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Cover Story

By DONNA BOYLE SCHWARTZ

GEEK SPEAK

Marine Corps spouse Julia Taylor empowers women to pursue business ownership through innovative entrepreneurial venture, GeekPack

Maintaining consistent employment is often cited as one of the biggest challenges faced by military spouses, as frequent relocations can wreak havoc on job continuity. A unique entrepreneurial initiative, GeekPack, equips women—including many military spouses and veterans—with the skills, strategies and support they need to start and grow businesses that thrive in a digital world.

Founded by former intelligence officer and Marine Corps spouse Julia Taylor, GeekPack is an online resource dedicated to empowering women to create technological businesses. “We’ve got a big vision,” Taylor declares. “At GeekPack, we are on a mission to equip 1 million women by 2030 to build sustainable, profitable businesses that give them the business and lifestyle that they want. We joke that our tagline is to help women build businesses for all the right ‘f-ing’ reasons: freedom, flexibility and fulfillment.”

“Since 2018, we’ve reached over 125,000 women—which I know is a huge number, and I’m very pleased with it—but we’ve still got a long way to go,” she adds. “We will reach that goal through a variety of avenues, everything from organic social media to our email list to a podcast, and most recently, partnering with organizations, like Verizon and TikTok, that can help amplify our reach.”

Taylor calls herself an “accidental entrepreneur” and relates that she never intended to start her own business. “My entrepreneurial journey really starts back in 2008,” she recalls. “I used to work for the U.S. intelligence community – it was my dream job – and in 2008, I was deployed to Afghanistan. While I was there, I met my husband, who was in the British military at the time, he’s now retired. We met, fell in love, and I ended up



leaving my job with the government, moving to the U.K., and became a military spouse, which I’m very proud of, but my career progression took a nosedive because we moved a lot.

“A few years into bouncing from different jobs, I ended up Googling how to start my own business,” she continues. “I came across coding and web design, taught myself everything I needed to know on Google and YouTube, and started my own business. In 2018, my husband retired from the military, and we decided to sell everything, move into an RV and travel around the U.S. looking for our forever home. While traveling full-time, I was sharing about the experience on social media, explaining how I was able to work and travel full-time. A lot of people ended up reaching out asking me how I was able to do it and if I could teach them how to start their own location-independent business. That is where GeekPack was born.”

GeekPack empowers women by providing “community,

confidence and hands-on learning.” The organization offers a variety of both free and paid informational programs, workshops, and events that serve women at all stages of business, from beginners just getting started to more established businesses looking to scale.

One of the programs Taylor says she is most excited about is a partnership program with Verizon, creating free, six-week cohorts for small business owners investigating digital skills including digital marketing, creating and managing websites, social media, client acquisition, and more. “We run these six-week cohorts throughout the year,” Taylor explains. “We have a variety of free and paid programming that is available for any small business owner. The free digital skills cohorts with

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WOMEN'S INITIATIVE
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Verizon are open to any US small business, and there is a very simple application. This is one of our most popular and most in-demand programs, and we're doing our best to spread the word to get as many small business owners through the program as possible. Because not only is it a huge value add, it's also free for the business owner."

According to Taylor, GeekPack partners with major companies—including Verizon and TikTok—to provide free programming and events. Paid programming is typically funded by the individual small business owner or through

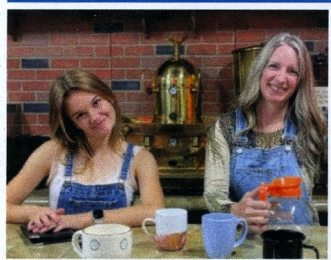
scholarships. "We love partnering with organizations that serve small business owners, military-connected business owners, rural entrepreneurs, and we're especially excited about this year's digital skills cohorts," she comments. "All U.S. business owners are welcome to apply; it's completely free." The application takes less than 10 minutes and can be accessed at: geekpack.com/cohort.

Taylor points out that a combination of factors sparked the idea for GeekPack. "People were asking me to teach them how to start and grow an online business that they could do from anywhere, and I saw a gap in the market for a techie, geeky community for women where they could ask questions without fear of being made fun of - hence, GeekPack," she notes. "In our community, there is no such thing as a stupid question. This is really important to me because when I was teaching myself to code and build websites, I would go into online groups and forums and ask questions and would be made fun of for asking 'stupid questions.' So, more than anything, I wanted to create a space for women to feel comfortable asking questions without the fear of being made fun of and also to be encouraged to learn more, do more, and grow their business and build a business that gives them freedom, flexibility, and fulfillment."

Taylor is passionate about helping military spouses start and succeed in their own businesses. "Starting their own location-independent business can be done fully online," she asserts. "Not only are they able to work from anywhere, but if it's their own business they can work when they want, where they want, how they want and with whom they want. That's exactly what we teach: everything from brainstorming business ideas to the legit side of starting a business to finding clients to growing and scaling. That's what we do in GeekPack."

Success Stories

GeekPack founder and chief executive officer Julia Taylor notes that the online community posts numerous "success stories" on the organization's website, geekpack.com. Here are a few testimonials from entrepreneurs, including participants in the six-week digital skills cohort in partnership with Verizon:



Lizzy and her 17-year-old daughter **Beth**, who have gone through our GeekPack programs. Beth is on track to earn \$60,000 before she graduates high school.

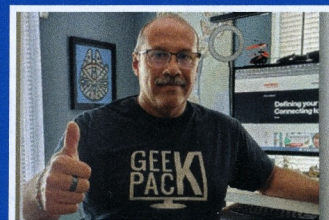


Dora strengthened her 50-year-old family business by embracing consistency and digital storytelling. Through the Digital Ready Cohort, Dora built consistency in her marketing and re-energized Yuca's online community. Not long after, her continued efforts and visibility were recognized with a \$50,000 grant that will help her grow the business even further.



Jessica went from creative overwhelm to consistent action by breaking her goals into manageable steps. In just six weeks, she built momentum, started booking more commissions, and finally felt confident showing up for her business every day.

Rafael joined the Digital Ready Cohort expecting to improve his website—and ended up rebuilding his business strategy from the ground up. He clarified his niche, relaunched his brand, and gained the focus and confidence to attract the right clients and scale smarter.



Beverly, a 73-year-old retiree based in Jamaica. She's a freelance web developer topping up her retirement income with the skills she learned from GeekPack.

