

**Testimony of Ryan Morris**  
**Owner, Ruff House Dog Training**  
**House Small Business Committee**  
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Good morning, Chairman Chabot and Ranking Member Velasquez. It is a honor to be with you today and to share my story of how I founded my business. My name is Ryan Morris and I am the founder, owner and sole employee of Ruff House Dog Training.

I am an entrepreneur -- someone who was always seeking out more. Opportunity drives me. But it wasn't until a few years ago that I found my professional passion.

After high school I joined the Marine Corps and traveled the world to see some of the most beautiful places; some not so beautiful, not so happy places. Despite the conditions, I was always able to put a smile on faces. While abroad, I met my beautiful wife. In 2014, I separated after a ten year enlistment.

This is where my story truly begins.

After the military, I was job hopping and had three or four jobs in two years. Many of jobs were behind a desk, and my body started to tell-me, "Remember when you did push-ups and ran for seemingly no reason? This hurts, that hurts."

As my body was slowly accruing pain debt, I began to ask my wife for massages. She said no. I then asked her for a massage chair - one of the rocket ships that massage your feet, neck, back, and hands all at the same time. She again said no. Whatever word you think she said before that, you'd probably be right.

So here I am, trying to think how I'm going to make an extra \$2,500 to buy the chair. While scrolling through Facebook, I saw an ad that said, "Dog Trainers Wanted" from a company called Thumbtack. Thumbtack helps small business owners and entrepreneurs find customers and they had customers in my area that were looking for dog trainers. So I signed up as an animal trainer in October 2015 and started to get clients right away.

By the next January, I had made over four figures just from dog training and by June, I had earned enough to get the massage chair. Now I'm thinking, this is a lot of money for a chair! Do I really want to spend this type of money on this thing? Then I said, this is the reason I started this business and it will serve as a reminder that I can do anything I set out to. The experience made me realize I could turn this into a full-time business, so I did. Now Ruff House Training is a successful full-time business with over 200 five-star reviews from customers. It gives me the flexibility I want and the ability to provide for my family.

One of the best things about running my own business is the freedom. I didn't have to take leave or ask permission to come here and speak today. I don't have to consult anyone and juggle whether I take leave for an event or save it so I can have a 6 day vacation. I don't have to abide by traditional hours. If there is an "American Dream," it's being able to do something you'd do for free and be paid for it. I've had so much fun working for myself, by myself, without restriction, I never want to go back to the traditional 9 to 5.

Of course, every entrepreneur faces challenges. For me, it's awareness and competing against bigger businesses with employees, company cars, banners and advertising budgets. I didn't have the budget to take out ads in magazines. Lucky for me, Thumbtack helped me find customers, and I was able to compete with the more established companies.

I have also benefited from several programs, designed to help people like me. When I left the military, I used the TRS program to help me transition into my civilian career as well as helpful resources on base.

I recently discovered the SCORE program. This program allows you to go and speak with a professional who has a similar background as you and has had/have their own business. You can bounce ideas off of them, share your business plan, get feedback and guidance, all for zero dollars. That's a wonderful resource!

Finally, the ACP program was a great resource to connect with someone with a similar background, in a field that you are looking to get into. These three resources have been so helpful to me and *should be utilized by more individuals*. We always think we know it all (especially Marines) until we open our eyes and encounter situations we never imagined could happen.

For me, it all began with a massage chair, but ended up following my passion to a career I love. Everyone should strive to get their message chair and live their dream.

Thank you for allowing me to share my story with you today.