



The Prior-Service Entrepreneur: The Fundamentals of Veteran Entrepreneurship

An interview with author [Michael I. Kaplan](#)

1. What inspired you to write *The Prior-Service Entrepreneur*? Is there one specific experience you can associate your inspiration with?

I had been invited to speak by a service organization to a group of veterans aspiring to be entrepreneurs. One of the reoccurring themes I encountered was the belief that the American Dream no longer existed to the extent that it did 45 years ago. I found that to be extremely troubling and wrote the book to encourage people to think differently.

2. Do you think that veterans have a better shot at being successful entrepreneurs because of their prior experience, or do you think they face more challenges?

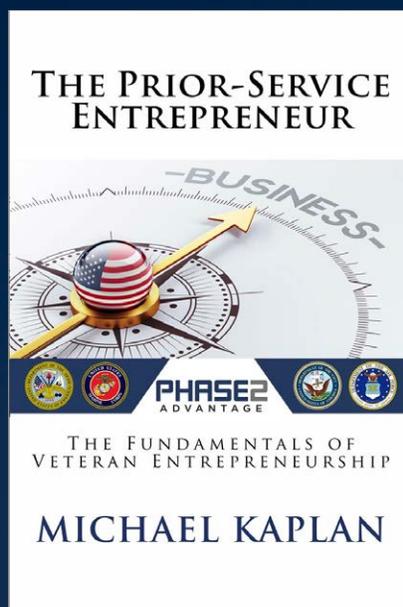
I believe that's contingent upon the individual, regardless of time in service. Most veterans tend to be natural leaders; if they possess "entrepreneurial DNA" they make fantastic entrepreneurs. Those who don't – like anyone else – find it easier to operate within an established and predictable system.

3. Is entrepreneurship something you have always been interested in? For example, while you were in the service, is it something that was constantly on your mind?

It's a mindset I grew up with even as a child, encourage by my parents. In the summer we mowed lawns, in the winter we shoveled driveways. In basic training, I was the one spit-shining boots all night prior to inspections for my fellow soldiers to generate extra income.

4. How was the transition for you - from the service into becoming a successful entrepreneur?

It was successful because it didn't happen overnight, but over an extended period as I transitioned through multiple industries. As I transitioned through these professions – military, federal warrants, government



contractor, executive protection and finally business owner – each step brought me through the transition process.

5. What kind of challenges or failures did you face, if any, on your journey to success?

There are too many challenges and failures to list, although I do reference many of them in the book.

Finance, authority structures and effective management styles are the three greatest challenges that come to mind.

6. Can you explain more about the 25 years of experience you have with small business ventures, aside from Phase 2 Advantage?

I had the chance to invest and participate in business ventures when I left the military, but really became fully immersed in 1994 when I entered the corporate executive protection profession with a company I founded. Since that time I launched original restaurant concepts, consulted for national restaurant chains and work as a business coach for start-up ventures in addition to my position as CEO of Phase 2 Advantage.

7. Did you have anyone helping or consulting you during your transition into the civilian workforce? If not, how did you do it on your own?

The time I spent in corporate executive protection was invaluable as I operated in the C-suite of many Fortune 500 companies



– within arm’s reach of the CEO’s. They imparted vast amounts of business information and guidance during that period. When I launched my first restaurant, I read on the topic prolifically and applied that knowledge to the foundation I had received during the previous 7 years.

8. What are some of the important concepts that the book explains to help potential entrepreneurs become successful?

I believe once people possess an optimal mindset oriented to success, achieving any professional goal is possible. Entrepreneurs don’t have the luxury of separating “personal and business;” they’re inexorably linked.

Flaws in the mindset will logically be extended into the business model. Identifying these psychological barriers, creating the proper mindset and executing accordingly are the most important concepts in the book.

9. Do any of your readers come to you or write you about their own success stories? How does that fuel your own motivation?

Yes, they do, and it’s very motivational. In addition to the private correspondences I receive, a number of readers have actually posted their success stories as part of their Amazon book review for others to read and share.

10. Why do you think the book is beneficial for those who support veterans as well? Is support a key element for veterans to transition properly?

I believe success happens with a proper balance between “people and systems.” Those who support veteran’s in the business realm have the systems piece down (business plans, marketing strategies, etc) but many neglect the people piece (mindset and human development) as it relates to entrepreneurship. This book hopefully offers a different perspective and provides another tool of support for the transition process.

11. What is one of the biggest benefits that a reader will reap from the book?

The knowledge that with a proper mindset anything is possible, and the understanding that if you’re not building your own dreams, someone

else is paying you to build theirs. The benefit of that knowledge and understanding is financial self-sufficiency and unlimited opportunity for the future.



About the Author

Michael Kaplan is a military veteran, entrepreneur and best-selling author with 25 years of business start-up and consulting experience. He works nationally with academic and veteran service organizations as an instructional designer of entrepreneurship

programs and a lecturer on business development and management.

For additional information, visit Michael I. Kaplan’s profile on [LinkedIn](#)

