Mininia Hawkins: My name is Mininia Hawkins and I am with the Department of Defense Military Community Support Programs office, the host for this week’s symposium.

Our speaker today is Lakesha Cole, an author, advocacy influencer, serial entrepreneur and self-proclaimed chaos coordinator. She has been featured by the Today Show, NBC News, Attn:, CBS This Morning, Fox & Friends, Black Enterprise, Military Families Magazine, Military Spouse and Military.com.

Ms. Cole is going to discuss why we need a personal brand and tips on how to succeed as the best you. Welcome, Ms. Cole.

Lakesha Cole: Thank You, Mininia for that wonderful introduction. Good morning everyone, or afternoon or evening depending on where you are joining us from around the world. I’m more than excited to hang out with you guys today, and really share some of my tried-and-trusted secrets and tips on how to present the best version of you.

So, I like to keep things a little easy-going and fun. And so to make sure this isn’t death by PowerPoint, my big ask from you all today is to not be shy and to ask questions throughout via your chat box.

I see we do have a few friends who’ve already chimed in, so if you can, go ahead and let us know where you’re dialing in from. I do have a few slides to guide you all through my talk, but I really want this to be an interactive two-way conversation. I’ll try my best to catch your or questions in real time and I should have about 10 minutes or so at the end to gather the remaining questions and get you guys the answers that you’re seeking. So, does that sound like a plan? I can’t see you guys, but I’m envisioning you all nodding your head.

So, all right, let’s get started. So, again my name is Lakesha Cole and I am actually trying to get my mouse to click to my next screen. Here we go. There we go. Again, my name is Lakesha Cole. I am a retired Marine Corps spouse. My husband actually retired almost two years ago. We are now nestled down in the suburbs of Tampa, Florida. We were trying to decide if this is going to be our forever home, but for now it feels good. My parents actually moved here once my dad retired from the Marine Corps about 17-18 years ago. And like many of you listening today, we’ve never had
the opportunity to live near family during his entire 20 years of service. So we thought now would be the perfect time for our kiddos to get to spend some quality time with their grandparents and aunts and uncles and cousins. And then we get to fully enjoy taking advantage of grandparent privileges, too.

I am mom to Kaylie who will be 15 in a couple of weeks. We lived in Okinawa, Japan for four years and there’s where she fell in love with Japanese culture. And now she loves all things anime. She’s an honor roll student, really, really good kid and an aspiring video-game designer.

Kirby is our fireball, our middle child with special needs. She’s 5. She has bilateral hearing loss and she’s now thriving with her new cochlear implants. Kirby also loves to cook and dance.

And then there’s Tegan, my baby. I call him Mr. Cuddles, who is 4, who is currently obsessed with trucks and all things Ryan's World.

And then, as for me, I’m an introvert, believe it or not. But I am a doer in the purest form. I love, love, love being a connection maker. Whether that be, you know, tap into my network and my friendship circles, to whether it’s helping someone expedite information flow or provide access to resources, or to bridge a gap between ideas and actions and by simply knowing who to ask to help get things done. I want to ensure those who want a seat at the table get one. And knowing these attributes about myself really plays a huge role in me being able to present the best version of myself.

So, some of the work that I am most proud of is my contribution to the military spouse employment conversation. And that’s where my advocacy influencer piece comes into play. I most notably have been able to work with my home-state senator to help draft legislation to address military spouse employment issues. And this legislation was later signed into law by the president. Now, I do wear many, many hats these days, you know, besides being a mom and trying to figure out this whole new homeschooling role.

I own a brick and mortar gift shop which is currently closed due to COVID. I run my own PR boutique agency where we help women-led companies accelerate through strategy and media. I’m partnering with some of my girlfriends on some really fun business initiatives like Milspo Media and Make Her Milspouse, where we directly serve the military spouse entrepreneur community. And I’m also a freelance writer for Military Families Magazine.

So, now that I’ve shared a little about myself, I am ready to share with you all what is a personal brand, why I think it’s important for everyone to have a personal brand, how to tap into your inner-self, and to help you present the very best version of yourself.

So, now when most people hear the words personal branding they think business. So, I don’t want you guys to think this is going to be a business presentation and it’s
not. There's going to be information that I'm gonna give you guys that's going to apply to everyone even if you're not a business owner.

When most people hear the word personal branding they think business. Now we all know what a business brand is, right? But you probably don't think much about having a brand yourself. Now, I know the idea having a personal brand is unusual to most people but you know we're in these modern digital times now where things, you know both good and bad, can last forever on the internet. Personal branding is more important now than ever before.

So, have you ever Googled your name? Right, so I actually personally set Google alerts on my name and my business name so that I'm immediately notified when something is published. And I also recommend for others to do the same. It's a free Google tool, so just type in your name and put in your email address and it will just automatically send those alerts to you.

Well when you find that there's, well you may find that there is nothing there and obviously you may find that other people may share your name as well. But when you do see items that mention your name, do they show what you want the world to see? And this can even include, you know things that are on digital social platforms like Facebook and Instagram and LinkedIn.

But, let's take that question a step further. How do people perceive you offline? Now I want you guys to really think about that. Do they connect you in your values with your job role or business and the values it represents? Think about that for a second. I want you guys to keep these questions in your mind as we move through the rest of the presentation.

So, what is personal branding anyway? According to Influencer Marketing Hub, your personal brand is how you promote yourself. It is a unique combination of skills, experience, personality that you want the world to see you as. It is the telling of your story and how it reflects your conduct your behavior your spoken and unspoken words and your attitude.

You use your personal branding to differentiate yourself from other people. Now, professionally, your personal brand is like the image that people see of you. Now this can be a combination of how they look at you in real life, how your co-workers may portray you, and the impression that people gain from the information about you online. Now, you can either ignore your personal brand and kind of let it develop organically and in some cases chaotically because we all have seen situations that have happened online that just kind of went from zero to 100 in seconds, right? And things can get beyond your control. Or you can kind of help massage your personal brand to depict you as the person you want to be seen as. And that's where we're going to work that's what we're going to work on a little bit today.

So, in the pre-internet days, and I'm dating myself here, your personal brand was really just a business card, right? You go to these networking events, everyone
exchanges business cards, and you go home, and you know that's kind of, sort of the end of it. Unless you were like, some high-profile person. Now, on a side note, I personally don't give out business cards anymore. I'm the one that would rather connect with you socially on the spot. I know people are still warming up to that idea, but that's my preference.

But now that we have social media where everyone can be known for something, and in today’s highly public world, over-selfie, everything is out there type of world where every little action is discussed and shared at length on social media, you are as far less anonymous as you think you are, maybe even want to be. So once you create a powerful personal brand and take control of the messages that you’re putting out there, you can then use that to navigate your career or your business wherever you want it to go, and really do things that you could not have achieved without it.

So, I want to get started with some of the basics. A brand is not a business. Now, if I were to ask you, name some brands, you may think of famous companies like, I don’t know, Facebook, or Apple or Tesla, or even Exchange, right? Now a lot of people think of these multi-million dollar businesses when they think of brands, which can lead to the misconception that a brand is a business. When in fact, brands are not businesses.

Now, when I used to work in economic development for one of the wealthiest counties in the country, we used the word brands and companies interchangeably. And that's fine, because companies do have brands, but brands are not companies. Rather than, brands are sort of simply what people think of and imagine when they hear a name of someone or something. So, think of it like a reputation, right?

Companies love creating brands to influence how we perceive them and how their particular brand can add value to our daily lives. And just like those multi-million dollar big companies that I’m talking about, you too can create and use your brand to influence how others perceive you and make yourself appear and become more valuable in your field of work, too.

A brand is not a name, logo or product. That’s also another misconception. Now to be fair, when you do Google “what is brand?” The first definition that will probably come up is that it’s a type of product that is manufactured by a particular company under a particular name. Now, this oversimplification can mislead you to think that a brand is a name, product or logo, when it really isn't, right? A product name and a company logo is what makes a brand distinct and recognizable. So, you think of Target and their bulls-eye. You think of Apple, Mac products, MacBook’s and laptops, and you know, the Apple logo. It's what makes their product or their brand recognizable. Sort of like a fingerprint. No two people have the same fingerprint just like no two people can have the same personal brand.

So, for example when I say the name Beyoncé, right? We all envision the same person, right? We’re probably all singing the same song in our heads right about
now. But however, what transformed, you know, that ordinary girl from Texas with the beautiful voice into be Beyoncé, is the collection of her songs, right? You know, the music videos she’s created. Her multi-platinum albums. You know, the messages that she spreads, what she stands for. So, ultimately her body of creative work has created your perception of her, whether that be you know, good or bad. Your body of work will shape how your co-workers, and supervisors, and colleagues, and clients or customers, whoever – your body of work will shape how they perceive you and that is what will make you valuable and successful in your field as well.

Now, this brings me to my next point. You already have a brain. You may not be famous, you may not be a celebrity, may not be a professional athlete or an Instagram star, or even you know, an elected official running for office. It doesn’t matter because you don’t have to be any of those things. But you are a brand, you’re a professional brand, and you’re just as important as the next person.

So, your colleague knows you as you. And you are the person they’ll think of when they hear your name. Now the only question is, if I were to ask your colleagues what they think of you when, what they think of when they hear your name, what would they say? Think about that for a second. What would they say? Will their description of you reflect how you wish people will talk about you when you are not in the room? Think about that one. Or does how valuable they think you are reflect how valuable you think you are or aspire to be? Think on that one, too. Well, you know believe it or not, more often than not the answer is “no.” But we’re gonna work on turning that no into a yes today.

So, you know, how we see ourselves in our head isn’t always how others perceive us from the outside. And that’s what sometimes keeps us stuck where we are in our career or in our business. Now, we may dream of climbing that career ladder, but let’s be honest for a lot of us on this phone call today, that it is not a straight path. That path is very zigzag, right? From having to reinvent ourselves every two to three years. But nevertheless, we know we are capable of doing meaningful, exciting and challenging work, but we don’t always get the opportunities we feel like we deserve, right? And even though we believe we’re more valuable, we get paid less than some of our colleagues. And even though we may believe we are the perfect candidate for a job, we sometimes don’t get the offer.

Now, I don’t know about you guys, but I’ve definitely been there. I had 10 jobs before I decided to make that transition from an employee to an employer for a time because I just could not keep up with having to, you know, reinvent myself, you know, every two to three years. And this shift happened for me when I started to think of myself as a brand. And it helped me to transform into the professional entrepreneur and leader that I’ve always aspired to be.

So, here’s how creating a personal brand can help you do the same thing. Gain confidence. Now, I always say self-confidence is your best accessory, right? And I know, I know confidence can be a sensitive topic and sometimes I don’t really like talking about it but it has to be addressed, right? Because it’s not something that
we’re all born with. But in fact must learn to continue to grow and advance. So when we’re talking about personal branding, gaining confidence will come from publicly sharing your positive qualities and strengths, right? So people know that others want what you are selling or want skills that you possess, of course that’s going to make your self-esteem soar.

Empowering yourself, you know, in general is one of the best strategies for building self-confidence. I like to say I’m always a student because I’m always investing in knowledge to empower myself. And that is how I continue to build my own self-confidence.

First, having a personal brand helps you build credibility and reputation so your current state reflects who you are right now. And this is what's going to keep you doing the same work you're doing right now. Your ideal personal brand is what you love others to say when you're not in the room. This is what will open doors for you and create your dream career opportunities. Now, let me say this, the reality is you cannot control what other people think of you when they see you. That's not what I'm saying. But we all have to have a certain level of care to know what we are projecting and what we are putting out there. But you do hold the power to strongly influence how people perceive you, whether it’s at work or whether it’s online and wherever else you choose to show up. If you think about it, you’re likely already influencing people every day, from how you talk, how you walk, how you present yourself, even how you dress, to what services you provide to your team or your customers, clients. What results you achieve at work and how you make others feel. So basically any experience someone has when interacting with you strongly influences how they perceive you. And so the easiest way to get the career opportunities you want is to consistently behave in ways that are consistent with how you want to be perceived.

So, when we talk about building credibility and reputation we’re really talking about establishing your name as a thought leader within your zone of genius, within your industry, right? So maybe you’re great at marketing or accounting. Maybe you’re a great administrative assistant. Maybe you’ve dominated fitness or in direct sales. For, establishing yourself as credible and reliable helps in gaining recognition in your specific industry.

So allow me to put my business hat on for just a second. Us business owners talk a lot about, you know, target markets. And by definition, it’s a particular group of consumers at which a product or service is aiming. So when you are perceived as an expert, you become more visible to your target audience. Now, in thinking about yourself as a brand, think about who your target audience is – their wants and needs – and how you personally can uniquely help fulfill them.

Now, cultivating those relationships will further your own goal as a result. But you know, think about your current work situation, right? So when you put your boss’s needs first, you ultimately, you know, get praised. For you to shine when you put your co-workers’ needs first, they are there for you in return. And when you put
your team’s needs first, they help you complete projects that ultimately helps accelerate your career.

Having a personal brand also helps you showcase your specialty, your talent, right? I read a really good book called Promote Yourself: The New Rules for Career Success by Dan Schawbel – I’m probably saying his last name wrong – but he’s also the founder of millennial branding. He talks about how personal branding is the process of unearthing your unique talents and communicating them through various mediums to the right audience, of course, and how if you don’t have a strong position, how you’ll just go unnoticed.

So, if you’re prepared for a job interview right now or hopefully in the near future. There we go, so if you’re prepared for a job interview right now or hopefully in the near future, obviously you want to research the company beforehand, right? You want to know who they are what types of services they provide, who are their clients or customers. And then you want to prepare every possible question and you want to know your brand, know your resume, like you know your favorite Starbucks drink, right? And practice by interviewing, practice your interviewing skills with others, do mock interviews if you need to. And you should always have follow-up questions. Having no questions is completely unacceptable. Always prepare questions to ask the interviewer. Why? Because not only is the interview, not only is an interview a two-way street, but your questions that you ask will say something about who you are, and it will say something about your personal brand, so you always want to make sure that you have follow-up questions. And then if you really want to level up, you want to come to your interview, into your business meeting with your own personal sort of branding kit, which could include like your business card, your cover letter, your resume, type of references document, and if you’re in the creative field like I am, you want to make sure you bring a portfolio of your most recent work. You want to make sure you give them a variety that really showcases your wide range of skills. But each part of your kit should include a link to either your website or LinkedIn page. And this just really shows that you are prepared and you’re thoughtful, I mean you really understand how to sell yourself.

Now let me back up for a second about the website. Everyone who is listening right now, you should own your first name, last name or some variation of it.com. That is your digital real estate, and if you do not own your domain name, you should own that piece of digital property for yourself. Even if you have no plans to use it today or tomorrow, you want to make sure that it’s in your possession so that if the time or opportunity comes, that you own the right to your domain name.

So, creating a brand, a personal brand helps you attract ideal opportunities as well. The more you hone a brand, your personal brand, the more likely you are to connect with new opportunities that align with your goals. And it also helps you increase your value. But remember your value isn’t based on who you work for or your position at a job, it’s based on what you’re able to bring to the table. And that is what also makes you more marketable.
So, how do we do all of it? Step 1, unlock your authentic self. So, we’re going to make some sense of all of this and start putting together an actual plan. So, you want to know your value, which also points back to having self-confidence. First, it is impossible to know your value if you don't believe that you are valuable. Let me repeat, that it is impossible to know your value if you do not believe you are valuable. And in order to leave an impression on people that you meet, you must first leave an impression on yourself.

Now, my grandfather, who we just celebrated his heavenly 89th birthday on Sunday, used to say, “Be careful how you talk to yourself because you are listening.” You have to learn to be aware of your self-talk and thoughts you have about yourself and what you're doing. Negative thoughts and emotions makes us mentally weak, it drains you. Happiness plays a very important part in knowing your value and your confidence levels. And if you are truly happy, then really half the work of selling yourself is done.

You want to form authentic relationships. Now, going back to lessons my grandpa taught me. There are generally two people, two types of people in your life: those who make deposits, and those who make withdrawals. You want to seek those who add value to your life, but you must distinguish the two, so you'll be able to manage your expectations, meet people where they're at, and really know how to engage with the people that you bring into your life. Now, these are the people who generally care about you and they show it by engaging with you on things that matter most to you. These are also the people who know your work and realize your potential and fully encourage you to walk in it.

Now, and I want to add, you know something about, you know, authentic relationship-building, because the same way I’m telling you to seek those who make deposits, you have to reciprocate and make deposits into others as well. Reciprocation it is key to building good, authentic relationships. When you share resources and make referrals to others, it really does demonstrate that both parties care about each other and that they trust each other. And those are the relationships that you want to hold on to tight. You want to nurture them and you want them to be forever relationships.

Make authentic decisions. Now, when I mentor people in this area, I always point them back to their core values. And I’m talking about back-to-their-childhood core values. Things they learned, you know, when they were growing up. I came across something, maybe it was in a book or something, I can’t remember, but I did write it down, and it said something like, you know, our values shape our actions, our actions become our habits, and our habits become our character. When our character is consistent with our values, making authentic decisions becomes second-nature.

Now I wrote this down and I stuck it on my wall as a constant reminder to make decisions based on – as a constant reminder not to make decisions based on public opinion, or not to make when I’m all up in my feelings, right? Or not to make
decisions based on what everybody else wants me to do. Now, this allows me to not only make responsible decisions, but it also allows me to make proactive and not reactive decisions. And you never want to regret decisions that you made. And then, you know, putting this into practice. It all really points back to confidence. Can you think of a time when you were afraid to do something because of fear of what others would think? I’m sure you can think of many, right? I remember in my younger years, I used to be terrified – it’s not business-related, but it’s you know personal – I used to be terrified to dance in front of people. And I don’t know if I thought it was because I’m a bad dancer, or maybe it was I wasn’t as good as others, you know, honestly it took me to see someone who danced much worse than me to get over my fear and off the wall and on the dance floor. And now I love to dance. I’m still debating on the whole Tik-Tok thing, but my husband and I are often the first couple on the dance floor and sometimes the last couple off. So, I was able to get over that fear.

Step 2, set and crush your goals. So none of this really happens without goal-setting, right? So, you want to create a big picture of what you want to accomplish. Goals don’t necessarily have to be large in scale. In fact, if your goal is too large you’re likely setting yourself up for failure. Many people spend their entire life floating from one job to the next or rushing through the day, you know trying to get as much done as possible, but they’re accomplishing very little. So setting goals, you want them to give you long-term vision, short-term motivation. You want to type your goals and put them in places where you can see them daily. So, you want to type up your goals and put them in places where you can see them daily. Some may use vision boards. If you are not familiar with how to create one, at the end of this session you can Google vision boards and you’ll find some really great tutorials on YouTube. I personally use a physical paper date planner and lots and lots and lots of Post-it notes to sort of organize my thoughts and tasks. And then I’m able to, by writing everything down, I’ve been able to kind of identify what the obstacles are all gonna be in order for me to accomplish these goals, and maybe identify some resources and people that I can tap into to kind of help me flesh things out. And writing those things down also makes me aware of my competencies and my strengths, and then I’m able to sort of kind of see everything laid out and figure out how everything kind of marries together.

You want to organize your goals again into smaller, manageable steps. Oftentimes when goals feel big and you can feel overwheml – and you start to feel overwhelmed, it’s because you haven’t broken them down into steps that are digestible or steps that are easy to obtain. And then I take all of that and I create what I call a 30-60-90-day game plan where I identify what my goals are. I classify them by path or project or client, or whatever it is I’m working on, and then I prioritize them by deadline or urgency. Now, now with the 30-60-90-day rule, you want to begin with 30 days because on average it takes 21 days to form a habit, that’s what experts say, and then the extra days gives you time to kind of adjust yourself. Then you write your goals down to make it feel tangible. Then plan the
steps you must take in 30, 60, 90-day increments to help realize your goals and to avoid feeling overwhelmed. You they always say you’re in always 90 days away from the next opportunity that you truly want, we have a saying in business: purpose and planning equals profits, and the same would apply for a new job or a promotion or whatever your next big step should be or will be.

Beatrice said we have a white board and I have my own agenda with my own daily goals. Yes, that is how I organize my thoughts to visions. I have a whole wall dedicated just for Post-its where I’m able to kind of move things around as my ideas and projects start to shift.

And Kaitlyn, yes SMART goals were a lifesaver in high school. We use SMART goals a lot in business as well. Oh good job Shannon, you’re taking notes? Good, I’m glad you’re finding everything helpful. (Unintelligible) says Making Vision Boards Work For You by Terri Savelle Foy is a great resource. Great idea, awesome. I have to look that one up.

Awesome, you guys. All right.

So, Step 3. Then we want to create, you know, our playbook, which really kind of centered around our elevator pitch, because we’re talking about how we're selling ourselves to other people, right? So you want to develop a concise elevator pitch that includes your attributes.

Now did you guys know this? Listen to this, according to Business Insider, at least 70% of jobs are not listed publicly. And up to 85% of open positions are filled through networking. Now that means introverts like myself, we have to actually pass, right? To meet people and put ourselves in front of people and to get these opportunities. So, using your elevator pitch is a way for you to expand your network and opportunities. Your elevator pitch should be around four to five sentences. You can easily get to the point in less than a minute while still providing enough details to pique interest. You want to include who you are, your relevant skills, your strengths and actions, your why and who you aim to serve. You also want to choose, make sure that you choose an audience – the right audience. And you also make sure that you know that audience. You want to have a general elevator pitch for when you, let’s say unexpectedly meet strangers. Because we know that always happens. You want to have one for networking events that’s geared towards the certain type of professionals that will be in attendance, and then you want one for when you are up for a specific role – maybe it's a job promotion or such.

You want to make sure that honest, right? Because the truth always comes out. So you want to make sure that you ensure that you aren’t over-promising or over-embellishing with your pitch, so that you don’t want to create a void that you are unable to fill. And then you want to make it memorable. Now is not the time to oversimplify. You don’t want to oversimplify in your elevator pitch. Brevity is important, but your pitch needs to have some meat to start a real conversation.
Make your self-impression others’ impression. You want to aim to connect, not sell. A then you want to be flexible. You want to make it a two-way conversation, right? In a professional setting, people love when you give them permission to talk about themselves, right? So the conversation doesn’t always have to be about you. If you sometimes get nervous in those types of situations, it’s perfectly fine to use your pitch to engage the other person and talk about what you do in a conversation of that nature.

Yes, Kristen. Get every kind of domain. First name, last name, any variation that is available. You want to make sure you get that for yourself.

So, step 4. You want to promote your personal brand to perfection. So, hopefully by now you understand, you know, finding the perfect job or the next big opportunity requires more than simply writing a resume and posting it online, or sitting back and kind of waiting for something to happen, right? You have to put yourself out there. So, we want to make sure that you cultivate an online presence. Now you know there’s a saying, the internet is not Vegas, right? And what they mean by that is, what happens online doesn’t always stay online and privacy is more of a theory now than a reality. So, keep this at the top of your mind when you’re building and cultivating your personal brand online.

You know you are creating your personal persona and building a following based on your professional brand, which is yourself. So, if you have personal accounts that shouldn’t be associated with your professional persona, you might want to consider deleting the profiles altogether. If you want to keep your personal social media profiles and keep them separate from your online professional persona, you know, remember that privacy settings aren’t perfect. While no one really expects you to be devoid of a life outside of work, and just you know, we don’t want you, don’t be overly concerned about it, but just be mindful about it. We want you to keep in mind that, you know, potential clients and employers may still be able to see, you know, your personal pictures and posts and things like that. So, you want to think twice before you post, and consider changing the name on your profile to a nickname if that’s important to you.

You can be your own publicist. You know, when it comes to promoting yourself in your work, you need to be noted. You know if you own the business, you know being featured, or even if you don’t own the business, being featured in the media is one of the best ways to seriously promote yourself and your work, in an effort to build your brand. It also provides a really cool way, or foundation of material, collection of material for people to look up when researching your brand for potential, you know, job roles, or you know, for interest in becoming a client. As if all that isn’t enough, you know being featured in the press also helps to position you as the go-to person in your industry.

You want to make sure you show up. I always tell people, show up. You have to show up even when you don’t feel like it. You know it’s important to, you know, find your pocket on these digital platforms, whether it’s a Facebook group or LinkedIn
group, or you know wherever your industry people tend to hang out. You want to find those pockets – you want to engage with others in your industry. Then you want to give more. You know, people respond to a brand in direct proportion to how much value it adds to their life. And we know that to be a fact, right? So, whether you are going to a job interview or your dream role, applying for promotion, or promoting your work or your business, you know, take a really good look at where you can add more value to the experience that you provide. And you know, ask yourself how can I give more? It may sound counterintuitive to all the things that we just discussed, but I promise the more you add someone else’s experience the more you will receive.

And then, you want to invest in your image. You know there’s nothing superficial about, you know, wanting to look your best and presenting yourself as you wish to be received. You know, when I look good, I feel good and I know I can deliver. When I look and feel a certain type of way, right, it goes – points all back to, you know, confidence and self-esteem, and you know all of that good stuff. But just be conscious of your image and the way you put yourself out there.

And then, you want to connect, connect, and connect some more. You can never connect enough. You can never network enough. I mean, it’s so important to build the right relationship both personally and professionally when it comes to promoting yourself. You know, people who know you are much more likely to do business with you, are much more likely to refer you and help you out when you need it.

So, it looks like we have 10 more minutes. So, I want to kind of, I want to close by sort of recapping. You know, personal branding is no longer optional for a job search or starting a business because it really helps you differentiate your unique values that you offer, whether it’s your target employer, over and above your competition. So, building your personal brand online is similar to building a career. You want to work on it slowly and focus on doing it right. Unlike people, the internet doesn’t forget. So, it’s important to set out within your comfort level. You want to stay consistent, you know focus on your long-term goals and build something you enjoy that is sustainable.

So, here on your screen there’s a review that someone left on my Facebook page. I’ve never met this woman before she’s actually never shopped in my store, but because of the impression that I left on other people, she felt compelled to leave this review, these kind words on our page.

So, I will leave you guys with one of my very favorite quotes by Jay Danzie that says your smile is your logo, your personality is your business card, how you leave others feeling after an experience with you becomes your trademark. So, I will end there, you guys. I appreciate you.

I’m going to go back through and see if I have any questions. What, Jamie says, what social media platforms are a must? LinkedIn is a must. I think it’s a must. If you’re
trying to network with people, I actually find Twitter is a great platform for that as well.

Let me scroll up and see if I ... how important is yourself on social media? It's very important, because if you think about it that's likely the first place employers go, right? To kind of get a closer look at the person who's applying for an application -- who is applying for a job -- so I would say social media, your social media presence is very important.

Checking for more questions. I don't see any more. Alright guys, well I'm going to – I have a screen here if you guys want to connect with me. How do I network with people I don't know on Twitter? Well, you want to start to build a relationship. So, for example, in my field I have to constantly keep relationships with, like reporters. So, I not only follow them on Twitter, but I'll share their content, I'll engage with their content. So, that's an easy way for you to kind of, start getting to know people, right? You want to make sure you're building a relationship first before you go in and ask them for something.

Is it negative if you don’t have a strong media presence, LaTonya asks. It depends on what your profession is. I don’t wouldn’t say that it's negative because you know there’s always room for improvement for everyone, so if you don’t feel like you have a strong media presence, you can start today.

How do I get more resources about marketing? Depends on what type of marketing you’re looking for, but there’s some really great, there's some really great resources. I’m sure you can find some business resources through Military OneSource. And I’m sure the great folks over there can direct you to some really great programs that can help you get that information.

How can you connect with me? You guys can find me on Twitter at beingkeshacole. You can find me on Instagram at beingkeshacole, and you can also find me on LinkedIn under Lakesha Cole. And here’s my email address, hello@lakeshacole.com. See how I have my first and last name.com? If you want to check out my website, I have all of my work and publishing, and everything is listed there, so if anyone wants to know more about me that’s exactly where I send them instead of sending them to my social media page.

Kiki asked if I coach others. Occasionally I do. But when I open more spots up for coaching, it will be posted on lakeshacole.com.

How do I go about owning my domain name? And, so I'm a little biased, I purchased my domain name from GoDaddy.com, former CEO is a retired marine and then it also allows me to donate from one of my favorite little charities with my purchase. So, that’s typically where I buy my domain, at GoDaddy.

What are my thoughts on advertising your experience and education after an extended time of being a stay-at-home mom? You take those skills from being a stay-at-home mom and you translate them into day-to-day work skills. That is not a
setback at all. There are things that we do as moms in our households that will make us great assets to any and every company.

You’re asking for the title of the book. Let me go back and find it. It is, I should have had it right on my desk but I don’t. How about this? I can’t find it right now, but I’ll tweet the name of the book on my Twitter page, how about that?

Kaitlyn, yes, you can talk to me about freelance writing for Military Magazine, the editor over there is one of my dear friends, she’s fantastic to work with, she hires tons of military spouses to write content for them and I’ll be more than happy to share her information with you.

Looks like I have three more minutes guys, so I can I can answer some more questions. Oh, let me find, you don’t have Twitter? Let me see if I can find that book title. It’s called Promote Yourself: The New Rules for Career Success by Dan Schawbel. And I’ll type it right here in the chat box.

Mininia: So, while, Lakesha, while you are typing, yeah, I just want to say that it is just wonderful to see so many comments, so much engagement, and also how the conversation has just helped and impacted so many today.

Before we leave, I just want to ask, what is your one word of advice for military spouses that, you know have taken everything that you said here today, that are going to take it and move forward with it, so what is the one thing when we leave the session today that I think we can focus?

Lakesha: Yeah so I will have to quote my dear friend Crystle Spell, and she always tells me to launch it broken, fix it live. And what we mean by that is it is, you’re never going to have that perfect moment, or that perfect opportunity, or the perfect time. Your social media pages are never going to be perfect, your website is never going to be perfect, but do not let that stop you from moving forward. We’ve just got to jump and do it.

Mininia: Thank you so much. That is so applicable to, I think everyone, we can all use that word, those words of advice. So, thank you so much Lakesha, Ms. Cole for joining us today for this session.

And, so everyone who is interested in downloading the handouts from this session and that is including the presentation slides and our SECO program flyer that discusses the resources and services available to military spouses, please highlight the document and click the Download Files button. The items will download to your computer in a compressed file and if you are connecting from a mobile device and are unable to download the file successfully you may enter your email address into the trouble.