

Why Operations Management?

The operations field consists of general management positions in Corporate America. Operations is an excellent field for transitioning military leaders because of variety of roles available, and in some roles like distribution or transportation, because you can transition from a very similar capacity in the military.

An operations management role will put a premium on your leadership, organization and communication skills. As an operations manager, you are a mid-level manager in the company. Your specific duties will differ from company to company.

Typical Positions

Listed below are some of the positions most commonly available to transitioning military officers in the operations field:

Distribution Manager

A distribution manager oversees scheduling operations, personnel management, and day-to-day operations in a distribution environment. You are overall responsible for the timely and efficient movement of products. You typically work in a warehouse or in a section of a manufacturing facility dedicated to distribution. Logistics or supply chain management experience may be preferred.

Transportation Manager

A transportation manager oversees scheduling operations, personnel management, and day-to-day operations in the transportation industry. You are overall responsible for the timely and efficient movement of transportation assets in support of company operations. Innovations like satellite communication systems and faster, more efficient transportation have taken this industry into the information age. Transportation or supply chain management experience is usually preferred.

Project Manager

Project managers are the key managers responsible for the overall direction of key projects. The projects differ significantly depending on the industry, from construction to manufacturing to defense, but the overall position requirements are similar - manage resources to get an assigned project done on time and at budget. Most positions in project management require a Project Management Professional (PMP) certification and/or previous project or program management experience.

Retail Manager

A retail manager is responsible for day to day operations of a retail store. Common responsibilities include personnel management, profit and loss, and community relations. Retail often requires flexible working hours, as the company needs to adjust to customer needs. Significant bonuses based off profitability are not uncommon.

Other Operations Roles

We also see operations management roles in Marketing, Finance, Consulting, and Human Resources from time to time. These roles are often not the ideal entry point for a military officer, since they may require subject matter expertise in that functional area. But, they are often roles that our candidates move into after gaining experience within the company.

Career Progression

There are several career paths you can follow from all of these types of positions. You can stay in Operations Management or move into Technical Services, Engineering, IT, Human Resources, or Loss Prevention with the right qualifications. A successful Operations Manager can move into a Senior Manager position as early as two years. The willingness to relocate will increase promotion potential significantly.

Keys to a Successful Interview

The key to a successful operations interview is to focus on examples in your past that will support your answers. Specific examples (with places, names) add depth and meaning to your answers. Giving an answer on philosophy alone will not work in a management interview. Here are some additional points of focus during an operations interview:

- Have a game plan focused on three of your best attributes that you feel, based on your company research, are most important to the company.
- Focus on what you have done in the military that relates directly to the role you are interviewing for at the time. Unlike engineering, sales, or manufacturing, JMOs tend to have a stronger direct correlation to Logistics and other Operational roles. Use that to your advantage.
- Focus on directly transferrable skills (degree, work experience, certifications).
- Focus on your ability to learn quickly.
- Review our prep module for management interviews and practice your questions.