

HIRE HEROES

Brian Stann continues to fight for the troops

BY KELLY CRIGGER // PHOTOS BY PAUL THATCHER

Brian Stann led a Marine Company that numbered nearly 950 men at one point. Now, he leads only seven, but the rewards are no less satisfying. As the executive director of Hire Heroes USA, Stann's mission is to provide career placement assistance in the civilian job market for returning servicemen and women when they separate from the military, especially injured and disabled vets. Stann was offered the position by John Bardis, the CEO of a healthcare company called Med Assets, while still a member of the Marine Corps. Bardis started Hire Heroes after a visit to Walter Reed Army Hospital, which motivated him to give back to the men and women who sacrifice so much for us.

"Companies today want people who know the meaning of honor, loyalty, and commitment, and veterans live those values," says Stann. As you would expect from a Marine, he immediately took charge and made changes. Because of Med Assets connections in the healthcare industry, the majority of Hire Heroes' placements were also among healthcare companies.

"I shifted the focus to defense contractors because they were a better fit for the veterans and also because they had a higher percentage of veterans already employed," says Stann.

Hire Heroes also provides the servicemen with skills they need to get through arduous job interviews. Since they usually don't have any experience with job interviews, Stann and his team coach and train them on resume writing, computer skills, interview skills, and public speaking. In its short history, Hire Heroes has found jobs for more than 100 veterans, all while operating strictly on donations. Similar job placement firms receive payments from the companies they connect an employee with,



but Hire Heroes' funding is purely philanthropic. Their recent golf event, 100 Holes, raised more than \$40,000.

But everything hasn't been wine and roses for Hire Heroes. Despite a winning record, the economic recession has proved a formidable opponent to getting people hired, and, in some cases, the veterans themselves are actually a challenge.

"They register on the Web site and then don't answer the phone when we call them," says Stann. "It's a two-way street. They have to want to get something out of it."

Luckily he has a team of seasoned employees—most of whom are vets—who know

how to entice vets out of their houses. One of his employees, Michelle Saunders, is a former Army Engineer who was awarded the Bronze Star medal for valor. People like Saunders and Hire Heroes' long list of volunteers are action-oriented, which enables Stann to get away and train MMA.

"I've never been able to just train," says Stann. "When I was a Marine, I would train in the field with buddies holding pads for me when I had down time. Med Assets lets me have more time, and I know that my team can handle the job when I'm in camp."

It's not a 950-man Marine Company, but they still have his back. 📍