



## Creating meaning at Work for Military Spouses

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**Guests:** **Cassandra Sullivan**, Senior Consultant, Deloitte Consulting LLP

**Quiana Downie**, Senior Consultant, Deloitte Services LP

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**Anna Paridee**, Managing Director, Deloitte Tax LLP

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A lot learned folks don't get the opportunity to do this kind of work and their daytime job. And so I think breaking things up and being able to kind of step away and see something that is kind of greater than you, it really makes me feel like I have really left my mark, I've built a legacy

**Burt Rea (Burt):** Making work meaningful by giving people a sense of belonging and

building trust in relationships is a crucial part of leading a social enterprise. But for certain groups in the workforce that meaning can be harder to come by. I think we can all appreciate the personal challenges that come from being a military spouse, but the professional challenges can be considerable as well. Unpredictable and sometimes frequent relocations, perhaps to locations not conducive to maintaining a steady job

and career, are an ongoing challenge. To provide support for military spouses, our guests today, who are military spouses themselves, cofounded the Military Spouse Initiative, a volunteer-supported community for military spouses. They are Cassandra Sullivan, a senior consultant for Deloitte Consulting LLP, and Quiana Downie, a senior consultant for Deloitte and Touche LLP. We will hear from them about how the program

started and the profound impact it has had on its members. Later, we will be joined by my Deloitte colleagues, Monte Zaben, Anna Paridee, and Bob Phelan, who will share their personal and professional perspectives on how organizations can foster meaning in the workplace by supporting the human experience at work.

**Jeff Winn (Jeff):** My name is Jeff Winn, and I am a managing director with Deloitte Cyber Risk practice. I have been with Deloitte for now over 12 years. I am a retired Lieutenant Colonel in the United States Marine Corp, having served for 23 years. During my time with Deloitte, I have been really proud to be a senior sponsor for veterans' initiatives, including our Deloitte Military Spouse Initiative. And it's this initiative that will be the subject of our interview today. I have with me today Cassandra Sullivan and Quiana Downie. Cassie and Quiana, welcome to CapitalH. I am very excited to have you here today to talk about Deloitte's Military Spouse Initiative, especially so since you are the cofounders of this highly successful initiative. To get us started, it will be great for each of you to share a brief introduction of yourself, including a bit about your journey as a military spouse.

**Quiana Downie (Quiana):** Sure. Thanks for having me. I am Quiana Downie. I am a manager in our Information Technology Services organization. I joined the firm back in 2015, and I currently support operations for our technology and infrastructure group and work closely with our chief technology officer to execute organizational strategies. My husband is an active duty JAG officer, recently pinned Major last week actually, and he has served since 2000, and we have been married for eight years now. So we've moved several times throughout that period. He is deployed. He has gone temporary duty out of country and in country. There have been lots of challenges since he has been in. We also have two young children, TJ and Amari, who are six and two, which just adds another level of complexity to being a military spouse and being a military family. And I guess to answer your question about my journey as a military spouse, I have had different jobs in an array of areas, from

investment banking, accounting, I even sold life insurance for a little bit. And I say all that to say that I've always had a job, I've always been able to find a job, but being at Deloitte has really helped me to find a career and really pursue that and continue to grow that alongside my husband serving our country.

**Jeff:** That's awesome. Tell him congratulations for me. Getting on Major, going to field grade is a big deal, so that's fantastic.

**Quiana:** It was an amazing experience.

**Jeff:** Cassie, tell us a little bit about your story.

**Cassandra Sullivan (Cassie):** I'm Cassandra Sullivan and I started at Deloitte in 2014. I joined straight out of undergrad, and I knew that military moves were going to be in my career directory, and so I went to Deloitte for that reason. I recognized that it had all these locations, had some flexible options, and I joined the federal practice in Washington, DC. And then since joining, I was in org transformation as an analyst at that time and then over my four years that I spent, I moved from DC to the Bay Area, to Greater Atlanta and Charleston, then up to New York and Connecticut, and then finally landed in Seattle. Those were all military-ordered, unpredictable, last-second, didn't know where we were going moves. So that is really where my journey with Deloitte went, along with my journey being associated as a military family member, and now I'm actually calling in from Oxford, England. I'm part of the Graduate School Assistance Program that Human Capital offers at Deloitte, where I'm sponsored and doing my one-year MBA. So, I am about eight months into that, I'm on my final term, and I'm excited to be joining Deloitte in October.

**Jeff:** That is quite a journey and heck of a lot of moving. Is that moving around really is kind of core to what we initially started to solve for, if you will? I remember Quiana was on a project that was leading at a federal client and she was the leader of it. I knew she was on the team, but I am just recollecting her coming up to me and saying,

you're a veteran, aren't you? We have this idea. So Quiana and Cassie, tell me about your idea.

**Cassie:** We were living on opposite coasts. We were dealing with different issues with the military. Mine was my kind of sudden move without a lot of tenure at Deloitte. Quiana was anticipating moves, had her family, and wanted some options for career development because she had experience working as a military spouse. So, as I was really worried about my career and the trajectory of it and didn't know if my transfer would be successful, I really just thought, even if I am going out, even if I am not able to make this successful, I want to make sure to raise awareness about this cause because I just felt that anxiety and that pain of having ambitions but having no idea, even when trying my best, how to navigate employment. And it was actually at a point when I didn't think my transfer was going through, I remember, a Friday night, 6 PM phone call from a partner saying, "you've got to move back to where you came from, we don't know if we are going to be able to make this work," and just sinking down into my knees and thinking okay, I don't know what to do next, but I need to make sure that people know my story and the story of other military spouses in this position, and that Deloitte does have infrastructure to help if we can connect the dots better. So, I shared that on Deloitte internal social network, just asking to be connected or if folks thought that was a good idea and just to put feelers out there, and then to my surprise and excitement, Quiana was on the other coast just having similar ideas and getting it started. So we got connected and honestly instant best friends, I would say, and understanding where we wanted to go, how we wanted to work together, how much we are willing to put into it. So, I will hand it over to Quiana to kind of talk about what she had done up to that point when we got connected.

**Quiana:** It is funny. It makes me think of when you watch those movies or those shows and they have two different storylines going on on one side and then they go back to the other one, that is what it makes me think of because meanwhile in DC, I had started with the firm maybe six months before our conversation, Jeff, and we had gone out to dinner and he and my husband are both JAG officers, so it was an easy connection there. We started talking about how things were going. Long story short, I ended up putting together a proposal and going to his office and he was like, go build it. I was like wait what, what do you mean go build it, because I was a new consultant and I just didn't expect a senior leader of our firm to just be so supportive and just say go do it, go make it happen. So, I was sending out emails and I was on the East Coast and Cassie was on the West Coast. And somehow, she got the email that I had been sending out trying to ask for volunteers to help me build this thing, and then the rest is history. My ideas were more about how do we bring folks to the firm, so it was more of an external thing but Cassie's was more internally focused because she was in the heat of it, so we put those ideas together and we've received awards and we were doing so many great things. It's just so empowering and so energizing to work with this group of individuals. So I am just so thankful for Jeff and all of our senior leaders for really supporting us.

**Jeff:** What was interesting to me is both of you kind of described the problem that we were trying to solve is that as Deloitte has been and is known for its focus on talent, and certainly its focus on veterans as well. How did you guys kind of build the team? Take us both of you from your perspectives along the journey of how you built it from first you two and then how you expanded and organized.

**Cassie:** So like Quiana mentioned, she thought and was thinking about this external factor and about bringing people in and offering career development, and I was thinking as I was in the heat of it about how do we keep who we have internally. So right away we organized what this internal/

external two sides of the same coin, came up with four work streams between our ambassador program, our talent work group, our career development, and our recruiting. Right away, a lot of people were excited. It took about a year to really grow and make this part of something that anyone who is associated with the military joining Deloitte hears about, but now we have those hundreds of military spouses that are formally connected. Not only do we have the services and the infrastructure and the policies to support, we have just a network, we have a family with each other, we have a group of people that are all ambitious, that are overachieving, that feel privileged to get to work harder to try and navigate the complexities of military family life and Deloitte life.

**Quiana:** The biggest thing that I have taken was when we were at the leadership summit. So, we go, we fly out many of our spouses to Deloitte University once a year for our leadership summit, where we do a number of things from strategy to professional development, and that is just one of my favorite things of the year. We also have sponsored the Military Spouse of the Year program, and so we go out to DC once a year for Military Spouse Appreciation Day and several events throughout that week. So, there are a number of things that we have done to really build this community, and I think that has really made us successful.

**Jeff:** It truly has been an amazing journey, and you described certainly as the team has grown with your leadership, one of the catch phrases that we use is by military spouses, for military spouses. How has that played out over the years?

**Cassie:** One of my favorite anecdotal experiences that made me realize how unique our program was, the way that it was built organically and grassroots, was when we were networking with other companies that have military spouse programs, particularly it was at one of the recruiting events that we went to and they had a full-time recruiter just for military spouses. They had hired 400 military spouses over one

year, which is incredible and we, of course, (12:44) celebrate that and are excited, and she heard about our program and she reached out to me and said, oh my gosh, I hired all these military spouses and then a year later, they all had to move and I didn't know what to do. So, it kind of shows what happens when you are just thinking, oh, you know, support military and veterans, let's put some feelers out there, bring people in. The difference on our end, we were all naturally attracted to Deloitte because of the work it does for military services and families, and then once we were in, we built something to support us. It wasn't an afterthought, we knew we were going to be moving, we knew that we needed a network. We knew the types of phone calls, resources, flexibility, virtual opportunities that were going to enable military spouses because we were feeling and experiencing it in the moment. People would always want to say or compliment the work that we did, and I would respond like, I am very personally invested, you know I am moving in a couple of months and I'm moving a couple months after that. Of course, I care about the success of this and can't take no for an answer because it's just my constant daily life, and I think that is the exact case it is for everyone else involved in our group. Everyone is so excited to jump in because it's affecting us right now, right here at Deloitte.

**Quiana:** In the past, people focused on, oh, he or she is going to move soon, but I think by default, we have to be multitaskers, we have to be self-driven and able to just get things done because we don't have a choice. Our service number is our serving, so we have to hold down the fort at the home. When we move and all those different logistics, those are sorted out by us, and we've had to figure out how to do that at the same time of maintaining our careers. So, I think that all of those moving pieces have made us phenomenal practitioners at a firm like this as well, and just working, building this team up now, Cassandra and I have been able to kind of be more of advisors and not in the weeds doing everything, and just seeing the level of volunteers that we have, the fact that they are so excited and ready

to help, it just makes us grow even more. All of the activities that we've been doing in DC, those are managed and run by all of our military spouses that have joined our organization, and it just makes me excited to see how quickly we have grown and how much we are able to lean on each other.

**Jeff:** Tell me kind of from your perspectives with the kind of back story in the backdrop that we have set up here, how has MSI made your work at Deloitte more meaningful.

**Quiana:** Well, that just makes me smile because I think a lot of folks don't get the opportunity to do this kind of work in their daytime job. So, I think breaking things up and being able to kind of step away and see something that is greater than you. What we have created is something that is going to be here long after we are gone, we think. So, it really makes me feel like I have really left my mark, I have built a legacy at such a young, when I say young, I mean young in Deloitte stage in my career, been able to do that. I am really happy to stay and continue to grow my career here, regardless of other opportunities that might come my way.

**Cassie:** Absolutely, and as I mentioned, I am doing my MBA right now and one of the experiences we just recently had was focusing on entrepreneurship and thinking about, you know, you can be an entrepreneur on your own, but also within these large organizations where we work, how can we be change makers within and that's, my MSI experience is what I speak to here. When I am in classes and thinking about leadership and how to inspire people and how to motivate and organize large groups, to move everything forward and what it means, like I said, to be a leader provided such a safe space for me to have so many of those incredible lessons at Deloitte. I've got this micro-community of people that were so supportive and are so passionate but were willing to let me step up to lead, to email our CEO and do an interview with her. That was all just something, you know, we've mentioned that Jeff has just been incredible on letting us build it, on giving us the reins.

**Jeff:** Just amazing, both of your experiences and what you have built, and I will say how Deloitte, by the way, has supported you along that journey. It's pretty amazing. I will say that entrepreneurial spirit that military spouses and this team has shown has really had a considerable impact. I will say by virtue of your efforts and the team's efforts, other organizations and firms are looking at what you have built from nothing as a model to take to their organizations. We focused a lot on how you guys and the team have changed such a large organization as Deloitte but your impact has gone well beyond just Deloitte, and that's really been amazing to watch it kind of grow beyond the walls of Deloitte, if you will, and really help and support veterans and military families across our nation. So, I thank you both. Anything else that you would like to share to kind of wrap up this discussion today?

**Quiana:** What I will add is just that in order to make a program like this successful, it is so important to have the support of your senior leadership, but it is also so important that they are not the ones building it, they are not the ones creating it, deciding what it is going to look like and what it needs to have. It doesn't need to just be kind of a promotional type of thing. It doesn't just need to be service so you can feel like you did a good job and you are a corporate citizen. It has to be something that is really effective and really adds value to the military spouse and the person that you are trying to grow. So that is what I would say. If any of you ever have anything, questions or anything, we do have an inbox [militaryspouse@deloitte.com](mailto:militaryspouse@deloitte.com), and we are happy to answer any kind of questions that you might have because this is not just a Deloitte thing, this is an international challenge that needs to be solved, and we want to put all of our heads together to make the best solution possible.

**Cassie:** As we wrap, because I know I needed this some days, and so if someone is listening to this while at work or hopping on a flight, if you are feeling discouraged, we have all been there and just keep going. I know I needed to here that sometimes, so I am just going to say that in case anyone

listening is feeling that too and know that there are people that can relate with them, and Quiana and I and Jeff are here and reachable, but we're relatable as well.

**Jeff:** It has been an amazing journey, and I will tell you, you two and the team certainly more broadly really embody that spirit that our military has, this resilience, this drive to do the right thing and to be able to support one another. So certainly on behalf of CapitalH, I thank you both.

**Quiana:** Thank you for having us.

**Cassie:** Thank you.

**Jeff:** Thank you to Cassandra Sullivan and Quiana Downey for your insights into the Military Spouse Initiative and the meaningful support it provides for members. Next up, we'll continue with a conversation that we recorded just before Memorial Day with my Deloitte colleagues, Monte Zaben, Anna Paridee, and Bob Phelan, about their experiences with military spouses and the importance of creating organizational policies, structures, and cultures that support employees to create meaning at work.

**Burt Rea (Burt):** This is Burt Rea, your co-host for CapitalH. Today's topic is military spouses. Organizations are investing in many programs to improve life at work, all focused on improving the day-to-day experience of our workers. While there is much that can be done to improve work-life balance, research shows that the most important factor of all is the work itself, making work meaningful, and giving people a sense of belonging and trust in relationships. Deloitte's Military Spouse Initiative provides that purpose and also creates a strong network based on transparency and personal relationships that empowers those military spouses to own their careers in the midst of unpredictable changes. The Military Spouse Initiative provides support to its members through an ambassador program, talent support, professional development, and specialized recruiting efforts. Today, we will hear about this program and how it got

started, and the profound impact it has on our members. With me today are Monte Zaben, Anna Paridee, and Bob Phelan, and I would like each to maybe give a quick introduction and what's your relationship with the military spouse program. Monte, could you start us off?

**Monte Zaben (Monte):** Sure, thanks, Burt. My name is Monte Zaben. I am a principal in the advisory practice based in Washington DC. I have been with the firm for almost 22 years now, and prior to joining Deloitte, I had a 12-year career with the United States Marine Corp as a Marine Corp officer. I was very fortunate to be tagged several years ago to help a military spouse with a relocation, and by doing so, I was also part of the original foundation of the Military Spouse Initiative here at Deloitte. I am very proud of the fact that I have been a sponsor of the spouse initiative, as well as a champion for our practice, ever since then.

**Burt:** Wonderful. Thank you for your service and thank you for helping to get this program started for us. Anna?

**Anna Paridee (Anna):** Hi, I'm Anna Paridee. I'm a tax managing director in Atlanta, Georgia. I am a military spouse who has been through three combat deployments over the course of my career with Deloitte, and while I am new to the Military Spouse Initiative program, I am excited to be a part of it and to support it.

**Burt:** Thank you, Anna. It is great to have you and thank you for your husband's service and for your service. Bob?

**Bob Phelan (Bob):** Bob Phelan, I am a consulting managing director up here in Arlington. I have been with the firm a little over 10 years now. Prior to that, I spent almost 27 years in the Army and had the benefit of retiring from the Army and starting with Deloitte, which was quite a change. Like Monte, also a champion of the spouse initiative, and lastly, I am still connected to the military through my consulting work in the Pentagon.

**Burt:** That's fantastic. Thank you, Bob. Thank you for your service and thank you for being on the call today. So Monte, Anna, Bob, we would love to share with our audience, and maybe each of you in turn, how have you seen the Military Spouse Initiative at Deloitte evolve and grow, and what do you see as some of the benefits of the program? And Monte, let's start with you.

**Monte:** Certainly, when the program started, it was one-off as we learned of military spouses and their situations, we would jump in and try to help, and it has evolved into a network of military spouses, but it is very proactive sharing information about life in Deloitte, life as a military spouse, and the rigors of both within that network. So, it has become from a one-off serving a need at the time of need kind of relationship and organization, it has turned into a very proactive organization that has created a network of common objectives and a network of individuals that have common needs.

**Anna:** I think to build on that, what is amazing is that there is this network of individuals who understand the struggles that military families face. It is different than what the struggles of a normal family look at. For many families, Memorial Day is a great three-day weekend, and when I think about Memorial Day, in some ways, it is my greatest fear. Every time my husband has to go overseas, I have to worry about whether he is going to come home, is he going to be safe, is he going to be mentally okay when he comes back. These are things that normal families don't have to face. So having a network of people who understand that while you are building a career is invaluable.

**Burt:** That's very well said, Anna.

**Bob:** And if I could, Burt, one of the greatest things to watch with this group is that they have started it, the spouses themselves have started it, created it, and they have such incredible passion for this given the challenges that they have. So that, as we are champions for it we just let it go, and these

guys are really making it happen for the group and expanding their network.

**Burt:** Perhaps we could talk a bit about some specific examples of how this program has made a difference or where you have seen some of the impact that this program has had for our military spouses. Anna, maybe you could share a little bit more. I really connected with what you said a moment ago about Memorial Day. I was a military kid growing up with a dad in the Army and I certainly share that perspective.

**Anna:** As I said, I am new to the initiative and to be honest, I wish that when I was going through my combat deployments or my husband was going through his, that I had a group of people. I was fortunate that I had one partner I worked with and she used to joke that she was my base. She was the person that I could go into her office and talk about the things that I was going through. My husband was fortunate, he was able to Skype with me on our last deployment and in the middle of the Skype conversation, the building he was in came under attack. He tried to shut the screen and somehow missed turning it off. So, I saw him take cover, I heard things I didn't like hearing, explosions, and I saw things rattling. When he stood up, of course, he dusted himself off and realized what happened and said, uh oh, but I got off the phone, that was a hard day. That was an incredibly hard day. As amazing as this partner was to talk to me and be a sounding board, she really didn't understand what that felt like, and that was several months and it was the third one. So, having a network of people who understand what that's like is a huge thing to be able to help you steady and keep everything moving that you need to keep moving at home. As a spouse, our job is to keep the home front stable so that our servicemen aren't worried about that while they are in combat, and that is hard to do when you are worried about your loved one. So, there being a network and group of individuals dedicated to helping make that happen as seamlessly as possible for you, it's a family that really means a lot when you want a career and you want to be more than just a military spouse.

**Burt:** Monte, maybe you can share some perspective in terms of being part of this program since its inception. How are we supporting military spouses whose service member relocates next assignment? I know Deloitte is almost everywhere, but certainly facilitating those transfers is a challenge. How are we doing with that?

**Monte:** My initial introduction to the program was through a relocation, helping the military spouse relocate within the firm commensurate to her spouse's relocation with the military. I see it as kind of piggy backing on something that Anna said, that there are so many stresses with a military family that nonmilitary families simply cannot understand. We are attempting to take away one of those stresses and that is the stress around employment. So, military spouses at Deloitte are given a commitment from the firm that when your spouse has to relocate, then we will make sure that your position at Deloitte is not affected. You will move to new geography, but in the moving to that new geography, we will make sure that there is a position waiting for you at the end of that move, whether that is within the continental United States or abroad. I've helped military spouses relocate to jobs with other member firms, in Europe, for instance. I've also helped military spouses relocate to jobs at different practices within the US. So again, just taking away the stress of employment I think is very, very positive. Because of what Anna was saying, there are other stresses that nonmilitary families just can't understand. We are trying to adjust at least one of them.

**Burt:** That's fantastic and certainly leverages the breadth and capabilities of the Deloitte firm. It is a global organization, which does make that possible.

**Bob:** So we had a summit last year down at DU and I had a chance to meet, I think she was an audit senior whose husband was being transferred to Fort Drum, and it turns out that she lives one block away from my daughter. So, I was able to connect my daughter to her, so at least she knew one of

the neighbors up there. So when I go up to see her, I will reach out and see if she want to grab dinner with my daughter and I, but just the fact that she is in a remote location of which there is no Deloitte office in upstate New York like that, that she can continue to work for the firm, I think that is huge.

**Monte:** You know, Burt, these stories are indicative of the power of networks, and I think one of the huge benefits of this program is to create that network.

**Bob:** I will turn it the other way too. From the firm I will tell you it is also a business issue. To have folks leave the firm and we have to either rehire or retrain or reeducate folks, there is a cost associated with that. So once we get solid people on the ground and they are working for us, we want to keep them and let them to continue to grow their careers. So, there is that aspect of it too. So, I believe we all should be supportive as leaders here in terms of once we have our folks, let's keep them, let's keep their careers advancing.

**Monte:** Great perspective.

**Burt:** So maybe we could generalize from the success of this program, how can leaders in general support employee-led initiatives like the Military Spouse program that emphasize more of the human experience at work? How can we be supportive and have you seen this Military Spouse program lead to other types of employee-led initiatives within Deloitte?

**Monte:** As leaders, one of our principal responsibilities is to our people, that we firmly believe in that at Deloitte. Those aren't just words, we demonstrate it on a daily basis. Military spouse is again demonstrative of that, but as leaders that aren't directly connected to a program like this, like Bob and I are, I think it is incumbent upon them to understand the needs of the people that are working on their projects or in their practices, understand that programs like this exist, and understand that there may be special needs for those individuals

that are associated to special areas like the military. That understanding and awareness, I think it's one of the biggest objectives and challenges that we have within the Military Spouse Initiative. I don't think we know who all of our military spouses are in the firm, I don't think we have identified all of them. So, we are constantly working on information sharing, awareness, and just getting the word out within the firm. The more we can get the word out, the more leaders understand what it is we're doing, the more outreach there will be into our people, and the more people will kind of identify themselves and let us help them.

**Anna:** For me, I feel a little bit on the front end of this because I didn't have the support of the group when I was going through a lot of this. What I did have was the support of a few leaders who really talked to understand what my challenges were, what my needs were, and what I wanted. So, in those communications, I was able to convey that I wanted an exciting career. I didn't want to put my career on the back burner, but I did have two young children and a husband overseas. So, how did I make that work and for me at the time in the middle of busy season when I was working far too many hours because it was busy season, could we reassign some of it, could I work from home a little more than the average time I would just so that I could get a few extra hours without the traffic and the commute. We did things that enabled me to do all of the things I wanted in my career and still take care of my family. And I think that this initiative is similar to so many of our other diversity and inclusion initiatives of just hearing people, taking the time to understand their needs, and working with them to achieve the end goals because in my example, I wanted all the same things that the firm wanted for me, to be a high-achieving professional that would make PPMD. So by working with me, I stayed here and I produced revenue and I did great things, I've developed more people, and I've become a more flexible and compassionate leader for all of the things that have been given to me.

**Bob:** I have noticed with the group, it's just their energy. They have not stopped by just creating a process where we can help folks move during a PCS. Right now, they are trying to take on the issue of time during a PCS. And I'm going to explain that just for a minute. So when a military member moves, normally you get 30 days between stations to uproot your house, move it, get everything moved in, and get ready to go, but for a Deloitte staff member, practitioner, whatever the case may be, they have to take PTO. So, their challenge and what they are trying to work on now is how do I get my house set up while I have moved it and not have to spend 30 days of PTO to get everything done, and I think that is going to be an interesting question as they continue to try to move that one forward. It's been a tough challenge, but I think it is a good question for them to address because moving the family from point A to point B is a very stressful time in any military family. So, I guess I'll say the moss is not growing under them, they are still tackling issues.

**Burt:** That's fantastic. Perhaps as we close, I could ask for any parting thoughts or what one thing might you recommend to another organization that is considering this type of initiative?

**Monte:** Well, I might echo what I said earlier, that is, have an open mind to various ways that you can assist this community, military spouses, when they need assistance and not just around employment, but just to be there when they need a friendly shoulder

or understand what is happening in their world and take away the stresses and the drives of the work environment while understanding what is happening with that military spouse. Once that is obtained, I think an organization thinks differently again about this community of people that are part of their organization and they can serve them better.

**Anna:** The program offers so much. I think that that next thing that any company trying to implement this should make sure they do is make sure that HR in every location is really aware of this. Programs like this don't hit the majority of our professionals, but for the ones that it does, it goes deep, and the challenges that are faced are immense and the loyalty and the impact from the benefit of this program, I can't even express how deep they are. I think the biggest challenge that companies will face is making sure that the people who need it are aware of it at the right time. So, when they really need it most. So make sure your HR departments really know about it and can bring it to the people who need it, when the need it.

**Burt:** Really make those connections, absolutely. Bob, your thoughts as we wrap up.

**Bob:** I will tell you that I think what's important for us right now too is to ensure that it gets more broadly advertised, the program within the firm. I have a stack of flyers on my desk and I tell people about it and people don't know about it. I think some

of the spouses do and the word gets out, it takes time, but efforts like this to let at least folks understand what the program is and what it is trying to do. The more things we can do there, the better.

**Monte:** That is a great point.

**Burt:** Well, Monte, Anna, Bob, thank you for sharing your thoughts with us on this program, Military Spouse Initiative. It is such a critical focus for our firm and I think a wonderful opportunity for everyone who's listening to this podcast. So much of fostering the human experience at work and driving meaning depends on meeting people where they are. Our thanks to the Deloitte cofounders of the Military Spouse Initiative, Cassandra Sullivan and Quiana Downie, along with our Deloitte colleagues, Monte Zaben, Anna Paridee, and Bob Phelan, for helping us understand the importance of providing support for military spouses and the positive impacts on people and organizations. Join us next time as we dive into more topics and trends that focus on putting humans at the center of work.

