and provides a meaningful career. We've learned that veterans train well together, so we've developed specialized programs like the Combat to Claims and Junior Military Officer Career Development Initiatives, which enable recently separated veterans to learn alongside one another. We also connect new hires to employee veteran mentors who have already made the transition to the civilian workplace. Through employee communities like VetNet, they can connect with fellow veterans on all kinds of things – work-related or social.

Beyond our walls, USAA is an active member of the White House's Joining Forces initiative. We've also joined with a diverse nationwide coalition of businesses and organizations to mobilize for veteran and spouse hiring through the U.S. Chamber's Hiring our Heroes initiative, and we serve on their Veterans Employment Advisory Council. We're equally committed to our military spouses and are a founding member of the U.S. Chamber's Military Spouse Employment Advisory Council, which will help connect military spouses with employment resources.

On a wider scale for our members and others who are getting ready to leave the military, we introduced the Military Separation Checklist and a

Military Separation Assessment Tool to help them plan for civilian life. Using these, veterans and their families can help prepare for contingencies by, for example, calculating their estimated civilian cost of living and future health care costs. We train and equip our member service representatives – many of whom either served or have family members who served – with tools to detect and respond to those who might be considering military separation to help them prepare for a successful transition.

How do you communicate your veteran hiring efforts to USAA employees and make sure that they are engaged in your programs?

Serving and understanding the military is at the heart of everything a USAA employee does. We provide a surround-sound military experience for our employees so they're routinely reminded of our members and the sacrifices they make. Veteran hiring is another piece of that mission, and we provide regular updates on our veteran and military spouse hiring program, and our success in meeting our goals.

We also provide ample opportunities for our employees to engage with our veteran hiring efforts and to be part of the movement. At USAA, we facilitate coaching by other veterans and we're implementing clear development paths for those we've hired. We also encourage our newly hired veterans to connect with their counterparts in our internal veteran community, VetNet, which links them to social and professional events, and volunteer opportunities.

What makes USAA so special and helps it maintain its leadership position?

There are three things that have kept us strong: The world's best members, the world's best employees, and prudent financial management.

Our members meet their obligations. They pay their bills. They look out for their families. They think about the future. And they stay loyal to companies that are loyal to them. In fact, 98 percent of USAA members have stayed with us year after year and plan to continue doing so. And many pass along the legacy of USAA membership generation after generation.

USAA employees are a reflection of our membership. They're mission-oriented and caring, and many have worn our nation's uniform. Our employees are as loyal as our members. Nearly one in 10 at our headquarters has been with USAA for 25 years or more.

We manage our business for the benefit of our membership and make decisions based on long-term strategy, not quarterly earnings. ●