



Client Case Study

The Milspo Project

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The Need

In early 2016, gothamCulture began a pro-bono engagement with the Milspo Project, a rapidly growing nonprofit that supports military spouse (milspo) entrepreneurship through local chapter meet-ups, live leadership events, and online educational resources. This engagement was in support of gothamCulture's partnership with Inc. Magazine's Military Entrepreneur Program.

The Milspo Project began in 2014 with their first annual Embark conference being held each September. Embark is aimed at providing military spouse entrepreneurs with the knowledge, skills and tools they need to grow their own businesses and networks. In 2015, the Milspo Project launched their local chapter program, which includes monthly meet-ups led by local members in chapters across the globe. In 2016, the Milspo Membership Program was launched, which introduced an annual dues process to better serve the needs of the growing community.

After so much organic growth, both in services offered and in membership, the Executive Director (ED) of the Milspo Project recognized the need to refine the organization's internal processes and better understand its impact on milspouses, their families, and their communities. As she looked to transition her role to a full-time position within the Milspo Project, the ED also recognized her own need for individual support services.

The Intervention

gothamCulture engaged in a series of discovery discussions with the Milspo Project staff to determine several areas of focus for 2016: measurement and evaluation (M&E) of demographic and community impact and leadership development at both the executive and local chapter levels were identified as top priorities.

To gain clear insight into the Milspo Project's impact on the people and communities it serves, gothamCulture partnered with the Executive Director to develop a logic model detailing the outputs, outcomes, and impacts the Milspo Project hoped to achieve through its activities. Next, the logic model was applied to determine which key performance indicators (KPIs) needed to be measured to allow for an accurate evaluation of the Milspo Project's impact. Once the KPIs were identified, the team developed an online survey with questions and prompts calibrated to provide data for each KPI and deployed the survey to members via email invitation and social media promotion.

Support for leadership development was also identified as a high priority need during discovery, with areas of challenge and opportunity recognized at both the internal and local levels of the organization.



gothamCulture began providing executive coaching to the ED to help her recognize her strengths and opportunities for growth and to identify focused and meaningful short- and long-term developmental goals. The weekly cadence of coaching sessions, with timely feedback about successes and alternative strategies, has enabled her to make consistent progress towards these goals.

To address the need for leadership support within local chapters, gothamCulture provided support at a pre-workshop for chapter leaders at the 2016 Embark conference. The goals of this one-day session, facilitated by Milspo Project leadership and “rock star” chapter leaders, were identified during initial discovery and further refined through six interviews conducted with local chapter leaders.

The first goal is to enable peer mentorship and develop individual leadership skills by connecting chapter leaders. Creating a space where leaders can share what is happening in their individual chapters will foster discussion of successful approaches and collaboration around points of concern or difficulty. The second goal is to establish a standard framework for chapter meetings in order to help leaders operate more effectively and consistently around the globe, as well as to smooth transitions between chapters for milspouses when they inevitably relocate with their serving spouses.

The Impact

The M&E work concluded, with over 100 Milspo Project members completing the survey. The early results indicate that members see the network as the Milspo Project’s greatest strength, especially the access to other milspouses and resources. The data also serves as a baseline for the organization as it continues to grow and mature in the coming years.

Leadership development efforts are currently underway. The coaching engagement is ongoing, with the ED’s substantial progress making a positive impact on her confidence and ability to partner effectively for funding and support. The work with chapter leaders will begin in September at the Embark conference, with the content covered during the initial in-person training course continuously supported by ongoing reinforcement within the network.

gothamCulture will continue their work with The Milspo Project through the end of 2016, with the project plan currently being revisited to solidify remaining activities for the year. A vision roadmap will be developed and implemented to guide the rest of the partnership, as the work continues to identify and pursue goals for this growing organization