



Success News

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“The Importance of Teaming, forming Mentor/Protégé relationships, and Joint Ventures”

Lani Hay and Dawn Halfaker’s paths were unlikely to cross. Lani grew up in Manassas, Virginia, while Dawn Halfaker grew up on the other side of the country in San Diego, California. Just a few years ago they were considered rivals. Both women played college basketball, Lani played for the Naval Academy and Dawn played for West Point. Upon graduation their military careers took different paths. Lani patrolled the skies, conducting reconnaissance missions around the world as the Air Intelligence Officer for a P-3 Orion squadron, while Dawn patrolled the streets of Iraq as a Platoon Commander protecting high value areas with her Military Police Company. Both women received service related disabilities during their military service. Lani became partially deaf requiring a medical waiver to fly and Dawn lost her right arm during a mortar attack in Iraq. The two of them have since left the military and are pursuing careers as entrepreneurs and business leaders in the federal marketplace while continuing their service to the Department of Defense in a support capacity.

Lani Hay is President and CEO of Lanmark Technology, Inc. (LMT) and Dawn Halfaker is the President of Halfaker and Associates, LLC. In five years LMT has generated approximately \$15M in revenue while Halfaker and Associates concluded their second year of business hitting the \$4M mark. Both companies are fast growth companies and have been successful by taking advantage of the opportunities provided for small businesses in the federal marketplace. Both firms are SBA 8(a) Certified, Woman-owned, Service Disabled Veteran-owned, Small Disadvantaged Businesses with offices located in HUB Zones. Additionally, the two companies have focused on strategically aligning themselves with business partners and industry leaders that have demonstrated success.

Lani Hay, who was the SBA’s 2007 National Minority Small Business Person of the Year, says “mentoring is essential at every stage of growth. Teaming and developing mentor/protégé relationships that are mutually beneficial are the keys to success in today’s business world.” Dawn also recognizes the importance of being mentored by not only large businesses but by medium-sized businesses as well. She states, “LMT was launched three years before I started my company so a lot of the questions I have and the obstacles my company is facing are similar to what LMT recently overcame. When my company received its 8(a) Certification, Lani stressed the importance of utilizing the SBA to champion my business. The SBA has been such a valuable asset for LMT that she personally took me to the Washington District Office to meet everyone who assisted her company. From that initial meeting I received invaluable advice on forming joint ventures to grow my business.” Lani and Dawn were introduced several years ago by a mutual friend, Joe Galloway, who co-authored the best-selling

1992 book, We Were Soldiers Once...And Young. We Were Soldiers is the 2002 film based on his 1992 book.

Lani says, "I appreciate having the opportunity to be a business mentor to Dawn as she continues to inspire me. She has enabled me to truly be successful as a businessperson. It is my belief that the ability to give back is not only a gift of success but it is also one of the responsibilities and measures of success." Lani also emphasizes the importance of being mentored at every level of business growth and the need to understand that individuals may outgrow their mentors at different stages of their growth. LMT's business relationship with Halfaker and Associates is also a strategic one. Where LMT is no longer able to compete in the Small Business area, a teaming relationship is established.

Lani and Dawn not only share business advice and strategy, but they also lend their personal expertise to further each other's success. Once separated by coasts and rivals on the basketball courts followed by military careers separated by land and air, they have finally joined as partners in the business world. LMT is currently supporting the Army in developing IED Defeat technologies while Halfaker and Associates supports the Naval Facilities Engineering Command. Two individuals who were on seemingly different paths have intersected yet again in their continued service to the country.

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