

What your military leadership is worth — in civilian terms

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1. Translation table — what your rank actually means at work

Civilian recruiters do not know the Indian forces' rank structure. That is your problem to solve, not theirs. Use the lines below verbatim on your CV summary, on LinkedIn, and in the first three minutes of any interview.

Military	Civilian equivalent
Sepoy / Lance Naik / Naik, 5–10 yrs	Skilled operations associate. Trained on equipment worth Rs 50 lakh+. Civilian fit: shift supervisor, driver, security guard, technician.
Havildar (JCO entry), 12–15 yrs	Team lead. Direct supervision of 8–12 people. Civilian fit: shift in-charge, store supervisor, lead technician.
Naib Subedar / Subedar (JCO), 18–22 yrs	Junior manager. Span of 30–50 people, training delivery. Civilian fit: assistant manager, branch supervisor, training officer.
Subedar Major (senior JCO), 28+ yrs	Senior operations manager. Adviser to unit commander, 25-year track record. Civilian fit: head of admin, plant manager.
Lieutenant / Captain (Officer), 5–8 yrs	First-line manager with full accountability. Led 30 people in high-stakes conditions. Civilian fit: assistant manager, project lead.
Major (Officer), 10–14 yrs	Mid-level manager. Commanded 120, owned a budget. Civilian fit: senior manager, deputy general manager.
Lieutenant Colonel (Officer), 15–22 yrs	Senior manager / BU head. Commanded 800, owned an annual operating plan. Civilian fit: general manager, head of operations.
Colonel / Brigadier	Senior leader, 2,000–5,000 people, multi-crore equipment. Civilian fit: vice-president, business head.
Air Commodore / Major General	C-suite-adjacent executive, strategy and oversight. Civilian fit: chief operating officer, divisional CEO.
Air Marshal / Lt General / Vice Admiral	C-suite executive with multi-thousand-crore responsibility. Civilian fit: CEO, group COO.
2IC / battalion second-in-command tour	Chief of staff role. Owns operating cadence and escalation. Translate as: deputy general manager — operations.
Instructor at a training establishment	Capability and learning lead. Built a curriculum, certified a cohort. Translate as: head of training, L&D; manager.

These are translations, not promises. Final designation depends on the role, the sector, and the employer's grade structure.

2. Five short scripts for the conversations that matter

Read each script aloud once. Then say it in your own words. The point is the structure — anchor first, ask in specifics, close with a clear next step.

Stating salary expectations. When asked your expected salary, do not give a single number first. Say: "Based on the role's responsibilities and my 22 years of leading operations of similar scale, I am looking for a package in the range of X to Y LPA, and I am open to discussing structure — fixed, variable, and benefits — once I understand the role better." Anchor high inside a defensible range. Pause. Let them respond.

Asking for relocation support. Most companies have a relocation policy; you only get it if you ask. Say: "Given the move from my current station to your office location, can we discuss relocation support? I am thinking of one-time movement of household goods, two weeks of temporary accommodation, and a school-admission allowance if applicable." Ask for specifics. Vague asks get vague answers.

Asking for housing benefits. Service housing is part of why your in-hand felt larger than it was. Say: "In service, accommodation was provided. To compare like for like, can the offer include a house rent allowance equivalent to 30 to 40 percent of basic, or company-leased accommodation? Frame it as parity, not a perk. This is a tax-efficient lever that costs the employer little.

Asking for an early review. If the salary number is firm but the role is right, trade time for money. Say: "I understand the band is fixed at this level. Can we agree on a review at the six-month mark, with specific performance criteria written into my offer letter? I want to earn the next step, not ask for it." This signals confidence and shifts the conversation to outcomes.

Asking for a joining bonus. If you are leaving notice-period money, pension paperwork, or a settled posting, ask. Say: "To bridge the gap between my last service entitlement and my first salary credit here, can we include a joining bonus of one month's CTC? I am happy for it to be subject to a 12-month service clause." Naming the clause first removes the employer's main objection.

3. Five things not to say

- Do not say / do not: "I will accept whatever the company offers." That single sentence costs ex-servicemen lakhs every year. Always state a range.
- Do not say / do not: Compare your civilian offer to your military pay grade. They are different systems. Compare to the civilian market rate for the role.
- Do not say / do not: Accept the first number on the table. Even a Rs 50,000 annual increase, taken once, compounds across every future role you hold.
- Do not say / do not: Let "we don't negotiate" close the conversation. Most employers will not move on base, but will move on joining bonus, leave, notice period, designation, or review timing. Ask which lever is open.
- Do not say / do not: Undersell long service. "I was just a JCO" or "I only commanded a company" is information the employer will use against you. Twenty-two years of unbroken service in a disciplined organisation is a feature, not an apology.

4. Indicative salary bands by rank and sector

Disclaimer: The ranges below are rough market estimates based on publicly available sources (Naukri, LinkedIn, Adecco India reports). They are NOT employer-published figures and vary widely by location, organisation size, and individual profile. Treat them as a starting anchor for your own research, not as a guarantee.

Rank / Background	Typical first civilian role	Indicative range (LPA)	Sector examples
Sepoy–Naik (5–10 yrs)	Security guard / driver / technician	3–6 LPA	PSUs, logistics, private security
Havildar (12–15 yrs)	Shift supervisor / store in-charge	5–9 LPA	Retail, manufacturing, FMCG
JCO — Nb Sub/Sub (18–22 yrs)	Assistant manager / branch supervisor	8–14 LPA	Banking, FMCG, security management
Subedar Major (28+ yrs)	Operations manager / head of admin	12–18 LPA	Infrastructure, defence PSU, logistics
Captain / Major (8–14 yrs)	Manager / DGM — operations	12–20 LPA	IT services, BFSI, consulting
Lt Colonel (15–22 yrs)	GM / VP — operations	18–35 LPA	Conglomerates, defence tech, infra
Colonel and above	Business head / VP / C-suite	30–60 LPA+	Large enterprise, defence OEMs, PSUs

Ranges are indicative estimates, not employer-published figures. Last reviewed May 2026. Detailed market-rate data by city and sector will be published at faujilink.com/market-rate.

Sources

- Department of Ex-Servicemen Welfare — placement statistics (PIB, Ministry of Defence)
- Directorate General Resettlement — official guidance on civilian re-employment: dgrindia.gov.in
- Adecco India — veteran hiring practice notes and indicative role bands
- Ekam — sector notes on private security and logistics roles for ex-servicemen
- Naukri.com / LinkedIn salary insights — used as benchmark for indicative LPA ranges

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