

From Battlefields to Boardrooms

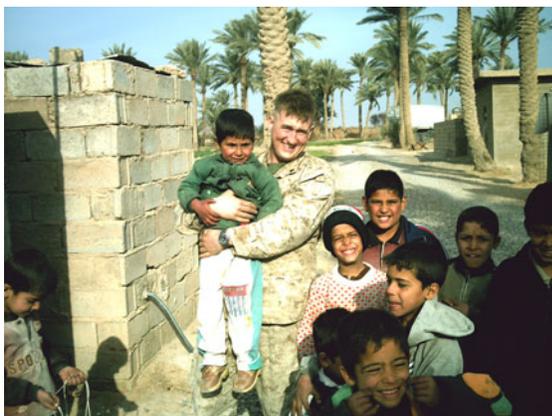
A Marine's Story

Upon returning from Iraq, most veterans look for some much deserved rest and relaxation. However, Marine Kyle Blades of Milwaukee's Fox Company, 2nd Battalion, 24th Marines decided to start a business instead. Kyle fostered the idea of starting his own business while on his second tour in Iraq. September of 2008 was the launch date for **Rebel**, the name he chose for his business.



Rebel, located in St. Francis, Wisconsin, assists businesses in their growth. **Rebel's** services are similar to those offered by marketing, advertising and public relation firms but differ in their approach to reaching consumers. Businesses are looking for firms to look at their entire consumer interaction instead of just one way to reach a consumer. Instead of looking for a firm to create a new advertising campaign, businesses now look for a firm to pinpoint how consumers receive and perceive the clients messaging. **Rebel** studies what the client's target consumer is looking for, what the client has to offer and how the consumer can be led to the client. When this study is done, the client has a strategy and the products in place to reach their desired consumer. To find out more about **Rebel**, visit their website at <http://www.timeforarebel.com>.

Kyle's decision to join the Corps was in January of 2003 but his military service did not begin until July 28, 2003 after overcoming several obstacles. Obstacle number one, he was over the required weight limit. He began an intense weight loss routine and was ready for the Corps in May of 2003. Obstacle number two, he was ineligible and was discharged because they discovered he had been described as an "inhaler" when he was a child. Kyle knew this was not the case and fought the decision with several in-depth medical investigations and physical fitness tests. Finally, he re-enlisted and headed to San Diego to start his training. Obstacle number three, he got several large blisters on his hands from intense physical training that became severely infected requiring surgery. After several weeks in the hospital, he had the choice of staying in San Diego or returning home with the hope of re-enlisting after he was healed. Kyle chose to remain in San Diego, doubling his time in recruit training.



After completing his transition to the Marines, Kyle returned home for a few days and then reported to the School of Infantry. After this training returning home to check into his Marine Reserve Unit, he was told he was getting deployed to Iraq. Kyle was stationed just south of Baghdad where his unit engaged in retaking a town that had not been occupied since the invasion a year earlier. After several weeks of constant intense battle, the town was fortified and the journey of returning peace began.

To assist in engaging the local populous, after previously completing an introduction course in Arabic, Kyle took it upon himself to learn the language in depth.

Kyle returned to the States in 2005 and began his professional career with Harley Davidson. As a marketing coordinator for the parts and accessories department, Kyle was in charge of up to fifty packaging projects at a time as well as the complete marketing plan for Buell Parts and Accessories. Kyle's leadership soon became apparent and he became an interim manager in his department during a crucial transition period. He was promoted to the retail environment group as product development and retail programs coordinator. Since he was hired during a crucial transition period, he held the positions of visual merchandising administration coordinator and assistant product develop manager simultaneously. After this tumultuous period, Kyle focused on his original duties and was put in control of the entire Buell Brand at retail.



In 2007, Kyle's unit went to Chile to train the Marine Corps in South America and later that year he was again deployed to Iraq arriving in country in January of 2008. Because of his proficiency in the Arabic language, he became the Iraqi

Police liaison. Kyle also served as an intelligence representative that resulted in the capture of the few remaining terrorists in the area. During this second deployment, the idea for **Rebel** was born. Little did Kyle know how quickly this "idea" would come to fruition as, during this deployment, Harley made several rounds of layoffs that terminated his position and Kyle has been working on starting **Rebel** ever since.

After five years in the Marine Corps, Kyle has established himself as a Marine that has stood out among the best. He received the Navy Achievement Medal for each of his deployments to Iraq and the Wisconsin Service Member of the Year award for his ability to rise above expectations regardless of the situation. Kyle's drive was proven when he taught himself the Arabic Language while in country, facing long exhausting days. His determination and insight proved invaluable to his unit during a very complex campaign. In between deployments, Kyle has continuously pursued his higher education focusing on global business. He expects to earn his BSBA from Cardinal Stritch College in 2010 and will begin his Masters work immediately thereafter. Since his return in late August of 2008, Kyle has been promoted to Platoon Sergeant and continues to serve his country to the highest degree.

The Small Business Administration has been fortunate to be of assistance to Kyle in the pursuit of his quest to own his own business. This writer received an email from Kyle, right after he returned from Iraq, seeking assistance with getting his business started. He spoke with SBA's Wisconsin Veteran liaison regarding programs available for veterans and was then directed to SCORE, "Counselors to America's Small Business," where he received help in preparing a business plan and information about general start-up procedures. Since that initial email in November 2008, Kyle has secured an SBA Patriot Express loan to assist with the start-up of his business.

Kyle has proved his "merit" in serving his country, done his homework to start his own business and demonstrated all the positive traits that make up America's finest entrepreneurs. SBA is proud to have been able to have a part in what will undoubtedly be a very successful future for this dedicated enterprising young man.