Welcome everyone to day one of the 2018 Virtual Military Spouse Symposium and the first session in the Fill Your Toolbox track. My name is Eddy Mentzer and I lead the Department of Defense’s Spouse Education and Career Opportunities program, the host for this week’s symposium. We’re already in our third session today, and it has been amazing so far. Earlier, we heard about personal branding, and we just had a great session from the Small Business Administration on resources for entrepreneurs. Yesterday we kicked off the symposium with a keynote by Shawn Martinbrough, the critically-acclaimed artist behind the Black Panther comic, and many other graphic novels and comics. Shawn shared with us his career path and it was a great session. If you weren’t able to join us yesterday, you can head over to the SECO Facebook page and hear his presentation. One of the best parts of these sessions are the questions and the comments in the chat pod. As a military spouse myself, I know how valuable peer sharing can be, so join us with your experiences and your comments over in the chat pod, and share the wealth. Let other spouses in your network know about the symposium and get them to log on. None of this information is secret. Our next speaker is Miss Paula Michael Dass, one of our amazing career coaches with the Spouse Education and Career Opportunities program. Miss Dass is going to offer some convincing strategies to build your case and successfully convert your office job into a work from home position. Welcome, Paula.

Well, thank you Eddy, for that introduction. And hello, welcome to the "How to Sell Yourself as a Remote Worker" webinar. My name is Paula Michael Dass, and as Eddy mentioned, I am a career coach with the Spouse Education and Career Opportunities program and will be presenting today's webinar. I would like to thank you for joining us today. I’m excited to talk on a topic that has value to so many military spouses due to the mobile nature of military life. With military families relocating every few years, many spouses experience a negative impact on their employment and salary rate, which can also have a negative impact on family life and overall wellbeing. Today, I will be providing timely information that has the potential to improve the overall quality of life for military families while also helping employers retain talented military spouses. During this webinar, I will discuss the why, when, and how to sell yourself as a remote worker to your employer. Before considering remote work, you must determine if working at home is right for you. This will require an understanding of the benefits and challenges of working remotely. To improve your success of converting your job to a remote position, timing your request is also important. And when negotiating with your employer, crafting an organized, well thought out detailed request is needed to ensure success. It's important to know that some industries and some employers are known to be more remote-friendly than others. Additionally, it is easier to apply directly to employers that offer remote positions, rather than to ask your current employer to make your job remote. However, if you have to relocate and you believe that your job can be done at home, you have nothing to lose when asking to convert your job into a remote position. For those considering working remotely often are doing so
because of a perceived benefit. So in the poll directly above your slide, tell me, what would be the greatest benefit of a remote position for you. So some spouses feel that they work better alone and without distractions of coworkers in their space. Those with an introvert tendency often have a preference for working independently versus in a group setting. Common responses I often hear include, being home with children and flexible schedules.

Possibly less distractions and stress, and saving time and money on a commute and food and clothing, and working from the comfort of a home office, and job portability, which allows you to maintain your job with each relocation. As seen by your responses, reasons for wanting to work remotely can vary, however, many have similar motivations due to the challenges of the military lifestyle. It's much easier to identify the benefits of remote work, but considering challenges will be more important to long-term success. If remote work does not work out for you or your employer, it will likely be due to challenges that present themselves. So, raise your hand if you have young children at home. Many remote positions require a quiet environment, particularly those that require phone work. You must determine if you have a quiet environment where you can focus, distraction-free. If you have dogs or young children, this may be difficult to manage. Those with young children may need a babysitter while they work. You will need outlet for socialization as well. This is especially important for extroverts that are energized and often think best when they are able to interact directly with others. You must ask yourself if video chatting or talking with people on the phone will satisfy your need for socialization. Develop a plan or schedule for socialization, such as outings with friends, and joining clubs and organizations, gym memberships and church functions. Another concern is separating work and home life. An inability to do this can lead to over or under working. It’s easy to work over a scheduled time when at home or under work, so you will need a strict schedule for work. Be sure others respect your space and work timing, do not cause interruptions. Also, do you have a dedicated office space? You will need a door to your office or workroom to decrease distractions and increase focus. A motivation for converting your current job into a remote position is that competition can be very high for these types of jobs because they are not necessarily local. Applicants can come from across the U.S., so only apply for remote jobs that you are highly qualified for can improve your chances of success. Something to also consider is that although some home jobs can be done from anywhere where there’s an internet connection, some employers only allow you to work from home if you live in certain states. So as you can see, there are many challenges to consider before deciding to work remotely. You must decide if the benefits outweigh the challenges. You can call the Self Education and Career Opportunities program to schedule an appointment to speak with a career coach about your fit for remote work and options available in your field of interest. You can’t sell yourself well to your employer if you’re not a good fit for remote work to start with. You must be realistic about your skills and have a plan to overcome any potential challenges to ensure success in a remote position. Successful remote workers, they don’t need direct supervision, they’re productive working alone. And are computer savvy. They’re self-motivated and organized, and are quick learners. They’re also trustworthy and can work independently. So think about why these qualities would be important when working from home. Common qualities of successful remote workers should also be on your resume and discussed during your interview with examples of when and how effectively they were used. I'll talk more about how to do this later in a presentation, including how to highlight these skills and when asking your employer to allow you to work from home. In addition to determining if you are a good fit for remote work, timing your request carefully is also important. Asking to work remotely before the first 90 days, which is the probationary period may not be very effective. Give employers a chance to learn more about your skill set, your work ethic, and other essential qualities needed for remote work. And during the interview process, ask about the job’s remote possibility is best done after a job offer has been made, when you have more leverage. If you are an experienced remote worker, ask the employer during the job interview if there is a possibility of working remotely and talk about your previous success with remote work. Even if you have no formal experience working from home, you can talk about other tasks completed at home, such as baby sitting experience, work done for your homeowner's association, and for church or other civic organizations. Not all jobs can be remote. So another thing to consider is the job dynamic and requirements to determine if your job can be completed mostly or 100% from home. For example, nursing, working for an insurance
company such as United Healthcare, which is a Military Spouse Employment Partner. Taking your job remote will change your daily task. You may find yourself answering client’s questions over the phone instead of in person, or doing quality assurance work, which is not direct patient care. Think about whether the changes to your job would change your satisfaction with that job. It is sometimes difficult for spouses to identify jobs that are often worked in a remote setting. Insurance, health care, IT, computer science, and the education field commonly have remote positions. Your level of education will impact the types of remote jobs that are available to you. Though in order to get an idea, a position that can be successfully done at home by spouses. I would like for you to type in the poll directly above your slides, the job you have or what that can be worked remotely. I see that many of you have great suggestions for remote jobs, such as medical transcriptionist, working for a nonprofit, tech administrator, so now let’s talk about how to negotiate and make these jobs remote. If you are in a job that you would like to convert to a remote position, you will need to learn convincing strategies aimed at building your case to improve your chances of success. You will need to be prepared to explain in writing, the how, when, and why you should work your job remotely. You can do this by emphasizing your value to the company, discussing traits that will make you an effective teleworker, and citing your performance evaluations and work accomplishments. Offer your reasons for wanting to work remotely based on benefits to the company, such as increased productivity and minimize facility expenses. You should also highlight any previous successful remote experience. Having a social media or online presence can help you demonstrate strong writing and computer skills and professionalism. LinkedIn is an example of a space where you can demonstrate these skills. And I would highly recommend developing a written proposal and a presentation focusing on what telework can do for the company. You will want to suggest ways to measure accountability, such as daily pass summaries. And describe your workspace, such as a room with a door you can close, a desk, telephone, high-speed internet connection, a printer, et cetera. And address any personal issues like childcare, or care for elderly parents. Also be prepared to address questions and objections. Consider all possible disadvantages and develop your recommendation on avoiding these issues. You will need to convey to your supervisor how you will communicate to resolve issues, overcome challenges, and communicate with coworkers from home. For example, will you phone, email, drive, or fly into the office on occasion for meetings? Websites such as The Goodwill Community Foundation, can help you to develop needed technical skills. It has tutorials to develop typing and computer skills and knowledge of Microsoft Office products. Also, you should become familiar with collaboration tools used by companies, or other ways to share your computer and files. Popular online collaboration programs include Google Drive, Slack for team messaging, Hip Chat and Stride for group chat and meetings, Asana for project and task management, and Trello for teamwork and work share. If your supervisor is hesitant, see if he or she is willing to let you do a trial period before you relocate. You can also discuss the possibility of working from home a few days a week at first, and then gradually build to full time. To give you a better idea of what this conversation may sound like, I will role play this scenario for you.

[Paula]
Hi Tammy.

[Tammy]
Hi Paula, how are you?

[Paula]
Great. Well, I'd like to talk to you about a work opportunity that I believe will be beneficial for both the company and me.

[Tammy]
Okay, what do you have in mind?
[Paula]
Well, I really enjoy my job here, and I think we both agree that over the past year, I've really excelled in this position. And as you know I'll be relocating with my military husband really soon to an installation in another state.

[Tammy]
Yeah, that'll be here before you know it.

[Paula]
Well, I was thinking, instead of taking the time and money to train another employee, I'd like to propose a better option that is kind of a win-win for both of us.

[Tammy]
Okay, I'm listening.

[Paula]
Well, I've prepared a written proposal for your consideration, and I'd also like to explain my position and give you an opportunity to address any concerns you may have about what I'm proposing.

[Tammy]
Okay, well I'm definitely interested in anything that will save the company money and keep you on here as an employee, so tell me more.

[Paula]
Well, I believe that I could do my job just as well at home, if not better, than I can in the office. So I'd like for you to consider allowing me to work my position from home.

[Tammy]
Okay, well this brings a lot of questions to mind for me, but why don't you tell me what you're thinking first.

[Paula]
Well, as you know, I'm very organized, I often take initiative on projects, and even you have mentioned recently that I work very well independently. Also, I believe I would be much more productive at home where there are no interruptions.

[Tammy]
Okay, you're right Paula, I agree, you're very organized and you have done some fantastic work here, but working from home has its challenges, how would you resolve issues, communicate with your coworkers or overcome other challenges that might come up?
[Paula] Well, not being face to face with coworkers, it can be a challenge, but I can be face to face with my coworkers very quickly via Skype, and we can chat with each other through a program called Hip Chat, these programs are very user friendly and I would be able to communicate with my coworkers just as quickly as if I were in the office.

[Tammy] Okay, well it sounds like you have the communication piece worked out, but working from home isn't for everyone. What makes you think that you'll be successful?

[Paula] Well, I agree that working remotely is not a good fit for everyone, which is why I've taken steps to ensure I can be successful in my position from home, I have a dedicated home office with a door and a fast internet connection, and also my children, they're in after-school care, so they won't be home when I'm working.

[Tammy] Well, I can see that you've given this a lot of thought and it sounds like you have a good plan for ensuring you can effectively work from home. However, what's the plan for how I can monitor your work and see when your assignments are complete?

[Paula] Well, I thought about that and I've taken initiative to learn about file sharing programs such as Google Drive, MeisterTask, and Asana and you would be able to see the projects I'm working on and you can leave comments and suggestions and I can also work together on projects with my team members by using these programs.

[Tammy] Okay, that's helpful. However, your position's never been remote, so I'm still a bit hesitant to agree to this.

[Paula] I can understand your concern and since I won't be relocating until June, what if I worked a few days remotely now, and kind of see how it goes? And if we both agree it's going well, maybe I can work remotely five days a week, so you'll have a feel for what it's like for me to work remotely full time, how does that idea sound to you?

[Tammy] Well Paula, you've addressed all my concerns. I'm willing to give this a try. If your work at home is just as good as your work here in the office, I think your proposal will indeed be a win-win, we'll be able to keep you on here as a strong employee, and you'll be able to take your job with you when you move, so let's try this.

[Paula] When applying to remote positions or to positions that you would like to be remote, use your resume as a marketing tool that identifies you as a good candidate. Use key words on your resume to show previous
remote experience, and include skills and qualities associated with remote work. In the objective, personal statement, or profile section, use language that speaks to skills needed in remote work. Mention previous remote work experience or desire to work from home. Provide a quick example of skills, or list specific knowledge and level of competency with particular skills, for example, foreign language or typing speed. Use action verbs in your resume so employers can see that you have the skills, experience, and qualifications to work remotely. Start each bullet in your work experience section with an action verb. Your cover letter should expand on the most relevant elements of your resume and answer the question of why your employer should hire you. To determine why you are a good fit for remote work, your cover letter should also highlight relevant transferable skills, and your familiarity with computer skills important for remote work. In addition to mentioning your interest in remote work in your cover letter, also provide quick examples of previous remote work experience, your knowledge of essential skills needed to work from home, and how you will use them to be successful in your previous job. During a job interview, you should identify and discuss qualities important for working in a remote role. Remote work often involves a lot of time on the phone, so be sure you communicate effectively during your interview, and be personable to demonstrate that skill to the employer. Without direct supervision, employers will need to see that you are capable of showing up on time and have effective organization skills to work from home. So show up to your interview on time. Mention your interest in working remotely, and ask if there is a possibility the job can be remote now, or in the future. Expand on examples of how and when you’ve successfully used skills necessary to work remotely in the workplace. The Spouse Education and Career Opportunities program offers video practice interviews with a career coach, by appointment, for you to learn how to shine in a phone or online interview.

So today, you have learned how to effectively pitch your employer on the mutual benefits of transitioning your job to a remote position, and how to sell your fit and desire to work remotely to an employer. You have learned convincing strategies aimed at building your case to improve your chances of successfully converting your office job into a work from home job. So, I'd like to give you all time ask questions in the general chat pod, and while you are working on your questions, I have a few reminders. If you would like individualized assistance with your resume, cover letter, or interview, or want to talk with a career coach about how to craft a proposal for your employer for remote work, please feel free to reach out to our SECO team and schedule an appointment with one of our career coaches by calling 1-800-342-9647. And lastly, please check out our other webinars that are scheduled throughout the symposium, including today at 2:00 P.M., Eastern Standard Time, Getting a Pulse on Health Care Careers. Tomorrow, May the 23rd at 10:00 A.M., Eastern Standard Time, LinkedIn for Military Spouses Behind the Scenes, and at 2:00 P.M., Go to the Head of the Class, Exploring Careers in Education. And Thursday, May the 24th at 10:00 A.M., Eastern Standard Time, let your resume tell your story. And at 12:00 P.M., Eastern Standard Time, we have Rock Your Interview with a Solid Performance. Okay, so now back to our general chat pod and any questions that have come in.

[Eddy]
Paula, there's a great question up there from Kiedra, it says, "what are some action verbs you recommend "for bullets and what are some of the top skills "employers look for when it comes to remote employees?"

[Paula]
Oftentimes, what employers look for are transferable skills that are in a lot of workplaces. But in addition to that, for remote work, they're looking for people who can work independently, who they can trust, and so they're trustworthy, also people who have technical skills. So, earlier I mentioned several skills that were essential and are common to working in a remote setting and those are oftentimes, skills are also listed in a job ad for remote positions. So people who are very organized and self-motivated, cause when you don't have a supervisor, someone managing you, or coworkers to interact with, you're kind of on your
own, and those skills are gonna be essential, more important in that remote role than it would be even in the office.

[Eddy]
Yeah, you know, I think for my experience, the soft skills are so important and Terrance Gonzalez kind of recognized that when he's looking at somebody to hire for a remote position, he's looking at what their technical skills are, their computer skills, that ability to work independently. And also, he brought up a really good point is if you have success in previous remote work, how important that is to show how you have been able to make that work.

[Paula]
Absolutely. And to convey that in an interview to the employer, definitely important, especially if it's for a position, you're applying for a position that you know you were in, and that you want to convert, let that employer know that you have those skills and you've been successful previously and worked remotely, it will give them that confidence to want to convert your job if needed.

[Eddy]
And I saw there's a little bit of discussion up there about LinkedIn, I would highly recommend, if you're able to join us for the LinkedIn session tomorrow. It's an awesome session on leveraging LinkedIn and how to make yourself stand out. Just a great opportunity there as far as building those networks, they should have mentioned Terrance is one of our military spouse employment partnership partners from Prentice Health, and they're very engaged in looking for opportunities for remote work. A lot of our MSEP partners do offer remote opportunities. And it's really hard to say what companies are going to offer remote opportunities. Obviously, not all positions are conducive to remote work, and not all individuals are conducive to remote work, but we do have a lot of partners through the Military Spouse Employment Partnership, they're very interested in being able to grow remote opportunities for military spouses, we know how important that is of course as we PCS. Just as we get ready to wrap up, remote work for K to 12 education administrators, a question from Nicole. Paula, do you have any experience in with education administrators working remotely?

[Paula]
Yeah, there are actually several K-12 educational programs around the country, and they hire remote educators, administrators, and so I would say, have someone look at those K-12 virtual schools, and they will find a position. Go to their hiring website, and they should be able to identify some of those positions there. There are certain times of the year though that they hire and some that hiring's not so common because of how the school year is structured, so in the spring is probably the best time, but yeah those are going to be virtual schools, K-12 and every state has those.

[Eddy]
Great information, Paula. Here's a question from Paige, she said, "should we identify position as remote "on our resumes, and what's good wording to use?"

[Paula]
Well I see a variety of different terms, I've seen remote, I've seen virtual, I've seen home-based, so they're kind of interchangeable. I kind of like using either remote or virtual, have more of a professional sound to
it, I've seen multiple different ways of doing that, and it comes right after the job title there on the resume, oftentimes, just to denote that that is a job that was done from home.

[Eddy]
Yeah, and then there was some good discussion about just access to the MySECO and the SECO resources, we should note that separating spouses, spouses whose service members are separating from the military are able to utilize all of the MySECO resources, including our career coaches, up to 180 days post-separation, and there is some work being done right now to extend that to 365 days. So we are excited about where this will go, and being able to provide these services for military spouses, even when they leave the service. We should also mention that all of our resources that we're talking about today, whether it's career coaching, the online website, are available for reserve, guard, and active component military spouses.

[Paula]
Yeah, and absolutely. And I wanted to mention that through the Military Spouses Employment Partnership, wonderful tool that for finding employment for spouses, there is an option on that site, hit the word search and that next page will populate and there is an option to select telework. So they can sort those jobs on there by telework, just by simply marking that option and they will populate. And there's a couple other ways on there as well, they'll see that option to mark telework, but it's very easy to do on the site to search the database just for those types of positions.

[Eddy]
That's great. And then I saw a comment that we had somebody asking about health care positions, and I know that we've got a health care session coming up here in the near future.

[Paula]
Yeah, and we actually have a session during this, webinar this week on healthcare careers where spouses can learn about opportunities and career paths in health care, so that would be a great opportunity for spouses to connect to that information.

[Eddy]
And then Barbara asked if there is a comprehensive list of MSET partners, I know how hard it is when we have more than 360 partners, and how does a company going about being a partner? That's a great question, and I think it's really important for spouses to understand, we do have a comprehensive list and you can go on to the MySECO website and access the list of all of our partners, but each of these partners go through a fairly significant vetting process. We have more than 360 Military Spouse Employment Partnership partners that represent large and regional, national, sometimes small companies that have really made a commitment to recruiting, hiring, and retaining military spouses. So they go through an application process to start, and then they go through a series of interviews with our team here and the SECO program. We talk to their leadership to make sure that the are committed to this, we look at their financial report, something called the Dun and Bradstreet Report to look at their financial viability. We look at what types of opportunities they offer for military spouses, we speak to them about their culture and why they want to be part of this organization. So they go through a vetting process and what we want for spouses to understand is that when you go to the MySECO website, and you search for jobs, you know that you are search for jobs from a company that wants to hire military spouses and it's pretty amazing to see the type of work that is included there. There's everything from hourly and seasonal jobs through senior leader and executive positions, lots of different opportunities and in every field. So if you are in the hunt
for a job or employment, you should definitely start with the MySECO website and search through our MSEP partners, I think you'd be surprised at how many jobs we have, I was just out there a little while ago and there were more than 300,000 jobs that were currently being offered.

Another great resource is our LinkedIn page. So if you are on LinkedIn, we have an MSEP LinkedIn page, and that has about just under 8,000 spouses that are part of that as well as many of our MSEP partners. And we offer what we call hot jobs, those are jobs that have immediate need to be filled through our MSEP partners, it's a great way to get a leg up on some of those opportunities and to connect with the recruiters and folks that are out there in the space.

The other thing I should mention as far as the MySECO website goes, Jessica, man, perfect segway. You said, "do you offer resume assistance?" Our career coaches are there for you to utilize any time you need them, and they can help you with your resumes, with cover letters, we have a resume builder that is on the MySECO website. Now, to have access to a lot of the back end stuff, you have to create DS log-on account within the MySECO platform. If you need information or help doing that, at the top of the MySECO page, there is a "how do I" button, and if you click on that, the very first "how do I" that comes up is "how do I create a DS log on?"

One of the new features that we have implemented in the last couple of months is the ability as a military spouse to opt in to being searchable by recruiters from our MSEP partners. Now, what that means is that our recruiters now can go, and they can search through spouse profiles to find a spouse that may be in the right location or have the right skill set that they're looking for in a particular position. And we have had spouses that have been hired by MSEP partners that never applied for a job. Where the partner is coming and finding them, they reach out to them and they say, "hey, is this something you're interested in?" The spouse says yes, and they're able to be hired. So it's a great opportunity for kind of that reverse search so that recruiters and companies are looking for you as a military spouse, and the fact that we've had a small number of spouses that have been hired through that process is pretty amazing. So that's just some of the other things we have going on.

We're gonna go ahead and start to wrap up this session. I really want to thank Paula for all the great information that she provided for us, still a lot more information to come throughout the day, we're getting ready to walk into a next session on the military One Source platform and we're gonna play a little game, Mil Life Quest and see how military One Source can assist us as spouses and as families within the experiences that we have in military life. As we wrap up, if you look at your screen up in the left corner, you have the ability to download some files, so you have the presentation from today, as well as some fact sheets and some information on the SECO program that you can download, and then in the middle you have resource links. So these are links to our participant feedback, this is vital for you to provide us with feedback so that we can continue to offer these types of opportunities and improve what we're trying to do to assist military spouses in overcoming those challenges around education and employment. Feedback is crucial, we've had great attendance today, I think we were up over 120 in this session, so I really appreciate that, and you also have the ability to download or link to the certificate of participation.

Finally, if you're having any challenges with any of those links, we have those over in the chat pod right now. And then if you're still having some trouble, you can enter your email into the "trouble with downloads" and we will get those downloaded and sent to you. You can also access all of this information as well as the archives of this webinar on the MySECO website, it takes a little bit of time to get those up there and get them all ready for publication, but you'll be able to come back and share this information and continue to push it out. One of my teammates, Mininia she pushed the link for the LinkedIn group in the chat pod, so you can connect to that LinkedIn group. And again, I mentioned earlier, great session coming up later this week from LinkedIn, we've got some new things going on that we're really excited about with LinkedIn. So please join us for that, and we'll wrap it up from here. Appreciate everybody sticking with us, it's been awesome to see people that have been with us all three sessions today and I expect to see them over the next three, and maybe even the next three days. Thanks again, and we'll talk to you guys in 20 minutes or so.