



Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554

Office of Communications Business Opportunities

Date: November 8, 2024

Title: FCC Office of Communications Business Opportunities - Veterans Day Small Business Spotlight

Greetings from the Federal Communications Commission.

The FCC's Office of Communications Business Opportunities (OCBO) acts as principal advisor to the Chairwoman and the Commissioners on issues, rulemakings, and policies that affect small businesses. OCBO promotes diversity, competition, and innovation in the provision and ownership of telecommunications and information services by supporting policies that create opportunities for small businesses, as well as policies that increase affordable access to communications technology for all small businesses.

We are celebrating Veterans Day by sharing an interview with ThunderCat Technology CEO, Tom Deierlein, whose company is a significant contributor to the Commission's work. We know that many veterans are also small business owners. We appreciate their service to our country and ongoing contributions to our local communities.

Please reach out to OCBO at OCBOinfo@fcc.gov with any questions, or to be added to our newsletter distribution list.

*Jeff Tignor, Acting Director
FCC Office of Communications Business Opportunities*

Veterans Day Small Business Spotlight

Jeff: Tom, thank you for sharing some of your time for this interview. Please tell us about the work your company does for the FCC.

Tom: ThunderCat Technology is Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business that delivers technology products in and around the data center for the FCC. ThunderCat works with the team at the FCC to discuss and explore the best platforms, hardware and software for your infrastructure. Our engineers talk with your FCC engineers to help explore what technology best supports your mission. That includes providing strategies for Data Storage, Networking, Cyber Security, and Cloud Transformations. I am combat-wounded and have a 100% permanent disability rating from the VA.

Jeff: How do you think your experiences in the military have helped you in your civilian career?

Tom: First and foremost, my parents and my upbringing set me up for a life of value, service, success, and purpose. But I went in the military at 17, so a big part of who I am and how I approach business and operations, and my life overall is driven by my experiences in the military. I recently attended a conference where the keynote speaker shared his journey. I like the phrase he used. "The military gives you a framework for success the rest of your life". There are a ton of articles about military skills and experiences and how they translate. In fact, I've written a few myself.

The take aways from my military career that I use every day are:

Leadership. From the very first day in the Army, you study and are exposed to what true leadership is. You are expected to be a good follower and over time learn to be a great leader.

Values and Team First mentality. The Army and military work off a set of values; and we are expected to uphold our country's values across the globe and now even in space. We always put the mission first and are expected to do the right thing ethically. We are expected to be the moral standard for the U.S. Today I live by the Veterans' Creed and consider part of my role to promote service and patriotism in my community.

Resilience and Grit. We are trained and expected to accomplish the mission no matter what obstacles, failures, and setbacks we face. We must operate in the most austere environments and excel. Talk to ANY Veterans about setbacks – almost every single one of us will say “Adapt. Improve. Overcome.” We are trained to fight through adversity and to win. As I write this answer, I am preparing a keynote for 100 high schoolers to talk about GRIT and how it's more important than IQ or EQ.

Service and Sacrifice. They call it “being in the service” for a reason. We serve our neighbors; we protect and serve our country and if called upon must be prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice. In the early 90's, the concept of “servant leadership” caught on in management books and corporate speak. For me, that is how I entered my adult life and professional career serving others and putting the mission and the team first, myself last. I try to lead that way at ThunderCat, with my children, and my non-profit, TD Foundation, which is a 100% volunteer organization that provides aid to children of wounded warriors and fallen heroes. We help American Veterans' families in crisis.

Jeff: In which branch of the military did you serve? How did you make that choice?

Tom: I served in the U.S. Army from July of 1985 until May of 2007. When I was 13-years old, I decided I wanted to go to West Point. I graduated in 1989 and became an Airborne Ranger Infantry Officer and served in Berlin Germany until 1993. I got out and went into a business career. But twelve years later, I went back to Active Duty in 2005. I led a Civil Affairs A-Team and was shot by a sniper in Baghdad in September of 2006. After 7+ months at Walter Reed and the VA's Spinal Cord Polytrauma Center in Tampa, I retired for good in May 2007. My Dad was a China Marine at the end of WWII and got out 20 years before I was born. But, I was taught that serving in the military was an honor and privilege. My sister was ROTC and a Naval Nurse.

Jeff: What advantages do you think a small business has in serving its customers, including the FCC?

Tom: Some key advantages of working with small businesses, include all the classic reasons, including more personalized customer service, faster decision-making, greater flexibility to adapt to specific needs, and direct access to key decision-makers. At ThunderCat, with fewer layers and less bureaucracy, we are more able to shift and quickly adjust to new tech solutions and bring them to market faster for the FCC to use.

ThunderCat is heavily engaged in our local communities in Northern Virginia, where many of the FCC staff live and are raising their families. We have sponsored everything from soccer teams and a girls'

high school rowing team to cyber competition and leadership and ethics workshops. We even helped one of our sales reps to launch a new little league for 8-year olds. A percentage of our profits goes to Veterans causes and a variety of other causes including diseases, mental health, youth programs, food insecurity, green initiatives, and others. So, the FCC is doing social good. It is not just the big companies that make a difference.

Since 1995, small businesses have created 62.7% of jobs. By supporting companies like ours, the FCC is helping to drive local and national economy. Lastly, at ThunderCat, we take care of our team since they are like family to us and not just another number. What this means is minimal turn over; so, the team that works with the FCC today, is the same team you were working with 5 years ago and will be 5 years from now.

Our purpose and our vision aligned DIRECTLY with the FCC mission: "...To ensure that the American people have available – at reasonable costs and without discrimination – rapid, efficient, nation- and world-wide communication services." **Our Purpose:** The purpose of ThunderCat Technology is to make the United States a better and safer place for all Americans. **Our Vision:** To be a trusted provider of enabling technologies that help organizations innovate and excel. Experts that make the world safer, smarter & more connected. Problem solvers committed to service, integrity, and quality.

At ThunderCat, we appreciate what the FCC does for Americans. We appreciate your business and trust in us. We wish everyone a Happy Veterans Day.