

Relationship Between a Military Spouse Just Starting Out and a Digital Marketing Pro Proves Win-Win

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By

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As a spouse of an active member of the U.S. military, you are often on the move—relocating to where your husband or wife is called to serve our great country. That presents some unique challenges, especially when it comes to a spouse with career ambitions, like Karen Hadley.

After graduating from college with a degree in foreign policy, Karen had moved to Washington, D.C. to pursue a career in public health at the Association of American Medical Colleges, which later led her to focus on diversity and its effects on health while working at John Hopkins Medicine. That's where she met and married her husband, an active member of the U.S. Army.

Karen's husband is currently stationed at Fort Benning in Columbus, Georgia, which called for the couple to move from our nation's bustling capital to the quiet town of Phenix City, Alabama—a short 25 minute drive to and from the Army post on the Georgia-Alabama border. “It definitely presents challenges,” shares Karen. “The most recent data shows that as many as 70 percent of military spouses don't work because of the lifestyle we live. I still wanted to fulfill my desire of being a professional, but having the flexibility to work more remotely.”

That's when Karen began the process of reimagining her professional life. She did online research and came across [American Corporate Partners \(ACP\)](#), a NAWBO National partner with mentoring programs for military veterans and spouses that NAWBO women business owners are participating in as mentors. She quickly applied and during the formal application and interview process, they honed in on what Karen was most interested in and who would be the perfect mentor.

As it turns out, Karen's “perfect mentor” was Margaret Brown, a leading authority on digital marketing who has been socializing brands in Los Angeles and across the country since 2008 through her agency [SocializeLA](#). Margaret is a member of NAWBO-LA as well as a member of the NAWBO National team who oversees social media strategy. Margaret learned about the ACP program through their partnership with NAWBO.

“I got involved in this because it was in my wheelhouse and it was an opportunity to help our Armed Forces,” says Margaret. “I am a proud American and I want to support our country in whatever way I can. I thought I could really make an impact on a young woman who is just starting her business and who is brilliant, but can't have a traditional job because of her husband's career. I feel like I'm doing something that's going to help her to flourish in a career she can build on no matter where she moves in the future.”

Margaret knows it's possible to have a successful business—no matter where you work. Six years ago, when she was a solopreneur at her first [National Women's Business Conference](#) in Miami, Florida, several NAWBO sisters introduced to her the idea of hiring contractors so that Margaret didn't have to “do it all.” Her business is now thriving as a result, and Margaret can work from anywhere in the world. In fact, she and her husband are traveling to Egypt soon where she can check in on her business if needed, but knows her team otherwise has her covered.

As part of the ACP mentoring program guidelines, Margaret and Karen participate in monthly calls. On their first call five months ago, they found an immediate connection. “I think we both really resonated with one another because of our drive,” says Karen. “She is an expert in digital marketing and I had just received a scholarship through [The Paradigm Switch](#), which is trying to push for military spouses to enter the digital sphere because we'll have to work remotely. Everything just happened at the right moment and I am now reinventing myself in digital marketing.”

Margaret couldn't agree more. “When we first spoke, I was so excited thinking, ‘Everything she is saying, I can help her with. I've had these same thoughts and have been in this same situation.’ I was overwhelmed by excitement that I would be able to stop her from doing certain things and encourage her to do others.”

Since that first talk, the relationship has blossomed. The two participate in their monthly calls, but have also exchanged emails and cell phone numbers so they can be available to one another as things come up. “ACP was awesome in providing guidelines if we needed them, but sometimes you don't know what you need until you get in a relationship,” says Margaret. “We like that we don't have to wait for our next call to talk about something; we can do it now. We talk through things, even things that are unpleasant and difficult, and we celebrate together.”

This has included conversations about Karen's company logo and branding, pricing and proposals. Margaret even recently gave Karen an opposing opinion on a serious situation. “It was forward and honest, and at the end of the call, we were so glad we could do this,” says Margaret.

“To have a subject matter expert and just someone with her life experiences is amazing,” shares Karen. “I’m still growing as a young professional, so there’s certain difficult conversations you have to have. It’s also nice to have a cheerleader in my corner encouraging me to grow and mature.”

Currently, Karen is building the foundation of her business—called Digipixly. She was just certified through GreenFig in Google analytics, Google ads and other digital marketing software. She is in the process of launching a website and social media presence, and has begun writing blogs and other digital content. Her next step is looking to take on freelance work and connect with clients through the Columbus Chamber of Commerce. Margaret is also hoping to connect Karen with online networking groups for opportunities, including NAWBO Virtual.

“I would say that as I am encouraging Karen to take bigger leaps and steps through our mentoring relationship,” says Margaret, “it is making me do the same thing because I want to practice what I preach.” Now, that’s a win-win!

The Need For Military Spouse Career Mentoring

- There are more than 600,000 spouses of active duty service members and with frequent moves, service member deployments and a lack of portable careers, many spouses struggle to focus on their own career development.
- According to a Chamber of Commerce Foundation study, 70 percent of military spouses do not believe their education or work experience is being fully utilized in their current job.
- Fifty-six percent of working spouses reported they were underemployed in the 2018 [Blue Star Families](#) annual Military Family Lifestyle Survey.

To learn more about the ACP mentoring program and becoming a mentor to a military veteran or spouse, [click here](#).