

# The AMLA Times

June 2019

**Teach-Coach-Mentor-Lead**



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## In This Issue:

Member  
Highlights

Mentorship

Branding

Scholarships

New Board of  
Directors

## *The Other Side*

We all have a journey. Like so many others who dedicated their lives to military service, mine had a beginning and an end. After 23 years offered to our nation, I found myself back in the world waiting to start the next chapter of my life.

My departure wasn't planned. It started with a diagnosis. Then an MEB, PEB, and ultimately, an appointment with the VA; it happened so fast. In time, I just stopped coming to work. No, I didn't quit, I just quietly faded away with the support of my Command and the wonderful people I worked with. I was physically, mentally, and emotionally unfit for duty and more so, unfit to plan the next stage of my life without assistance. My wife was a wonderful comfort during this time; and, on the eve of my departure from the Army, we learn that we were about to have our first child together.

After my departure, I focused on healing. I engaged in rigorous physical therapy in order to regain the simple ability to walk. I worked with multiple doctors, pharmacists, therapists, and other health care professionals to better my quality of life. In time, I regained some of my abilities and opted for work.

I started out as a substitute teacher in the Greater Kansas City Metro Area. This gave me immense confidence. After some planning, coordination and the encouragement of a supportive peer network, I along with my good friend Jim Steddum, founded the Association of Military Legal Administrators – an enterprise we hoped would help unite our cohort and develop a strong network of professionals poised to help and support one-another every step of the way as they journeyed from military service to the next phase of their lives.

With the positive momentum of these successes, my wife and I decided to move our family to my childhood home in Michigan's Upper Peninsula where we would build our forever home. Along the way, I began to gain some stride. I secured a job – a very meaningful and purposeful job – at our destination location; I felt like I was back to my old self. My thinking became clearer, my body responded to my new-found enthusiasm,

and I ultimately began helping others start small businesses in the local area, thus beginning my entrepreneurial crusade.

In time, my progress came to an abrupt halt. After numerous visits to the emergency room, the rigors of routine activity became too overwhelming to bear. The cold of the north proved too unbearable for my disabilities and my family returned to the Kansas City area. After months of reassessment by the VA, I was categorized as Permanently and Totally Disabled as well as Individually Unemployable. I will confess, I have some good days, and some bad days. On those good days, I take advantage of every ounce of energy I have to enjoy each moment with my family and those I love.

Today, I still help others with their business exploits, as I am able. My wife has launched her own successful business, and I remain at home with our two daughters. The simple gratification of sharing your family's life, continuously, brings to realization the full consequence of military service and the sacrifice each of us has endured – missing holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, and so forth.

This story is not meant to discourage anyone in any way. As you find yourself journeying from military service you may find you have more opportunities than others; exploit them. Some may not be as best equipped for their journey as they'd like; work to improve your circumstance. Life and time are precious, and what we do with both may characterize how we will be remembered; we can all thrive with a little support and a lot of compassion. Regardless of your circumstance when transitioning, know when you are blessed, overcome any obstacles that can be overcome, understand yourself, your limitations, and your capabilities, and make the best possible choices for you and your family.

Transitioning can be a stressful but needn't be when you know you are not alone and there are supportive people and agencies out there to guide you along your journey.

**by William J. Teeple**

## Formal Mentorship:

### An Experiment by the 19th Judge Advocate Warrant Officer Advance Course

During the 19th Judge Advocate Warrant Officer Advance Course (JA WOAC) in 2018, we were asked to start the beginnings of a formal mentorship program. Since we were living in the benevolent “Jimtatorship”, we complied with the exercise. The class received a list of Legal Administrators (LAs) who completed the Warrant Officer Basic Course in the last couple years. The 19th WOAC students split the list of names; each student received three to six junior LAs to contact. We thought it prudent for National Guard LAs to get National Guard LAs, Reserve LAs to get Reserve LAs, Active Duty to get Active Duty, and Marines to get Marines. The goal was to build a bridge between juniors and seniors to ensure no one was left on an “Island of One,” which the job of a Legal Administrator sometimes feels like. The class had a long and heated debate about what constituted formal mentorship and what it looked like. Could a formal mentorship program exist, or is mentorship something that should not be formalized because it is personal and should be built on trust and/or like-mindedness? This debate carried over breaks, lunches, and dinners. Most of the class was opposed to a formal mentorship program; not to the idea of mentorship, but to the idea of mentorship being formal and scripted.

One of the problems we encountered is that it is awkward to say, “Hey Stranger, I am here to mentor you.” It is a statement right up there with, “I am from the government and I am here to help.” I honestly believe that this factor led the WOAC students to reach out only to about half of the junior LAs on the list. We further found we received responses from only about half of the junior LAs to whom we reached out. I mean, it is bold for a mentor to say, “I am so good you should want to be like me.” Even fewer juniors have remained in contact. Out of the original six I contacted, only one showed an interest in continued correspondence.

The LA holds a unique role within the OSJA. The LA is expected to professionally and expertly handle any issue that arises within the OSJA, allowing the attorneys to practice law and the paralegals to support the attorneys. Junior LAs are often placed in offices where they are the only legal administrator on the installation. Legal administrators are competent high-achievers who truly embody the adage, “quiet professional.” The JAG

Corps inadvertently perpetuates the island mentality held by many, preventing many junior LAs from reaching out and asking for help. Instead, some spend hours trying to learn systems of which they only have a general familiarization. Although they know that there are resources available, junior LAs choose to tackle challenging projects in a vacuum. Working in a vacuum is frustrating; as the workload begins to be oppressive, these junior LAs start to question their decision to access. They can feel overwhelmed and be embarrassed to reach out. In addition to the sheer shock of what is actually required of the position, their inexperience makes it difficult to properly articulate their actual issue and need. They don’t know what they don’t know.

Senior legal administrators hide behind many excuses of why they don’t reach out to juniors. The two biggest excuses seem to be time and faith in the junior to accomplish the mission. If seniors make a little more time, the juniors will be able to accomplish their missions with ease. This will also aid in the transformation of explicit knowledge into tacit knowledge. In contrast, when I was a junior LA stuck on my “Island of One,” I reached out to senior LAs with my newly found LA woes. They were lifesavers. They listened, reframed my issues with a fresh perspective, and gave me advice to help me rise above my woes. There was no formal mentorship program, and I was the one who reached out to them. So, was the 19th WOAC exercise a failure since so few juniors engaged in and accepted the formal mentorship outreach? Is it good enough to just let a junior LA know that there really is someone out there who is willing to listen and help? Is the building of one or two relationships enough? What is the mark of success that we should use for a formal mentorship program?

As LAs, we tend to drive for one-hundred percent in our metrics. Does formal mentorship require a 100% success rate? For me, the students of the 19th JA WOAC being able to reach out to junior LAs was a success. I think the exercise was worthwhile because a connection was made with at least one junior LA.

**By: CW2 Rick Eswine**

**With Collaboration From: CW2 Brandon Brookhart and  
CW2 Crystal Aldridge**

## The Importance of Personal Branding

By: Jennifer A. Garrett

*Nike, Apple, Walt Disney, Google, Starbucks. Aside from being large corporations, these companies all share something else in common – They have some of the world’s most powerful brands. Their logos and their brands are immediately recognizable.*

Why is this important to you? Because similar to a corporation, you also have a brand – though it’s not called your corporate brand, but rather it’s your *personal brand*.

That’s right, whether you know what it is or not, you have a brand. And here’s the real kicker: Your current brand may not be accurate, and it may not be the brand that you want. But it will shape your career and future opportunities and relationships. Let’s think about this for a few minutes.

So, what is this personal brand thing all about? Your brand is what people say about you when you are not in the room. It is what people think you stand for and it should reflect what you are passionate about. It is what you bring to all of your personal and business relationships. It is the value you command in the marketplace. Think of it as the goodwill on your personal balance sheet. You are your own corporation and your brand is something that you must actively manage.

In order to have a successful brand, you want to make sure that you are creating impressions and perceptions that accurately describe you. People will associate what they see and hear about you with your brand. Make sure your brand is polished and current.

*In my book, *Move the Ball*, I highlighted the importance of playing like a free agent. Why? Because free agents are always concerned about their marketability. Now, whether you are currently looking for a new position or not, the impressions that people form about you, your leadership style, and your brand will follow you for years to come. You need to make sure you are managing your marketability and ensuring that your brand is consistent with how you want people to think about you.*

Here are just some examples of what a successful brand can do for you:

- *You are “top of mind” when promotions, choice assignments, training programs, and other key opportunities become available.*
- *People seek your advice and want your expertise.*
- *People are happy to mentor and sponsor you.*
- *People want to work with you.*

It is a common misconception that hard work alone will get you noticed. Being able to perform well is only one factor in having a successful career. The image that you convey and the exposure that you have is really what is going to set you apart from others. How do you do this? It starts by managing your personal brand.

Where do you begin? Start by identifying your key strengths. They are the foundation of your brand. Next think about what your interests are. Make sure your brand suits those interests so you can pursue them. Reflect on your values. It is important that your brand aligns with them. Remember, your brand should leverage your assets.

It is essential that you don’t try to be all things to all people. You need to be selective. This is a common pitfall that people make when creating a brand. Additionally, it is important to know what your current brand is. Solicit feedback from other people. Is what you hear about yourself reflective of what you want, or not? You want to know why people do or do not want you on their team. You’ll also want to find out what strengths people think you have. Equally important is what changes would make so that you can be even more successful. Managing your personal brand is not a five-minute exercise. It requires you to continually be mindful of the image you are conveying to people, in person as well as in the digital space (i.e. on social media).

For some, the concept of personal branding, meaning the practice of people marketing themselves as brands, may seem like an exercise in vanity. Are you one who doesn't like talking about yourself or boasting about your accomplishments? You aren't alone. While this may seem like an exercise in bragging, you have to get comfortable with being able to promote yourself when it makes sense to do so.

When done properly, having a personal brand can be much more than just self-promotion. A personal brand helps you define who you are and who you want to be. It gives you clarity around your purpose. Your personal brand can also establish your leadership style and how you want to be known both in and out of the workplace.

Regardless of your profession, a personal brand can also help you gain confidence, credibility, and courage as you define your priorities in life. Additionally, it can help you:

- *Identify and understand your strengths and weaknesses.*
- *Determine how to perform at your best level.*
- *Build your "tribe"—those who share the same values as you.*
- *Demonstrate your value through your actions.*
- *Stand out from your peers and your competition.*

The point of this article is that it's important for you to understand that everyone has a personal brand, whether you want one or not. There is no choice. It is defined by everything you do, from what you wear to how you carry on conversations, to how you compose emails to what you post on social media.

If you are not taking control and managing your brand, that means others are doing it for you. Play as if you were a free agent, always being mindful that people are constantly watching and forming impressions of you.

Perceptions and your personal brand can open doors for you. Conversely, they can also close them swiftly if you aren't managing them. Be sure your actions and your digital presence are consistent with the image you want to portray.

In American football, free agents are proactive with their brand because their future is uncertain. Even if you aren't concerned about the next few years, your brand should be a priority. It is imperative you take control of your image and what impressions others form about you.

Defining your personal brand will require time and many iterations to refine. In actuality, your personal brand will evolve as you grow both personally and professionally.

Your personal brand is a continual journey of self-discovery, and the sooner you take control of it, the sooner you can get on with achieving the most important goals in your life. Are you ready to work on your brand?

#### **Additional resources:**

LinkedIn is the world's largest professional social media platform and is a great way for you to strengthen your personal brand, grow your network, look for a job, and learn and grow from thought-leaders and influencers.

If you would like some additional training on how to maximize the use of LinkedIn for your personal brand, you can sign up for Jennifer's Enhance Your Personal Brand LinkedIn Profile Mini-Course at the following link: <https://movetheball.mykajabi.com/offers/7fobKuMF>

Jennifer's LinkedIn account is [www.linkedin.com/in/movetheball](http://www.linkedin.com/in/movetheball) if you would like to see a profile example.

Visit [www.jenniferagarrett.com](http://www.jenniferagarrett.com) for more information and content that can help you "move the ball" forward personally and professionally.

## Scholarship Update

As we wrap up the inaugural year for the AMLA Scholarship Program, let us set a goal that each year will be bigger and better than the last because growth of a program is an investment towards the future.

*An investment in knowledge pays the best interest. ~Benjamin Franklin*

The scholarship submission period will close on Sunday, June 30th when the committee will begin reviewing the applications received.

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## New Board of Directors

**Congratulations to the newly elected Board of Directors which will be installed at the Annual Meeting of the Members, 28 June 2019 at the Double Tree Hotel at 5:30 pm Eastern Time.**

William Teeple (returning Director (President) and Co-Founder)  
Jim Steddum (returning Director (Governance Committee) and Co-Founder)  
Monica Heuer (new Director)  
Kim Pastor (new Director)  
Andy Perkins (new Director)  
Charlie Poulton (new Director)  
Deborah Rivera (new Director)  
Vicki Slade (new Director)  
Rebekah Stuyvesant (new Director)

Jonnee' Carter newly inducted into the Authentic Purpose Advisory Committee along with Will, Jim, and Eddie Hernandez (First Member).

Tom Chilton, ex-officio Liaison to The Judge Advocate General'S Legal Center and School

Special Thanks to Brent Reeves (Vice President), Amy Reeves (Treasurer), Jonnee' Carter (Chief Administrative Officer/ Secretary), Eddie Hernandez (Membership Chair), and Matt Casey (Public Relations Chair) for their hard work and dedication to our organization.

Executive Committee Appointments and Committee assignments will be announced at the Annual Meeting of the Members.