General Information

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Description

The military is great at training civilians to become warriors, but when their service is over, many veterans have trouble returning to civilian life. Meet two veterans from Virginia who have discovered how to put their military skills to good use and become successful franchise owners.

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Citation

MLA

American Business: Veterans Putting Military Experience to Good Use

https://archives.nbclearn.com/portal/site/k-12/browse/?cuecard=53353
AMANDA CROW: I grew up so much in Navy and I think it’s just only helped me now. None of my friends at 26 own their own business, nobody.

J J RAMBERG reporting:

Amanda Crow thrived in the structured culture of military life.

CROW: It’s not for everyone. And I didn’t think it was for me initially, but it really taught me so much.

RAMBERG: Until last year, Amanda had spent her entire career in the Navy where she was told where to go, what to do, and when to do it. She loved her job as a special ops parachute rigger, but she also had an entrepreneurial streak in her.

CROW: I didn’t want to work for anybody else. I feel I am a leader and that I can manage a business on my own.

RAMBERG: These two personality traits may seem at odds. Entrepreneurs are risk-taking mavericks making it up as they go along right? Well, not always. Amanda found a way to perfectly marry her two sides-- running a franchise.

CROW: You are your own boss, but you still have the backing of an entire company behind you.

RAMBERG: Dennis Alard is another Navy vet turned entrepreneur. He was her inspiration.

DENNIS ALARD: I spent a long time in the Navy. I like organization. I like structure.

RAMBERG: Seven years ago in Virginia Beach, Virginia, he opened up one of about 400 PostNet franchises, specializing in copies, mailings, and business services. As a retired military officer, like Amanda, he was looking for some order and found it in the PostNet online manual describing how to run the company.

ALARD: We’re used to having systems in place and following those systems to the letter. And--and then when you bring someone in, you bring a new person in, that person is taught that system.

RAMBERG: After visiting Dennis at his store, Amanda decided to sign up.
CROW: I looked at Dennis you know straight in the face and I said, put my hands on my hips and I said, “How do you start one of these?” He kind of laughed at me and gave me the little franchise pamphlet and stuff like that and I said, “Somebody would make a killing in Ocean View because there’s nothing here.”

RAMBERG: Steve Greenbaum is one of the cofounders of PostNet.

STEVE GREENBAUM: …But you are reasonably capturing every email address that you can…

CROW: Absolutely.

RAMBERG: He finds that people like Amanda and Dennis have ideal backgrounds for becoming franchisees, people who are team players, but who also want to be their own boss.

GREENBAUM: Veterans have innate qualities and respect for systems and following processes and-- and are very driven people that understand that results at the end of the day are what matters.

CROW: We don’t compete against each other, we work together. And that’s something that was instilled in me in the military, as everyone is family.

ALARD: This wheel rolls this out and cuts it. When you press this on the package it just doesn’t go anywhere. I’ve been using this for all of the packaging.

CROW: Does the cost weigh more on this tape or…

ALARD: Not really.

CROW: I use Dennis’ store’s equipment often. If Dennis ever called me to say, “I needed,” you know, just manual labor help like stuffing envelopes or something like that, I would absolutely pack everybody up and go help his store as much as possible.

RAMBERG: Of course, all this sharing resources and information isn’t free. Franchisees pay significant fees and royalties, which go right to the PostNet founders or franchisors, Steve Greenbaum and Brian Spindel.

CROW: Initially, I think the idea of being a franchisee definitely made me feel like I would always be working for like Steve and Brian.

GREENBAUM: The investment level is around 200,000. That’s all in with working capital, breaks down of an original franchise free of around $30,000, a store development fee which is just under a $100,000 to build out the store.

CROW: I think you also need to accept the fact that you are always going to be giving money to your franchisor, so, forever. And not all entrepreneurs want to do that and that’s why people don’t franchise.

ALARD: The amount I pay out in royalties is-- is nothing compared to what I would spend in repairing my own mistakes and not knowing, you know, what to do next.

GREENBAUM: The right reasons to become a franchisee is recognizing that there’s strength in numbers and that joining a-- a large organization with a brain trust and resources creates a tremendous amount of opportunity.

RAMBERG: Helpful advice and operations manuals can make a big difference, but they can only take you so far.

GREENBAUM: The wrong reason to join a franchisee is to think that because you buy a franchise, you’re going to be successful automatically. It’s not the case.

RAMBERG: According to the SBA, buying a franchise alone is no better guarantee of success then
starting up a business from scratch and Greenbaum agrees.
GREENBAUM: At the end of the day the execution is really at the store level or with the owner themselves and their ability.
RAMBERG: For people like Amanda and Dennis, that’s where the entrepreneurial drive kicks in to make the real difference between failure and success.
CROW: Ho, I wish I could have been making money on day one, but I know that that takes time and as much energy as I put into it, is what I definitely see come out on weeks that I don’t get out of the store as much and do as much marketing, that’s the weeks that I don’t see my sales where I wanted them to be. So I know that it is a direct reflection of how hard I work and I completely understand that.