[Eddy] Hello, everyone, and welcome to the first day of the 2018 Virtual Military Spouse Symposium, and the Build Your Brand track. My name is Eddy Mentzer, and I lead the Department of Defense's Spouse Education and Career Opportunities program, commonly referred to as SECO, the host for this week's symposium. We kicked off the symposium yesterday with our keynote provided by Shawn Martinbrough, the critically acclaimed artist behind the Black Panther comic and many other successful comics and graphic novels. If you did not get to hear from Shawn, head over to the SECO Facebook page to hear him talk about his career journey. It's awesome to see people joining us from around the world. I've already seen folks from the Pacific and Germany, as well as from across the United States. Please let us know where you are joining us from in the chat pod. One of the keys to any conference is networking and asking questions, so feel free to ask questions in the chat pod and share your experiences. As a military spouse myself, I know how important peer sharing can be in our community. Our first speakers are Bridget Stockdale and Joel Machak from Crosby Marketing. Both Bridget and Joel have had extensive careers in the strategy, branding and marketing field. Whether it was an exotic vacation or watching the crash test dummies on TV, Bridget and Joel have played a key role. Today they are going to discuss personal branding. They will talk about how to differentiate yourself and stand out from the crowd, and how you can extend your brand, making it more memorable and discoverable both online and offline. Welcome, Bridget and Joel.

[Bridget] Thank you, Eddy. Hello, and welcome to the Virtual Military Spouse Symposium, Brand U - Establishing a Personal Brand presentation. I'm Bridget Stockdale, director and senior strategist at Crosby Marketing Communications, here with my colleague Joel Machak. We're here to share with you some insights that will help you understand and establish your personal brand. We'll walk through the branding process that we typically go through with our clients and show you how we've applied that process to something that works on a personal level. It's an incredibly powerful and inspiring process, and we're really just excited to share it with you today.

[Joel] I'm Joel Machak, I'm the executive creative director here at Crosby. As Bridget said, we're bringing our experience of branding for organizations and companies. We've kind of distilled it down to how it will work to develop your personal brand, which is a little bit different than what happens for large organizations, but has many of the same characteristics. Today's agenda, I'll walk you through that. First, you already have a brand, we're gonna talk about that, and why today is the day for you to begin to take back your brand. Second, we're gonna talk about the big secret of branding. We'll tell you about our
personal brands to help light the fire and maybe get you thinking about yours. Then we're gonna talk about not faking it and the importance of authenticity in communication today. Then we're gonna get to the heart of it, and that is identifying your brand pillars and distilling your personal brand, as such, down to something that is simple and that you can hold in your head and use to communicate everywhere in your life. Then we're gonna talk about taking control of your brand, and more. We'll start with a little quote from a movie. "You don't understand. "I could have had class. "I could have been a contender. "I could have been somebody." Well, creating your personal brand is about being somebody. It's about projecting an image, a message, a narrative that's consistent, distinct and easy to understand, and above all, that is yours. It's a message that you own and control, instead of letting the world do it for you. If you haven't done one of these personal brand processes before, you may be surprised to know that, as far as developing a brand for yourself, the world is actually way ahead of you. Creating your personal brand also means creating and living your personal brand. We're gonna give you the tools to help you do that. They will be your brand essence, supported by your brand pillars. Your brand essence will be your positioning. It'll be how you frame yourself in the world. These are the two big things we're gonna help you sort out, mold and build on. It all starts by creating your brand platform. Now, platform is a word that's used in many different contexts. I wanna just straighten, get it clear, straighten out what we mean by a brand platform. In the social media space, you may have heard of social platforms. Those are like Facebook, Twitter or Snapchat. Each of those is a social media platform. Or in the publishing world, if you're publishing a novel or something like that, you have your publishing platform. Those are the people who you can guarantee will buy your novel. In branding, it's a very different thing. A brand platform is actually a structure to help you organize and simplify all of your communications. It's made up of your brand essence, supported by your brand pillars. We'll give you tools to help you understand your personal brand so you can begin to express it outwardly. Now this is your brand platform. This is the structure I'm talking about. You see pillars, in this case, four. We'll get into a little bit of why that number four is there. It holds up your brand essence, which is just a few words that will appear at the top. This structure will become your blueprint for everything you do. You'll also, as a little sidebar, you'll be able to use this sort of a structure or pillars of brand essence to sort of reverse engineer competition or another organization or company, or even another person you might be dealing with, who seems to have a very well developed brand. You can kind of reverse engineer and kind of fill it in and see what works for them and see if there's something you can learn from that.

[Bridget] What do we mean by a personal brand? Your personal brand is really, it's everything. It's the sum of your distilled message to the world, and in turn, how others perceive you, which really ultimately shapes your reputation. Very early on in my career, I had a boss who told me I needed to understand and develop my personal brand. It was really eye-opening for me because what he was talking about extended beyond my actual work deliverables and work performance into so much more than that. It was how I worked with others and how I presented myself around the office. As a young professional woman, I started to think about things like how do others feel about working with me? Do I instill trust in my colleagues and clients through the way that I present myself around the office. As a young professional woman, I started to think about things like how do others feel about working with me? Do I instill trust in my colleagues and clients through the way that I present myself around the office. As a young professional woman, I started to think about things like how do others feel about working with me? Do I instill trust in my colleagues and clients through the way that I present myself around the office. As a young professional woman, I started to think about things like how do others feel about working with me? Do I instill trust in my colleagues and clients through the way that I present myself around the office. As a young professional woman, I started to think about things like how do others feel about working with me? Do I instill trust in my colleagues and clients through the way that I present myself around the office. As a young professional woman, I started to think about things like how do others feel about working with me? Do I instill trust in my colleagues and clients through the way that I present myself around the office. As a young professional woman, I started to think about things like how do others feel about working with me? Do I instill trust in my colleagues and clients through the way that I present myself around the office. As a young professional woman, I started to think about things like how do others feel about working with me? Do I instill trust in my colleagues and clients through the way that I present myself around the office. As a young professional woman, I started to think about things like how do others feel about working with me?
You skipped one, so just go to the next slide. Reality check number one. Humans love nutshells. There's a little quote here on multitasking. "So give it to me quick." You might have heard that, or even said it yourself. Well, it turns out the average attention span in the year 2000 was down to 12 seconds, average human attention span. Today, it's down to about eight seconds. Studies have shown that the average office worker views email 30 times an hour. If you do the math, if your message takes more than two minutes, it'll likely be interrupted by a glance away to a little glass screen, and there is more and more pressure in all of our lives to multitask. I know that's particularly true of today's audience. Multitasking is actually the wrong word. Technically, it should be called task switching because our brain is not a multi-core process area. It's actually basically a single core processor. It's switching from one task to another. It has been proven that this task switching, or multitasking, actually slows down productivity by as much as 40%, and introduces new errors. The reality is your audience generally is dealing with a very short attention span and increased pressure to multitask. Your message needs to be clear and focused enough to wedge itself into that environment.

Can you be brand-less? Can it wait until later? This entire process may seem a little bit like overkill, and you might be asking yourself if you actually really need a personal brand. Maybe you think it doesn't apply to your line of work or think it's not really a priority, and it's something that can always be done later, or maybe you just want to ignore it all together because you think it's not really for you. All of these thoughts are totally understandable, but the honest truth is you already have a brand. It's already happening, and it does apply to everyone, and everyone is that kind of person. Everyone can benefit from this process, both personally and professionally. You're already putting vibes out there to people about who you are and how you operate and what's important to you, so that's why it's really important to grab ahold of it and really own it. Everything you do is a reflection of who you are. Every interaction or observation is like a tiny snapshot of you that gets placed in an imaginary photo album and forms the basis of how others perceive your identity. You are branded already, whether you like it or not. Everyone has a unique personal brand, whether they know it or not, but what we should all be striving for is a powerful, attractive and visible personal brand. Remember, people will start to see patterns in your behavior, and that becomes your personal brand.

Reality check number two. Human beings are incredibly good at discerning patterns. In fact, some believe it is the heart of human intelligence. We look up into the night sky, a random smattering of tiny white dots, and we can see animals or mythical gods or creatures of all sorts. During the day, random cloud shapes take on new identities, and we can see faces in many things. Many of us can identify songs from a few seconds of hearing it. This is pattern recognition. Creating your brand is about taking advantage of that ability in the human mind. The futurist Ray Kurzweil says our brains contain about 300 million pattern recognition circuits. In short, it is what our minds do. As a brand, you will begin to create the patterns that you want others to recognize and attribute to you. That, in a nutshell, is branding. The right thing to do is to have intention regarding your brand. You will create your own nutshell view, and you will create the patterns that others will recognize as belonging to you so that you become the one who controls it. Lesson number two. This is a big secret of personal branding, and that is that your brand platform is private. It is a personal brand. This is going to be confidential stuff. Your brand essence and pillars are your personal blueprint. They are not going to be your word-for-word message that you're going to say to the world. You will use them to guide your actions and inform your message. You won't say it out loud. You're gonna do and say things that express it. This is where the whole process of branding and communication becomes really creative. You will have the task of expressing
your brand in fresh and creative ways while staying true to the essence of your brand. With a personal brand, you will have guardrails for how to express who you are.

[Bridget] We have two quick examples. This is really the fun part. Joel and I are going to share our personal brand platforms with you. The reason we're breaking this rule and letting you see behind the curtain is because we want you to understand how big this is. You really have to reach on this stuff. We want you to be super aspirational. It's bold and it's brave. You will also see why you'll wanna keep your brand platform a secret, because you aren't going to tell people, you're going to express it. My brand essence is the determined and fearless igniter. I took a little bit of a different approach than Joel to this process, and I kind of wrote a little rationale for my brand. I started by really digging deep and creating little narratives explaining each pillar. What makes me the determined and fearless igniter? Well, let's take a look at my pillars. The first one here is fiery spirit with fierce determination. I have strength, determination and perseverance. I rise to the occasion during crisis and chaos. I actually think that my strength is greatest when others need me to lead and they're relying on me. I've been described as a spirited energizer. I've often been told that I'm fearless. I bring an energy and passion to everything I do, and I just really throw myself into it with my heart. I use resolve to focus on the task at hand and move it forward with focus and patience. My second pillar is compassionate caregiver and collaborator. I think this one manifests itself in different ways. My grandmother always told me from the time I was young to talk to the person in the room who no one else is talking to, so to really be aware of other people and try to make them feel comfortable. I'm definitely a collaborative team player, and I'm willing to roll up my sleeves and get the job done in support of the team. I think that there is no task too big or too small. But at the same time, I don't wanna just take the work and do it. I'd rather guide others and build confidence in them so they can do it. I wanna understand each person's role and build on the unique attributes that each person brings to the table. There's definitely a nurturing side that seeks to build strength in others. I'm concerned with my teammates, their feelings, needs and personal growth. That's my people pillar. The next one is innovative problem solver. I like to think outside the box and I'm always pushing. How could we solve this problem in a different way? Maybe if we thought about it differently and turned the problem on its head, there would be another answer. Then the final pillar here is this thirst for understanding and experiences. I love adventure and travel and exotic places and food and wine. I have a desire for authentic experience and connections with different types of people. I love patterns and textures and sort of unique found objects. If you go to my house, it's full of things with meaning from places that I've traveled or things that were given to me by someone with some type of a special interest. I've always had a strange curiosity around mysticism from the time that I was a little girl. I wanna understand really the why and dig deeper into things. Really just wanna understand the purpose behind things. It's the combination of these things that results in the determined and fearless igniter. I bring my fire and energy, and use it to help ignite ideas and strength and growth in others. I'm not afraid to throw myself into things with passion, and that gives others strength and energy, too. I sort of mentor others and bring my passion to help ignite their own. The other thing I'll say for me is I went through this personal branding process many years ago, and I think it's definitely paid off for me professionally, but since that time, something else has happened to me. It's called motherhood. As many of you know, and can probably relate, motherhood can have an impact on your identity or your perceived identity. Here I was with my brand that had worked really well for me for so long through the lens of a businesswoman, and then I became a mother. I almost started to lose sight of it a little bit and question, and started to ask do these things still apply to me? Is this really still who I am? I evaluated my brand through my new role as a mother. What I found was it actually really cemented it. Through this new, additional identity of motherhood, my pillars actually had new meaning and became stronger. To quickly run through, fiery spirit with fierce determination. If anything has helped me discover my fiery
spirit and passion, that is motherhood. I bring a spirit and energy to our house and family, and keep things moving forward and trying to stay positive. It's actually the thing that I'm most passionate about in life. Compassionate caregiver and collaborator, I think this one is self-explanatory, that yes, check. My compassion and the ability to care for others and think about their needs has really reached new heights as a mother. Innovative problem solver. I solve, like, 10 problems an hour when I'm at home, so yes. I was actually laughing to myself thinking about this last night as I was thinking through creative ways to try to belly crawl and escape out my son's room in the middle of the night without him seeing or hearing me. Thirst for understanding and experiences. Seeing things and experiencing things through the eyes of a child for the first time really has given new meaning to life for me. Igniting the interest and personalities of my children is just incredibly eye opening. This might be my weakest pillar professionally, but is one that I'm finding I'm strengthening in my role as a mother. It turns out that my brand is exactly on track, the determined and fearless igniter, and has helped me continue to stay focused, fulfilled and grow both personally and professionally.

[Joel] My brand platform, I took a little different approach. My brand essence is the eccentric intellectual. I think this gives a really good point of why this is private. If I told some of my friends that I identified myself as an intellectual, they'd probably say something like, "Well, you're an intellectual "like I'm a Nobel Prize winner." That's not public information, that I consider myself to be an eccentric intellectual, but I can express myself in ways that make that true. As Bridget said, as we wanna do this, we want you to reach. That's why we're kind of showing you these and letting you see behind the curtain. We want you to understand that this is about being super aspirational. If there's any one phrase that you take from today's exercise, it is that. We just want you to really, really reach and be super aspirational. It my case, there's something else going on here. I am a bit of a brand in transition. That kind of happens throughout life. Things happen, things change, and ya have to kinda reevaluate what your message needs to be. When I started in the advertising business, my brand, I didn't do the process at the time, but looking back on it, I would be the creative upstart. I was the person who was supposed to come in the room with the wildest, craziest ideas, most unusual things. Then after a while, with some success, that changed. I became the creative hotshot, which means I was supposed to come in the room with the ideas that are actually good ideas and that would actually perform and work. But now I'm older. I definitely joined the greenaissance. They say in the advertising business there are no old creatives. As you look around, it's kinda true. A person in my position has to evolve their brand into something more, with perhaps more to offer than just writing, just coming up with creative ideas and writing snappy copy. Now I get very involved in other things and strategic work, in positioning work and in messaging. My four pillars that laddered up to the eccentric intellectual work like this. The way I did it, first of all, where Bridget wrote out a narrative, wrote kind of a story of what her qualities are, what I did is I just made a list. You could do this with cards. You can shuffle them around and start to organize 'em. But I just wrote down lists of all the attributes and qualities, and then started to organize them. The first pillar was intellectually adventurous. What came in under that is I'm curious, I'm a creative thinker, I'm a writer, author, I've self-published a couple books. I'm a very avid reader and knowledge seeker. I'm an intellectual omnivore. I like reading and understanding and knowing about everything. In fact, that's one of my favorite things about working in the communications business is that there is always something new to learn all the time. I'm a science enthusiast. The second pillar is passionately engaged. I discovered through this process in order to really engage something and do my best, I really have to get
passionate about it, really dive deeply into the subject matter. I always have strong opinions, strong affinities. I'm very willing to debate almost any point. I believe nothing really sharpens the mind like good debate. I've always been a bit of an iconoclast, even to the point of being a troublemaker, the person who will say the thing that will get a rise out of people. I'll tend to go against the grain. All of that kind of came together to the pillar of passionately engaged. Then the next pillar, the third one, is wide-ranging expertise and experience. This is pretty much kind of the resume pillar in my brand essence in pillars here. I'm a writer and photographer. I know graphic design. I'm a general aviation pilot. Last year I began to get interested in these new gyrocopters that are becoming very popular, and now I'm looking into getting certification as a hang glider. I'm a biker, as in motorcycles. Those three things kind of together. I'm interested in weather and meteorology. I'm very techie. I love technology, the history of technology. I'm a fan of history. Also a car buff, a big Formula One fan, a science nerd. I helped raise two daughters, who are now in their 20s. Oh, yeah, I have several decades of experience in marketing and advertising. That's the experience and expertise pillar. Then the fourth pillar throws a little twist onto the whole thing, and that is surprisingly Zen. I'm meditative, contemplative. I love nature and the outdoors, and the debate of amusement park versus national park. I will definitely go with the national park. I love poetry, I love cosmology. I'm looking at science from a more spiritual standpoint. I love Daoism, Buddhism, all those Eastern thought ways of looking at the world, and I'm a big fan of quietude. That's my brand essence.

[Bridget] Wow, well, onto lesson three: authenticity. Don't fake it. This is just an incredibly important aspect of the process, so I wanna emphasize it. As much as this exercise is bold and requires you to be aspirational, as you can see from both the examples Joel and I shared, it has to be honest and truthful. You can identify characteristics in yourself that you wanna foster and grow, but it has to be there. You can't make things up that simply aren't you. But that's okay because there's plenty there to go off of in each of us.

[Joel] Reality check number three. Humans are incredibly good at detecting inauthenticity. In fact, studies which go back to the '90s have shown over and over again that even as infants as young as 16 to 19 months old, human beings are very good at detecting inauthentic emotional cues. They can tell when an adult is actually not sincere or authentic. Turns out that the opposite of being able to express an inauthentic emotional cue, human beings don't really get good at that until they're seven or eight years old. There are times in life where it is appropriate to be inauthentic, frankly. For example, if someone gives you a gift that you already have or that you really don't like, you can still smile graciously and accept it, but we don't really learn how to do that until we're about six or seven years old. Of course, anyone who's a parent has the great stories of the five year old who was a little too honest in the wrong situation. But they are really good at detecting inauthenticity, so authenticity becomes very important. When it comes to branding, don't create something that is not you, simply put. Don't wear a mask. People will see through it. As Anne Morrow Lindbergh once said, "The most exhausting thing you "can be is inauthentic."
Bridget] I can see from some of the questions that are actually beginning to come in that you're asking how you can begin this process, which is exactly the right question to ask. I will say this is definitely something that takes time, so don't be overwhelmed. It's not something that can be done in five minutes, but it's an incredibly powerful exercise in reflecting on who you are, what makes you you and really what your purpose is. This is the moment to look at yourself and be as positive as you can. I think, speaking from personal experience, we don't tend to allow ourselves enough time to be introspective and self-reflective, to take the time that we need to do this sort of thing. This is really the perfect opportunity for that. It's actually, I've found that it's very fun and extremely empowering. You have to dig deep inside yourself, which will be really exciting, but it could also be a little bit scary. You may find things that maybe you didn't necessarily wanna face. But ultimately, this process will help you understand the essence of who you are and your purpose. Here are some tools you can use to start this process. We all have clear strengths, and there are some things that are like, okay, maybe that's not as much my space. This is a really good process to go through to try to sift through some of that. You can create lists. Create a flatter me list where you list all of your strengths, and then create a be real list where, okay, that might not necessarily turn out to be one of your pillars. But the goal is you wanna uncover what your skills are and where do you excel the most, what sets you apart. Another way to begin this process is to start to ask yourself some key questions. What makes you different from others who do the same thing? What makes you different from your siblings? I have four siblings. What makes me different from them? I had to think through that. When we do this for companies, that's a key question that we ask. What is your differentiator? What makes you different than other companies in the marketplace? What are strengths that people tend to acknowledge in you? I went back to some of my old reviews and looked at what people said about me, and some patterns started to emerge. That's where the fearless thing came up. You also want to examine what is your role on a team. What role do you play in groups? That can be either a volunteer setting or a business setting. Are you the one who's really leading and taking charge? Or are you more focused on making sure everyone gets along? When the going gets tough, what are your go-to skills that help you overcome obstacles and challenges? What was the most successful thing you've ever tackled, and what was it that made you so successful? What was that key attribute? What motivates you or excites you? I'm personally motivated when tensions are high and it's a crisis or a major challenge and others need to rely on me. That's when I find my greatest strength and I'm the most poised. Whereas, others are motivated by making people feel good. There are differences in what gets people energized. It's important to reflect and understand what really makes you tick. Similarly, what burns you out and takes the wind out of your sails? That's important to understand. Another important step that you may want to consider is asking others who know you really well what they would say about you. I found this step really important in my own process because I had developed where I was going with my personal brand some time ago, and I ran it by my mom, who actually said, "No, I'm not so sure about that for you." But I kind of thought, oh, well. She doesn't get it. It's supposed to be aspirational. Then I shared where I was going with my personal brand with my boss. She didn't really react right way. I was waiting for her feedback. Then she called me into her office and said, "Close the door, have a seat." I heard, excuse me, what you think your personal brand is, and I got this vision, this vision of like Barbara Bush, a strong, stately older woman with perfect hair. She said, "I gotta tell ya, that ain't you. "Have you asked anyone else "what they think about you?" She went on to say, "You totally missed something." She saw in me something that wasn't coming to the forefront as strongly for me. I was positioning it differently. Talking to her provided a lot of clarity, and her insight was extremely invaluable in the process.
Order will emerge. As you start to collect your answers to these questions or lists or putting things on cards, whatever kind of technique you like to use, you're gonna take some time to review your list, and you're going to discover that common themes start to bubble up. You wanna start to write those down. Then create categories, and things will start to merge. You might find surprising connections that you can build on. This is where some real introspection may also emerge. You may find some buried treasure, some things that you love but have set aside long ago or forgotten about for some reason. You may rekindle remembered passions and affinities for something from your past. It's all important. Write it all down, acknowledge it as an authentic part of who you are. Lesson four. Now we're going to identify your brand pillars. This becomes the foundation of your brand. Four pillars, in our opinion, turns out to be ideal. Some brands have only three, some brands have five. I will explain how that comes to be and why we feel good about four. You may start with 10 or 12 or seven, and that's good. More at the beginning is better, more categories. You have a bridge framework to build from. But you'll start to see that they can start to blend together, that one can fold under the other very easily, and to get down to a much simpler expression. Cause you're gonna wanna express these in everything that you do, every day, all the time. Reality check number four. Human beings can only think of a few things at once. You see a photo on the right there has got a lot of toys, a pile of toys, maybe a few hundred toys. Some of these you might even recognize from around your house. But at the end of the day, literally, or tomorrow, you will just remember that there was a pile of toys. Your brain won't hold onto all of it. There have been some people, Isaac Asimov, famous science fiction writer, he believed he could think of nine things at once. Other people think they can, say they can think of seven at once. But it turns out that for most people, that's not true. That's why good branding works so well. Branding is a tool our minds use to simplify our world down to something that we can hold onto in our heads. It's a tool you will give people to help them to simplify you. Let's try this test to demonstrate what I'm talking about. Can you think of all six of these items at the same time? It's not a memory test. I want you to think of them and picture them, look at them. There's a lemon, a bow tie, a duck, a flower, a rocket ship and a basketball. Think of them, picture them, together and separate, in their little white boxes. Now can you still see them? Can you still picture them all in the white boxes? Can you see them all at once, all six? You can remember them, you can probably write them down, but can you see them? Chances are, if you're like most people, a couple of those white boxes are starting to flicker to light. Right? Well, that's the audience of your brand.Think of a job interview you may have been on or something where you wanted to express or sell something to a person. They will write down things, or you may spend a 1/2 hour in a job interview or maybe an hour, but that person will leave, and maybe an hour later will jot down some notes from the interview about you. They're only going to remember and hold on to a few things that they can hold in their mind. Well, boom, that's your brand. Did I just say boom? I really did.

Go to the next slide. Choosing your pillars. Now this is where your pillars are not just necessarily a list of your strengths. Consider qualities that you may have, things that you love and enjoy, but that aren't yet strengths, but can become strengths. That's where it becomes a nice opportunity to build on. You'll want to, in your pillars, you wanna highlight the positive, the desirable, the aspirational and, as we said before, the super aspirational. Want you to really reach for these things. You'll wanna look for qualities that others wish they had, even if your version needs a little work. Now the question is, to pillar or not to pillar? What goes onto the cutting room floor and what actually goes into one of your pillars? You may have qualities, like all of us do, that should not be pillars. This is a little time for some soul searching. This word cloud that we've got here are a few of the things that Bridget and I threw onto the
cutting room floor. There's certain things that may be better left unsaid. I actually committed this year to stop telling Dad jokes.

[Bridget] I may have been called a pit bull before, but I'm opting for slightly more aspirational descriptors as part of my brand platform.

[Joel] Right, and don't get us wrong, maybe you're developing a video blog to get people who are lousy at math to be great at math. That would be really good. If you can turn one of these into something great, that's good, but this is just an example of some things that are, in our case, are probably better left unsaid.

[Bridget] After today, your pillars will become kind of your North stars. You will refer to your pillars for everything your brand does and doesn't do. Now you have your pillars, you'll wanna focus your energy. You don't wanna be putting resources towards things that aren't your strengths. I think this is a really enlightening thing for clients because often they will say, "Okay, here are our pillars, but we're putting "all of this time and money and energy "into this thing over here that "isn't one of our pillars." Maybe we shouldn't be. Maybe we need to revisit our priorities and focus our energies where our strengths are, which is exactly right. We should really only be focusing on things that align with our pillars, and we don't wanna waste our precious time, cause I know how limited it is, on other things. On the flip side, and I think this is an interesting strategy, use your weakest pillar as an opportunity. You may have a pillar that needs some development. For me, that weakest pillar is the thirst for understanding and experiences. I think part of that is situational because, well, motherhood and time, but I definitely need to feed that pillar more. The more interesting and thoughtful I am, the better I am as a strategic planner and a leader and a mother. I think if you can identify your weakest pillar and really build it out and strengthen it, then ultimately this will help you have a really well balanced personal brand.

[Joel] Lesson five. Now we're gonna take the pillars and distill your personal brand. One of the pillars will very likely become the heart of your brand. It'll be something that you really feel stronger. It kind of ends up being the first one on the list every time you do the exercise. That will ladder up to become your brand essence. Over on the right here, we've tried to visualize two of my pillars and some of the points within them, how they came together to become the eccentric intellectual. In this case, it's two words. It might be one word. Many big brands in the world identify their brand essence down to one word. It might one in your case, and that would be great, or it might be five words. Whatever is something that's a good thought that you can hold onto to. You wanna boil it down to just a few words. This is what you want people to know and love about you. Lesson six is about taking control of your brand. You're gonna express your brand and your brand essence in everything that you do. You wanna memorize it, weaponize it and actualize it, and go forth and conquer.

[Bridget] I'll just chime in here and say that I have found that actually having a personal brand has opened my eyes up to different opportunities. It's allowed me to say I can live up to my personal brand.
One example of this, at one point in my career, I was new at an agency and was really trying to build my reputation and credibility and trying to find my niche. There was a situation with a big client where they were not happy with the work done by the agency. The board called the agency in for a performance presentation. The previous client manager had just left, so they were all scrambling to figure out how to handle it and who would go and present and defend the work that was done over the previous several years. I thought about it, and I just decided to jump in and volunteer. I knew nothing about the client or the work, but I thought, I can do this. I chose to be fearless. I saw the opportunity and I grabbed it. I said, "You know what? "No one else wants to touch this thing "with a 10-foot pole, so I'm going to volunteer "and show them that I'm fearless "and how I can bring value when "they need it the most." I learned the material, presented and defended the work to the board. In the process, I think I made a lasting impression on leadership at my new agency. It was really a pivotal point in my tenure at that firm and helped solidify my personal brand, both internally and external.

[Joel] In my case, the idea of owning it, owning those things that become and are your brand became very important for me in both words, eccentric and intellectual. On the intellectual side, I really started to up my ante in terms of what I was reading, what sort of information I was seeking out. Going for really much more sophisticated, higher-level things. On the eccentric side, I realized I should be and can be more eccentric. I wanna really do that, enjoy that. Both of those, I'm really happy to have found them and feel good about owning them. But as I said earlier, not really telling anybody out loud.

[Bridget] How do you apply this tactically in how you bring your brand to life? You'll want to identify where your brand is going to live, how you will express it through words and visualize it through imagery. How will people encounter your brand? Is it going to be on Snapchat, YouTube, on a blog, in your job? Is it your interview style? Is that the primary vehicle that makes that perfect? But be honest about your time and budget. I get very excited and passionate about things and have to remind myself to only jump into the things that I can really stay with and commit to. You're not going to be able to live in all of these places necessarily with full presence. There are thousands of blogs out there that have been abandoned. Before you start, just think through if it's something you can commit to and follow through on. You may want to experiment, which is great. What does it take to have a blog or a presence on Pinterest? But ultimately, we have limited time and money, so we don't wanna overextend our self. Remember to value your time because it's not worth nothing. Now we're gonna talk about the two ways to bring your brand to life, through both expression and visualization. Here's an example of how I express my brand through words. This is my LinkedIn summary. Bridget is passionate strategist who sparks innovative thinking in the development of data-driven integrated marketing. She applies empathy to her planning approach, allowing her to define the brand through the eyes of her audience. A fearless leader, she motivates her team and ignites their inner drive to achieve new heights. Her clients value her curiosity, excitement and her collaborative approach. As I said, this is my LinkedIn summary. You can see the words I use to describe myself, align that to my brand platform. Sparks innovative thinking, empathy, leader, curiosity, excitement. But you'll also notice that I am not calling myself the determined and fearless igniter. That part is private. You may want to use words to express your brand in a bio, on a blog, on your resume or LinkedIn profile like I have. There are many ways this can come to life. Here is an example of how I might visualize my brand. I personally don't have a blog or a creative portfolio, but I do pull these things into my sense of personal style, even what my office looks like. The image of a sparkle and ignite alludes to the spark I bring to different situations and people. That fire at the bottom right, kind of that pride of spirit. I have a picture of my team winning a championship when I was young where I helped lead the team to victory. When I was considering photo options, I really wanted something that was authentic and real, so
the photo is of real people. I opted not to use stock. You can see that there's a little bit of grit to the photo. I also had an interesting graphic that speaks to that sense of wonder, spirit and travel and adventure with the sun. The other photo is an exotic place I've been, Croatia. It ties into the color palette. The color palette I've selected starts with a fiery red to the left to demonstrate the passion and energy, and moves over into cooler blues that convey the compassionate caregiver side. I selected a bold, strong font, Interstate bold font, that I might use on a blog or even on my resume. Then the fabric I just thought was something that was interesting and a bit exotic, and it also has a dragon on it, which I thought tied nicely into the fire theme. Like I said, these are the types of things you might see in my office, around my home, or colors and patterns even that I might wear.

[Joel] This is my example of applying my brand, the eccentric intellectual, as a visualization. From the upper left, in the upper left-hand corner there, I have this habit of, in my office or even at home, I have an object that will be on the table. That changes from time to time. In this case, it's a small brass sextant. If someone walks in and takes any sort of interest in it, I'm happy to explain what it is, how it works and how it's not very accurate 'cause it's so small. Down to the right, there's a picture of some clouds. This actually reflects my interest in meteorology and photography. This is my screensaver, almost every electronic item I have. Down below, we see I'm very interested in space and space travel. Along the bottom, if you come into my environment, you might see some books laying around. These are the kind of books that I've been reading lately, A Brief History of Humankind, The Sixth Extinction, A Brief History of Tomorrow, my favorite poet, Czeslaw Milosz. There are two books there that I have self-published, Upheaval, and the science fiction book Civilization Starship. There to the right of that is a manuscript, a finished manuscript, of a book that I'm about to publish. Going up from there, some photography and the kind of things I like to go out into the world and take photographs of. That photograph at the top is from the Hubble Space Telescope. It's the deep field photograph. It is a picture of deep, deep space. They say there are 10,000 galaxies in this picture. I have this photograph in my office. It's about eight inches square. It is what I call my 10 second meditation. When I feel like I need to reset my mood, reset my mind for some reason, if I'm stressed or something, I can look at this photograph for 10 seconds and try to actually understand what it is I'm looking at. That does a real good job of resetting my brain. But that's my visualization of my brand. That kinda wraps up our presentation of developing your own personal brand. Just wanna leave with a couple of thoughts. One is a thought experiment that philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche was very fond of. It was called "Eternal Return". That is the idea that, imagine that you discovered that your life, that forever you would reexperience your entire life over and over again, exactly as it was, without being able to affect it. You would just relive your life over and over again ad infinitum. How does that make you feel? The challenge is to go out after today and live your life in a way that makes you feel great about that idea.

[Bridget] One final thought from me, do not wish to be anything but what you are, and try to be that perfectly. That's from St. Francis de Sales. We wanna thank you for sharing your time with us today. We
are going to answer some questions. We shared some insights into how to develop your personal brand and how that brand can be applied through channels like LinkedIn and others. As you're in the next session in our track specifically, and throughout the symposium, you'll hear more about strategies for LinkedIn and professional growth overall, so we encourage you to attend as many as you're able. Thank you again, and with that, we will open it up to some questions.

[Eddy] All right, thanks so much, Bridget and Joel. What an amazing presentation. The chat has been awesome to watch all the questions that are there. I know we're wrapping this up very, very quickly because we have another session that will be starting in just a couple of minutes, but I think one of the resounding questions that I saw throughout was regarding younger spouses. How does a younger spouse utilize the information you guys presented to really build out their platform and their pillars? If you guys could touch on that really quickly. Then we got some closing comments, and we'll move on to the next session.

[Joel] I think as a younger spouse, a younger spouse or younger person in general, where it starts from is what your affinities are, what you like, what you want to do. It's kind of the old aphorism of chasing your dream. Are there skills that you have, do you have attributes that others would admire and love in you? Are there things that you would like to have as skills? You start to bring those two together. I think that starts to form a good foundation.

[Eddy] That's great advice, Joel. I really appreciate that. As we start to wrap up, on your screen you should see up in the top left corner a file download section where you can download this presentation and have access to all of that great information. In addition, we have a What is SECO handout. I know I've got a lot of interest there when I talked about our SECO career coaches who, as a military spouse, I've utilized. They are amazing. You can connect with a military spouse SECO career coach by contacting Military OneSource, or going to the MySECO website and using our brand new chat feature, which allows you to connect with one of our career advisors to be able to set up an appointment with a career coach. If you're having trouble downloading, I know sometimes when I'm on Adobe Connect and I'm on my phone, I may have a challenge downloading, there's also a pod at the top of the screen where you can enter your email address, and we will be able to send out all of the downloads and resources. Of course, this information is gonna be available to everyone here in the near future, as we put it up on the MySECO website, so you'll be able to see all of this information again, and you can listen to Joel and Bridget speak as many times as you want to. Thank you all for attending today's session. We had just over a hundred of you join us. It was amazing. But do you know a fellow spouse who's not with us? With a million military spouses, there's literally 999,000 out there that did not join us. Reach out and get them to join us for the rest of the week. We've got 17 more hours of content coming up over the next three days, so let's see if we can grow the number of participants. Again, really appreciate Joel and Bridget. All of this information has been great. We are getting ready in about 10 minutes to start the second session of today's presentations. This one is going to be about entrepreneurship and the entrepreneur's toolbox. Again, thanks everybody for joining us. Please provide feedback, information, and we will continue to utilize this as we move forward. Raquel, I see your questions there. Yes, you do have to log
off of this session and join in, easily through the MySECO website or through the links you were provided, into the next session. Thanks, everybody, and have a great day.

[Joel] Thank you, bye-bye.