



TAKING THE HELM: BUILDING A CAREER THAT BELONGS TO YOU

By Jess Sands, Milspo Business Network

As military spouses and partners, we spend our lives in a state of constant anticipation: waiting for the signal to move, deployment to end, or leave that might not happen.

For many of us, the trade-off for our partner's service has been our own professional identity. Spending years putting our ambitions on the back burner, waiting for that elusive 'perfect time' to fix our careers. **But there is a significant shift happening across the Naval community - spouses are no longer just 'waiting'.** They are building epic, resilient businesses that thrive precisely because of the unique challenges of military life, not in spite of them.

THE REALITY OF THE MILSPO BUSINESS

Let's be honest: building a business as a Naval partner isn't like starting one in 'civvy street'.

You're not only an entrepreneur; you might have to solo-

parent for nine months while your partner is at sea, or pack your entire office into boxes with only a few weeks' notice to move.

It can feel easier to put your dreams on hold until 'life settles'. But as we all know, in the Navy, life rarely does. **Good news, the skills you've already developed as a military spouse; resilience, problem-solving, and the ability to find a solution when things go sideways, are the exact skills needed to run a successful business.**

You already have the toolkit, you just need to apply it.

A JOURNEY OF BELONGING: BEKKY'S STORY

Bekky, a Navy wife and mum of three, shows how this is done in real life. Her business, The Crafty Starfish (craftystarfish.co.uk), didn't start with a grand boardroom plan; it started with the raw reality of life on a new Naval patch.

When Bekky first became a military partner, she felt like she

had lost her spark. After moving to a new area where she didn't know a soul while her husband was away, she found herself sitting at home wondering who she was supposed to be now. "I felt like I was just 'the wife'," Bekky recalls, **"I was looking for something that was mine - something that didn't just disappear every time we moved"**.

Bekky had always loved sewing. It was her creative escape, and she began making clothes for her children because she couldn't find anything she liked. Soon, other parents noticed her unique designs and asked where to buy them. The seed of a business was planted, but timing felt impossible.

"I was pregnant with my third child, we were in the middle of a pandemic, and my husband was deployed," Bekky says. Most people would have said that was the worst time to launch a brand, but it was the lifeline Bekky needed. Spending her evenings at her sewing machine once the children were in bed. It wasn't just about the garments; it was about reclaiming her identity and carving out a space that belonged solely to her.

However, having talent and running a business are two different things. Bekky admits she felt overwhelmed by the business side. She decided to join the **Business Launch Accelerator Start-Up course**, and it changed her perspective entirely.

"The course gave me permission to call myself a business owner", Bekky explains. *"It took the 'scary' out of the legal bits and gave me a roadmap. But more than that, it gave me a community. For the first time, I was talking to people who understood that I might not be able to work next week because of a sudden deployment change, and that was okay".*

Today, *The Crafty Starfish* is a professional brand with a loyal following. Bekky has proven that even when you are solo-parenting and living out of moving boxes, you can build something that is entirely yours.

YOUR ROADMAP: STARTING WHERE YOU ARE

If Bekky's story resonates with you, know that you don't need a huge budget or a permanent office to begin. Here is how you can start your groundwork today:

1. Finding Your 'Why' and Making it Work for You

Before you look at spreadsheets, find your "Why." In our community, lives are dictated by sailing schedules that change in a heartbeat. Your "Why" is the reason you'll keep going, and a sense of purpose that exists independently of the Service.

2. Progress Over Perfection Don't wait for the perfect website or dedicated office. Just start. Use your kitchen table. Some of the most successful businesses in the Milspo Network were started in the middle of a move, surrounded by half-packed crates.

3. Navigating the Rules "Am I allowed to run a business from my Service Family Accommodation?" Generally, yes, but you must ask permission by completing a form with Pinnacle. If you own your home or rent privately, check with your local council. It might feel like another hoop to jump through, but it provides the peace of mind to grow your business legally.

4. Registering the Basics For most, being a Sole Trader is the simplest way to begin. Register with HMRC, track your outgoings, and open a separate business bank account. Keeping "work" money away from "life" money is the first step to feeling like a professional.



5. The Power of the "Fleet" The biggest hurdle for Milspo entrepreneurs is isolation. When your partner is away and you're in a new area, self-doubt can creep in. A community of people who understand this way of life is vital.

The Milspo Network was built for this reason. We are a community of over 1,450 spouses, partners, and other-halves building businesses together. We offer virtual co-working and a space to share wins and wobbles with people who truly get it.

Whether you have a tiny seed of an idea or a hobby you've practiced for years, now is the time to take it seriously and turn your passion into a portable career that survives the unpredictable Naval life.



The Business Launch Accelerator Course: If you're ready to go from idea to launch, our fully-funded course (supported by the MOD) is designed for you. www.milspo.co.uk/course

The Find A Milspo Directory: Once you're ready to show the world what you do, get listed to help customers find and support you. www.findamilspo.co.uk



Jess Sands is the founder of the Milspo® Network CIC and host of The InDependent Spouse Podcast. Since 2012, she has built two successful businesses while navigating the highs and lows of military life. Find out more at www.milspo.co.uk.