Day 2 Session 3: Ten Employer Questions

Mininia Hawkins: Military Spouse Symposium. My name is Mininia Hawkins and I am with the Department of Defense Military Community Support Programs office. Our speakers today are Kristina Santos, a career coach with the Spouse Education and Career Opportunities program, and Mrs. Stevie Dahl with our MSEP partner, The ActOne Group.

We will first hear from Ms. Santos, who will discuss the process of crafting a compelling resume that effectively answers employer questions, tells your professional story and convinces prospective employers you will add value to their organization.

Mrs. Dahl is going to provide top tips and expert advice on what employers look for in your resume. Welcome, Ms. Santos and Mrs. Dahl.

Kristina Santos: Thank you, Mininia, and welcome everyone to the second day of the 2020 Virtual Military Spouse Symposium. This is one of my favorite events of the year as we prepare to kick off Military Spouse Appreciation month in May. My name is Kristina and I am a SECO career coach. I am also a military spouse and I'm grateful that you are here with us.

This session is all about crafting the best version of you into a resume. And while Stevie and I know there is no one-size-fits-all resume, there are proven techniques and strategies that can increase the chances of you being discovered by a potential employer. I will be kicking off this session by discussing the purpose of your resume, 10 employer questions your resume should answer, and SECO services resources and tools to help you craft a compelling resume. We will then hear from Mrs. Stevie Dahl, who will be providing us with valuable resume insights from the employer's perspective. We are honored to have Stevie joining us from ActOne Group. We will finish today's webinar with a question-and-answer session. And we do have a team that is working with us today, so feel free to ask questions throughout the presentation.

To begin, I want to bring back the poll questions many of you answered when you were entering into the classroom. We are going to review them in just a moment, so if you did not get a chance to respond please take a second to do so now. The first question reads, "Why are you attending today's webinar?" OK, and it looks like we have quite a few responses already. Most of you joining us today have a resume that

you either want to enhance and improve that your current resume looks like, for a majority of you. Some of you have a resume but it doesn't seem to be quite working. And we do have some that are creating your resume for the very first time.

So, welcome everyone. We are excited to provide you with resources and strategies today. The second question reads, “How many of you are new to the SECO program and hearing about our services for the first time today?” And we do have a little bit of a variety here. For most of you it's your very first time using SECO services, so welcome. We are so happy that you're here. If you've used other SECO services before, welcome back. Especially if you've been joining us for other sessions of the symposium. We're glad that you're joining us today. We're so excited as we finish up the symposium with the second great day today, so let's go ahead and get started with discussing the purpose of your resume.

Any time you are working on something that requires time, energy and effort, it is most likely a process that requires you to make many different decisions along the way. And developing your resume is also a process. So focusing on the purpose will help you gain clarity and confidence in the decision-making as you're building and editing your resume.

So, the number one goal of your resume is to obtain an interview, and you can accomplish this by doing three things. Number one, providing targeted, quantifiable information. What does the employer need to know in order to call you for an interview? Number two, demonstrate a compelling powerful and professional story. What does the employer want to know? This is your chance to document your value and worth. And finally, what does the employer still want to know about you after reviewing your resume? Your resume is a marketing tool to entice the employer to want to know more and schedule you for an interview.

So now that we've reminded ourselves of our resume's main purpose, how does an employer view your resume? Where do their eyes go first? What questions are they trying to answer? And what are the answers they are looking for?

Here we have a list of 10 employer questions your resume should answer. Stevie and I are going to analyze and answer each of these questions today.

So, let's start with the first question: How quickly and easily can I answer my questions? This is the hiring manager's first question because your resume's format and appearance are your first impression. This question is also subsequently asked throughout an employer's review of your resume. If your appearance and formatting make something difficult to understand, or if your errors or personal information make it look unprofessional, the hiring manager may stop reviewing your resume even before they get to know the real you. So we want to build a resume that is consistent, clean and concise. SECO career coaches can assist you with resume-formatting techniques. For example, we recommend keeping your resume one to two pages in length. But federal resumes and CVs may be longer. The key is to provide relevant information. Stevie is going to provide additional resume

strategies for optimizing your resume for the applicant tracking system when you are submitting your resume online, as well as best practices for spelling, punctuation and grammar, and what not to include on your resume.

And that leads us to the second employer question your resume should answer which is, who are you? Here they're looking for your contact information. You want to be sure that you include your name, your first and last name, as well as your phone number. We recommend using a phone number that connects directly to you, so be mindful of your voicemail etiquette. Also, provide an email address. You want this address to be professional in appearance and spelling. For your address, you have the option of including your full address or just your city and state. You also have the option of including your LinkedIn url. Make sure your contact information is easy to find by placing it on the top of your resume. This is where the hiring manager's eyes will go first.

After the hiring manager finds out who you are, they want to know your story. So, is there a way to give them a quick snapshot of who you are, what you do and the value you offer? The answer is yes. The career profile or summary of qualifications section at the top of your resume gives you an opportunity to answer this question by developing one to two paragraphs of your aggregated experience over time. Your profile helps answer who are you, what do you do, what have you done and what value do you offer in your own words. This section should be used to highlight your most relevant accomplishments and skills as they relate to the job posting. The goal is to attract them to keep reading the rest of your resume. This is extremely useful, especially if you're, if you have certain accomplishments that you want to bring to the forefront that maybe happened several years ago.

The fourth question most employers are asking as they begin to review your resume are what are your skills? Your skills should be woven throughout your resume, but try to showcase your skills in order of importance and relevance. Match key skills or keywords in your resume to those core competencies that you see in the job posting. Depending on the job posting, this could include hard skills such as Microsoft Word, Excel, typing, mechanical ability, and equipment operating skills. But it could also include soft skills, so you might want to include or demonstrate soft skills such as communication, critical-thinking skills, relationship building, teamwork and leadership.

Now, before diving deep into analyzing your complete education and experience history, the fifth question many employers want to know is are you qualified? This will look different for each of you depending on the position to which you are applying. Be sure to ask yourself, does the position require a specific certification, license, degree or specific amount or level of experience? No matter what the job's education, training and experience requirements or preferences are, make those qualifications easy to find. There should be no doubt that you are eligible to apply for the position. Some different ways that you can showcase those qualifications are using the career profile or summary section of your resume. You can also include it in your education and experience section. Also, you can highlight your qualifications

in your cover letter, that if they do review the cover letter first, they will know right away that you meet those minimum qualifications. The goal again is to tailor your resume format in each section to the job posting so that you are leaving no doubt.

Most employers also want to look at your education and training. When you build the education section of your resume, be sure each education or training includes the full name of the institution or organization, the city and state in which they are located, and the official name of the degree or certificate you received. You may choose to include your graduation date, especially if it is recent and within the last five years. If you have not yet completed your program, you may choose to include the estimated completion date. And depending on your education and training backgrounds, there may be other relevant education-related content, such as your GPA, the number of credit hours you have completed, especially if you have not yet graduated. Maybe scholarships or special projects that you want to include. List your education in reverse chronological order, meaning start with the most recent education or training and then work backwards.

Now, in addition to the education and training, all employers want to know about your experience. Now, this usually consists of several questions. Where are you now? Meaning, where are you currently working? And where have you been? Meaning, where have you worked previously? In addition to where, they also want to know additional details about each experience. What did you do there and how well did you do it? To help you with answering these questions on your resume, we will review how to gather and record your career accomplishments so you can include results, data and numbers.

When you are creating your experience section, each experience should include the organization name and organization location, including their city and state, your start and end dates, your job title and relevant skills, abilities, accomplishments and results written in bullet point format or short paragraph. List your experiences on your resume in reverse chronological order starting with your most recent experience. And once you format your experiences, how do you craft your relevant content that demonstrates and answers what you did and how well did you do it? When an employer is looking for what you did, they want to know your skills and abilities. The best way to answer this question is to utilize action words and verbs to describe your duties and responsibilities on the job.

In addition to those action words and your skills and abilities, employers want to know how well you completed those duties and responsibilities. To answer this question, you want to include your results and accomplishments when you are able to. Stevie will provide some great examples of how to document your accomplishments using numbers and data. But think about a time that you changed or improved something, and it was because you were working on it. Did you generate revenue or reduce cost? Did you increase sales or increase market awareness or customer satisfaction? Did you exceed deadlines? We know it is difficult sometimes to include numbers, percentages and results in your resume and that is OK. But the truth is you are valuable and you are making an impact wherever

you go. How many customers do you help each day? How many calls do you answer? Did you pioneer a project for your company? Or did you mentor or train new hires?

I do have another quick polling question for you. If you do have a resume, I know many of you do, do you think that it accurately reflects your value? Thank you so much. We have many responses coming in and it is a little bit of a variety in responses. Many of you joining today do feel that your resume does accurately reflect your value. There are some of you today that say no, your resume does not accurately reflect your value, and there's some joining that are a little bit unsure. This is definitely one of the most challenging parts of crafting a compelling resume. But you are valuable, and you are writing your story one day at a time. So, developing a way to actually keep track of what you do and how well you do it can make a huge difference when it comes to building your resume content. Start by brainstorming your projects, challenges, maybe leadership roles, or statistics and results. You can also record your personal and professional development as well as your company's or your team's development. This is not only excellent content for your resume to showcase your worth, it is also vital information to be able to discuss and share during the interview, performance review or even a promotion opportunity.

Once an employer has reviewed your resume and they know your information, they know that you're qualified, they also want to know what makes you stand out among all the other qualified applicants for the position. Utilizing additional sections on your resume may help demonstrate your unique value as a candidate. Additional content might include your volunteer work, community service, language skills, computer and technical skills, publications and affiliations, or even other leadership roles. You may be able to include one or more additional sections. Just be sure it is relevant to the position to which you are applying since you are using up valuable resume real estate.

Now, question number nine I like to kind of call the elephant-in-the-room question. This is when an employer is going to ask can you provide further explanation. So, to dive deeper into this question, we want to discuss how can you own your story and address special situations that might appear on your resume, such as employment gaps, career changes, recent graduation or maybe a lack of experience or frequent moves. Sometimes we may have more than one of the ones that we see here, especially as a military spouse. But we're going to share you how you can, with you how you can increase your value by gaining skills, abilities and experiences right away. With a little planning, perseverance and positivity we can overcome these situations and really thrive in our job search. So, I always, always recommend remaining honest. An employer may notice if it looks like you are trying to hide something on your resume. So, if you're returning to the workforce after caring for a family member, or if you're in the middle of a career change, or you have experienced frequent moves it is OK and can be beneficial to briefly, unapologetically acknowledge the situation in your cover letter. This respectfully

addresses that situation, the elephant in the room, right away, so then you can move on to demonstrate your worth.

Focus on your transferable skills. How has your past prepared you for your future? By focusing on your transferable skills and tailoring your resume, cover letter and application package to the job posting, you are helping the potential employer see you as part of a team and as an opportunity they do not want to miss. Most of these situations that appear on your resume are not deal breakers, but an employer may see them as an opportunity for further explanation. So, this means that that elephant in the room or that special situation will also be with you during an interview. So, prepare for these questions. Preparation will not give your special situation more power, it's going to give you power over owning your story.

This webinar is geared towards crafting a compelling resume, but the SECO program is here to help you with all aspects of your job-search journey. We offer video mock interviews where you can practice your responses with a SECO career coach. This can help you rehearse your responses to questions, especially those you know may come up. We all have a past, we all have circumstances that we wish were a little bit different, but your ability to own your story is brave, courageous and will inspire you to feel confident and positive about what the future will bring.

Another way to address a special situation on your resume is to get ahead of your resume. You can do this through networking, using resources like LinkedIn. The National Military Family Association, your local military installation and hiring fairs are all ways for you to build meaningful connections and relationships. Networking is a long-term investment but it is an excellent strategy when it comes to searching for a job, no matter how strong your resume is.

And finally, keep working hard to increase your value by gaining skills, abilities and achievements. If you're in the middle of an employment gap or preparing for a PCS move, what can you do right now? The MySECO portal holds a variety of resources for military spouses to help you make progress in your career goals in the midst of a very demanding military life. From the MySECO portal you can discover resources to help you find volunteer opportunities, resources for owning a business, and free courses for professional development. You can also discover a variety of networking opportunities, such as the Military Spouse Ambassador Network and the LinkedIn Premium upgrade opportunity, which is currently available to all military spouses. It is never too late and never too early to increase your value. You are worth the investment.

And the tenth and final employer question your resume should answer is, how does your resume relate to you, the candidate's brand? After all, your resume is only one of the many opportunities you have to tell your story. What other elements make up your brand? Have you explored your brand lately? How can you perfect and maintain your brand so it can start to work for you? Technology is constantly transforming your brand. If you are on social media websites such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, each of these make up pieces of your brand. Maybe

you created a blog or have a personal or professional website? Most of us have at least a few items on this list that make up our brand. So, take a moment to think about your brand and ask yourself who is driving your brand. Are you embracing the opportunity to promote the best you? Taking time to reflect and explore your brand is imperative when you are crafting your resume and searching for jobs. As you are exploring your brand, you want to strive for the best version of yourself. You can do this by identifying your goals and understanding your audience. This allows you to target the right skill sets and focus your energy. Is your brand current and consistent with your goals, as well as across different platforms? Employers are able to connect with other aspects of your brand quickly and easily these days. What will they find?

Now, as we recap the 10 employer questions your resume should answer, we know crafting a clear, concise, consistent and compelling resume takes time. The SECO program is here to assist military spouses throughout this process. The MySECO portal is a robust website with tools and resources available to military spouses to assist them with all areas of their education and career goals. Military spouses are able to select the employment readiness career life cycle stage to access resources such as the MySECO resume builder and the MySECO resume toolkit. Here you can find articles, sample resumes and more. Military spouses can also take advantage of our SECO career coaching services by calling the SECO service center at 800-342-9647, or by using our live chat feature on the MySECO portal.

Through career coaching over the phone, military spouses can discover career and personality assessments, allowing them to explore jobs and work environments that are the best fit. We can also assist you with researching professional development and lifelong learning opportunities as well as reviewing resumes, both federal and private-sector resumes. We can also schedule video mock interviews as we mentioned earlier, and connect military spouses to networking opportunities.

The truth is your career, it makes up all the roles you play in a lifetime and we understand that military spouse is often the role that has to take top priority. So we are here to provide you with resources, guidance and support every step of the way. We also understand that no two careers look exactly alike and sometimes they don't feel like they're going in a straight line. our SECO career coaching packages give military spouses an opportunity to walk hand-in-hand with a SECO career coach throughout their career journey. We offer industry-specific coaching packages that you see here, as well as a variety of transition coaching packages. And selecting a coaching package, it is just the beginning. SECO career coaching packages that we see here, they allow you to work continuously with your SECO career coach as often as you'd like. This way we can get to know your story, your fears and challenges, but also your unique strengths and skills. And each consultation is tailored to you and your goals. Our goal is to help you reach yours and to help you gain confidence, hope and inspiration that the best is yet to come.

So, now that we have discussed the purpose of your resume, 10 employer questions your resume should answer and SECO services that can help you take your career to

the next level, I'm excited to be turning over the session to Stevie from ActOne Group, who will be providing us with insight into the employer's perspective on your resume. ActOne Group isn't just any employer. As Mininia mentioned, ActOne group is a partner of the Military Spouse Employment Partnership. There are currently over 440 MSEP partners who have joined because they are committed to hiring, recruiting, retaining and promoting military spouses. You can connect to the MSEP job search tool and view a list of all of the MSEP partners on the MySECO portal. So, thank you so much for being here, Stevie.

Stevie Dahl: Thank you so much. I appreciate it very much, Kristina. That was a lot of information, and I'm on the Pacific time zone, so it's early. So, let me tell you a little bit about myself and the company. The ActOne Group is actually an international staffing company. We have several divisions. And that was one of the key points when our CEO Janice Bryant Howroyd decided to join the MSEP program. It was turned over to me. I am the director of security and specialty programs for the ActOne Group. Some of our divisions that we have, you may have heard of is AppleOne Employment, All's Well is our staffing division. We also have a group called AllSTEM, and AllSTEM of course focus on the STEM program, science, technology, engineering, mathematics.

So, let's talk about this from a different perspective. You may be asking yourself, hey what does this director of security have to do with this program? I am the daughter of a 21-year Navy veteran and military spouse. My parents, actually their 50th wedding anniversary is in October, so I watched my mother look for work even though she had skills being a military spouse. So the program got very personal to me, and when I was requested to do this presentation for you guys I got excited. So, let's go through some of the information I have to share and then we'll leave time at the end for questions you guys may have if they haven't been covered or you have them for us, OK?

So first up, let's talk about the resume. The resume is you. OK, most people consider resumes kind of intimidating when they're creating it. They want to show everything in there. They want to focus on where they are and how they're going, and they're really trying to hard-sell themselves. First thing outside the gate, just be you. You are amazing. You are valuable. You have worth. You have skills and talents to share. Take a deep breath and step back.

Could you have more than one resume, depending on the position? Yes, you could if that works for you. I caution having too many different versions of resumes because you may lose the 'you' part of that. OK? But, yes, if you want to highlight a resume for a specific position, you can. If you just want to have your overall resume just to show the math skills and everything that you have available, then please go ahead and do that.

Alright, professional tone. I have to point this out. Understand, companies will go online and they will actually see your social media feed – what you're doing, where you're at. So, make sure on your resume the information you're sharing is showing

you in the professional manner. We have seen resumes come in from people where their email address is quite frankly offensive. And they missed an opportunity with a client because that email address turned that client off. So, you want to make sure your resume is professional, the areas that you're highlighting, contact, etc., are professional as well.

Make sure we're sticking to the facts with it, OK? You want to highlight areas and specific certifications and goals or accomplishments, absolutely. But let's keep it in that professional manner. That's what they're looking for, for it. And please note, volunteer work still counts as professional, OK? A lot of people don't think it does. It does. You are working, you are growing with this, so make sure you give yourself credit for what you've done.

Alright. You want to create your resume with hiring managers in mind. You want to make sure that if you are tailoring the resume for a specific position. That you know it fits in with that job to where you're going to, and where you're setting up with. You want to make sure that it reads right. So, a big recommendation that we have is go ahead and write your resume and then step away don't look at it for a bit. Take some time, come back reread it, hey does this read right? Does this represent me the right way? Am I gonna be good with this? Oh, does it sound good? These are the things you want to do, and sometimes we have to actually remove ourselves from the situation, step away from the resume and come back to reread it. And then we can go, oh. Oh, wait a minute, that I thought sounded good and it doesn't sound as good as I thought it did. That doesn't mean you can't write a resume. That doesn't mean you don't know what you're doing. This is just how we do. When you stare at the same item for a long time, you can get lost in it. So, step away and come back and get that new perspective on it to help you read it.

Ok? Big, big good key point. Keywords. A lot of clients and customers are moving to situations now where they are using what's called an applicant tracking system. And what it does is, it just goes through your resume. It's a computer system. It finds the keywords and it says either, yes they should be considered for the position, no they don't have what they need. Yikes, so you want to make sure you do have those keywords in there on your resume to make it what they call ATS-friendly so that you're not getting missed out on that opportunity that you're seeking.

OK. Alright, so here's a big thing. I've seen people list a lot of questions regarding the size of their resume. You have skills, you have experience and you have accomplishments, and those are important and those are valid and you want to include them. But at the same token, realize you don't want to write a 40-page novel on your experience, your accomplishments and your achievements. We want to make sure that we go ahead and we keep our resumes focused on quality more so than quantity. It does not guarantee if you have a bigger resume that you were going to get that position.

There is, as Kristina mentioned, there's no miracle font, I can tell you, format of the resume, I can tell you that's going to guarantee every position you submit for you're

going to get an interview and you're going to get the job. It just doesn't work that way, unfortunately, it doesn't. But, you still can do a clean and concise resume full of quality of what you have to offer to them and how to submit that into the system.

If you are unsure, if you are doing your resume and you are trying to focus on you know, appropriate verbiage of how you use. It's quite simple, you can go to SECO, you can Google. There's a lot of options of where you can go for it, because maybe you have a three-sentence paragraph that is taking up a lot of space on something you did, but if you check it out you might be able to get that into one sentence. Still show the value of what you did, still show the power of what your experience is in that resume.

And I will tell you right now, if you do not have a lot of job experience and you're thinking, oh no, I'm in trouble, you are not. You have value, you have skills, we just need to get them listed correctly. So, again on this with brevity, you want to make sure that quality is in there and you want to make sure that you are focused on the key points.

Here's a big one, and I'm going to take a minute to talk about this one. Please, please, please, please, I'm on my knees. You can't see me, but please do not mention money. Your resume is not the place to discuss the salary, OK? Do not mention where what you were paid in the past. Do not mention what you hope to make in the future. You do not want to open that discussion just yet. And here are a few examples of why you don't want to go kind of crazy with the discussion on money. What if you bring up money and you come in with less than what they were gonna offer? OK, you might have just stopped yourself from being able to make more on it. What if you come in with money and that just pushes them off a little bit because they're a little sensitive? So, you want to make sure when you were doing this resume, and again this is from clients we work with for people who have pursued the opportunities out there, a big, big turn off, for lack of a better word, for them. A big no-no on the resume is the discussion of money out the gate. That's how it works now. It used to be years ago you did include that. We have gotten into a state and especially now in the unusual times with everything going on with COVID-19 and everything. Everybody is being very sensitive to subjects or areas that may make a person uncomfortable. And so that's why they try to avoid some areas. Money became a thing that became very uncomfortable for people. Say somebody had listed their previous salary and it was low, you know compared to where they're going now, then it hurt them. They just took the position to pay the bills. That doesn't mean they're not worth the money that the position should pay them. So, those are kind of some of the areas in the public world, in that public arena that we run into.

I do know in the federal arena the world's a little different. Again, I'm coming at you from that public side to give you an idea, so.

Consistency and clarity. Again we want to make sure your resume is easy to read. You want to make sure the way the work history reads it makes sense. If there are gaps in employment, there are ways to work that on your resume so that it does

show that you did have that gap, but it doesn't take it as a hit against your skills or ability, the way life happens.

So, there are little things that come in and make an impact and where you go, and so I recommend if you have the opportunity to reach out to SECO, get their opinion, send them your resume, say, hey, here's what I have.

Some people got a little font crazy and a little resume crazy. So we had, if you were a candidate and you were pursuing say a graphic design or marketing, they would try to show that skill on the way they designed their resume. But if you're going in just to do a customer service manager position, it's not going to necessarily have to show that kind of skill. So you want to make sure that you are fitting and meeting where you need to be that your resume is aligned there and that it's got consistency with it and that it is clear to follow and to read. If they get uncomfortable, like if it looks like you have a misstep of a paragraph or a layout of it, it's gonna look like you don't actually grammatically understand what's going on. You do. You've got this. Please double-check, triple-check, quadruple-check, because that's what we all have to do. I have to do it, too, believe me, I know, I know.

A big key point, I need you to stick to the facts. You can hear a fake smile through the phone just as much as you can hear a real genuine one. You can tell if the resume is embellished just as much as you can tell if it's an honest one. And if you don't think they can tell and you get the job, they'll be able to tell then. You have skills, you have abilities, you can do a great job. So, stick to the facts, be honest about who you are, don't worry about trying to make it look better.

If you are discussing accomplishments that you have done, include numbers and data to show what you did on there. We had a person whose resume was, they actually helped, they were in sales, and they had the percentage they increased the profit for their previous company based on their sales. That's an accomplishment. That's something to be listed on there. This is a key point. You have value there and if you're unsure, ask somebody, OK? Just ask them.

There is a difference between a keyword and a buzzword, OK? So, we want to make sure we're using keywords and not just buzzwords, or let alone, generic terms thinking that we're filling in areas but it doesn't help flow the resume for you. It doesn't help them see the value that you are. Again, the resume is what gets you in that door so they can meet you, and who you are is all they need to see. That's how you're going to get the job. You want that personality match, not just for you but also with the client, so not just them liking you, you’ve got to like them and want to work for them, too, OK? So, let's keep it that way.

Another big one. Please use spellcheck. There are, most every program you use has a spellcheck and grammar option. There are also free ones online that you can Google grammar correcting to have them reread it and just make sure. You don't want to be going in for a job that you know how to do that job ,that you have the skills and the capability to do it, but you didn't run spellcheck on your resume, and that's what

stopped you from getting the interview, OK? You guys just reread it yourself, have someone else you trust do it, run the spellcheck, run the grammar, make sure before you send this out that you have, that I say triple- quadruple-check, because that's what I do on that. And understand, if they're using the ATS system, it's just scanning, OK? It's just going to scan through. If the word's misspelled, it's not going to catch what word that's supposed to be. So, you want to make sure you have that set up right, especially with those keywords on there, OK?

I'm winding down to where we're going to have a spot where we can do questions for you guys to where we can lead in. I just wanted to take a moment to let you guys know, don't let the resume intimidate you. I understand it's hard sometimes to write about yourself, or to try to put yourself in someone else's shoes reading your resume, because you want to talk about what you've done and what you've accomplished, with the same token you don't want to do something that's going to hinder your opportunity for a job. Don't let that throw you off. Don't let, oh, I'm a military spouse, they're not going to give me an option. Oh, I'm a veteran, they're not going to give me an option throw you off. Not only does my company staff and recruit and send out candidates who are military spouses veterans, active duty transitioning out, we also have several that work for us. Several of my front-desk people in my branches end up being military spouses because they handle so well meeting new people and interacting with them and it's such a great opportunity for them.

So, you never know what you're capable of or what you could do until you step away, take a breath and give yourself a shot. One of my CEO Janice Bryant Howroyd's best quotes, quite simply, is you have everything you need to be everything you want to be. So, that is all my sassy talking for you guys. If there are some questions you guys would like to ask, I know Kristina and I would be happy to answer them.

Before I'm out, I would like to say thank you very much to MSEP and SECO for allowing me to be a part of this and getting a chance to chat with you guys because this has been awesome.

So Kristina, questions, here we go. OK rapid-fire questions going on in the general chat. I see them happening quite a bit.

Kristina: Yes, there are rapid questions going on, Stevie. And looks like, let's see can information on your resume also be in your elevator speech or should it be different?

Stevie: Oh the old elevator speech, yeah I remember those. There is nothing wrong with having similar information. You do not want to have a conversation with someone and have it completely conflict with what your resume says. So it is OK to have some of that mimic, absolutely.

Mininia: OK, great. So, we have a few stay-at-home moms that are getting ready to head back into the workforce. How do you address them, how do you, or what is

your recommendation for getting a resume ready? What should they put on the resume? What type of information, and what should they say?

Stevie: OK, so you're going to want to, if you were a stay-at-home mom and it has been a while since you worked, that doesn't mean you're previous work experience

Mininia: Sorry, and dads. Moms and dads. Thank you, Jared.

Stevie: OK, if you if you are a stay-at-home person, and you want to make sure your previous work history before you ended up staying at home can still be valid for you, so you want to make sure that's included. If you had any continuing education or volunteering work, the volunteering is always a great thing to add in there. But you want to go ahead and talk with someone. We have people come into our branches all the time and we'll go over the resume with them and help them figure out what's going to look and what's going to show right on it.

Some of the other keys can be, if you have great computer knowledge that's an awesome thing to have in there if you're going in for a position where you need to work on the computer. If you have helped out with certain areas, again, it's not always volunteering, you could just be working with a group that you know, you sold Tupperware. Technically that is the source of a job, so you were in sales so there were certain things you had to do.

So, I think that you need to make sure to partner with someone. Call out to SECO, reach out to them. Say, here's the last time I was employed. Here's if I've done any education. Here's if I've done any volunteer work. Help me to put this in there. You're not devalued, you're not of less worth because you chose to stay at home. And my mother did it and went back out there. Anyone can do it. I believe in you.

Mininia: OK, thank you, Stevie. Kristina, should you show your volunteer work as a separate section or in the chronological order of the resume?

Kristina: Yes, Mininia, that's a great question. So, a lot of times when, especially when we are able to meet with a military spouse during a consultation, we'll get to know a little bit more about what that volunteer work consisted of. And also what the spouse's career goals are. So, if the volunteer work is directly related to the job that the spouse is going to be applying for, we will most likely include it in their experience section. We will highlight that it was a volunteer position, but we could include it right with the experience section if it is relevant. If it isn't not necessarily exactly related or relevant to the job posting, but you have room on your resume to include your volunteer experience, it's still great to include it because it does speak volumes about who you are, that you are building relationships, and part of a team and part of a community, and some of those other transferable skills that you may be able to highlight.

Mininia: OK, thank you very much. So, how long is too long for a cover lever?

Kristinia: Yeah, so usually, Stevie could speak to this as well, too, but usually we do, as one of Stevie's slides said, that brevity matters. So, we usually try to focus on maybe two to three paragraphs. Kind of short introduction of yourself and what the job posting is that you're applying for, and really tailoring that cover letter to the job. So, highlighting some of those key accomplishments or skills that are directly related to the job and the overall company that you're looking to work for, and just that it would be an honor to join their team, and including your contact information, just to kind of do a short introduction. It's a great opportunity to really, really introduce yourself in your own words that puts you in a light that would make you a great match for that position.

Mininia: OK, great. So, Stevie, when you mentioned earlier in your presentation about not putting like salary information on your resume, some of the spouses in the group mentioned that some companies ask what is your desired salary range. So, how should they go about answering that question?

Stevie: It's a really, really great question. So, one of the keys you want to do is, you want to go back and you always want to research the job description that you're applying for, because all kinds of interesting little keywords and information including salary range is in there. You also can search online. There's a lot of great companies that allow you to search, you can just Google the position title salary range and it will show you on average, and you can even break down by state and location what the average salary is for it. So, that way when you're going in there to respond to them, you're not putting yourself in a range that is either way out of where they're considering going, or puts you in hurt because it doesn't pay you enough. That way you can find that exact area that's going to be comfortable for you, and as well as be considered by the company as a valid option.

Mininia: OK, thank you very much. There was a question earlier. So, shall I list certificates that are not relevant to the job you're applying for?

Stevie: Here's the breakdown of the certificates of your accomplishments. You want them to show your strengths, your skills and ability. If this is a tacky representation, my apology, but you know the fact that you won the spelling bee in the fourth grade is not going to help you with a managerial position now. So, it depends on the position that you're going for. If that certificate technically does not apply to that specific position, no you don't have to list it. But if in a way there are skills from that certificate that could be transferred into that other position, then it may be beneficial to list it. So, I think you need to look on that on a case-by-case situation, because again if you're doing a very specific resume per position, each resume might be slightly different. If you're just doing an overall one that you're going to use no matter where you apply, then it's probably going to be on every one.

Mininia: OK, thank you very much. Ad we are getting ready to wrap up the session. I do want to ask both Stevie and Kristina, if there's one piece of advice that you can offer the military spouses that are in this session, and also I see a lot of service providers that are in this session, about resumes, what would it be? Like what

stands out to you? Or, maybe what questions do you receive the most? Kristina, you can go first.

Kristina: OK, yeah, so probably something that stands out to me, when you are crafting a resume is to do a lot of the research up front. So, it helps really to research yourself, which is kind of hard for some of us you know, especially a lot of military spouses that I work with are very humble, and so a resume is really a chance to reflect on all the things that you've done, both in your community, both paid and unpaid work, your education and training. And trying to really write down the parts of yourself, the way that you do your work, so not necessarily that you just worked as a cashier, but that you have excellent active-listening and communication skills. So, just think about not only the job titles that you've had, but really what are you most proud of when it comes to putting your best foot forward in your experiences. And so researching yourself first and foremost, and then also researching the employer. As Stevie mentioned knowledge can be very powerful when you are trying to become a part of a team, and really fit into fit into the position that you're applying for. And, so that knowledge and that research can then help you tailor your resume so that it almost shows that you're, you know ready to start the job tomorrow, because they're going to start seeing you as a team member before, maybe hopefully before they even call you for an interview. So, just really focusing on that research ahead of time. And again the SECO program can definitely assist you with that, but I think that can make a huge difference when you comes to tackling your resume.

Stevie: Thank you, Kristina. And really quick people, clarity and consistency. That's the key to your resume.

Mininia: Wow. Wow. Well, thank you both for this all of the awesome information that you have provided, Kristina, you from a SECO career coach perspective, and Stevie as the all-knowing from a company perspective. So thank you so much for the presentation today. And for those in the classroom, to download the available chats or, I'm sorry, the available handouts, including the presentation slides and the SECO program flyer, please highlight the document and click the Download Files button. The items will download to your computer in a compressed file. If you are connecting from a mobile device and are unable to download the file successfully, you may enter your email into the Trouble with Downloads chat pod to receive the materials after the event. if you have trouble please let us know in the Need Technical Assistance chat pod. In the Web Link pod, you will find the two links. One is for the session survey and the other is where you can download your certificate of participation.

So, again this concludes our presentation today but please join us at 1 p.m. Eastern Time for Salary Negotiations 101. We don't want to miss out on that information. And again, thank you so much for joining us today and thank you to our presenters. See you soon.