

## Veteran-Owned Business Enters New SBA Mentor-Protégé Program

Blake Willson Group, LLC (<http://www.blakewillsongroup.com/>) is a certified public accounting firm based in the metro DC area. Their practice holds Department of VA-certified (CVE) Service Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business (SDVOSB) status and provides top-tier audit (and audit related), financial management, and supply chain management services to government agencies, including those in the DoD/Intelligence Community marketplace.

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In November 2016, they entered into an SBA-approved All Small Mentor Protégé Relationship with MorganFranklin Consulting (MFC); and created a Joint Venture company with MFC to pursue set aside opportunities in the National Capital Region (NCR).

The All Small Mentor Protégé launched on October 1, 2016 and was established to develop strong protégé firms through mentor-provided business development assistance, and to help protégés successfully compete for government contracts. You can find details about the program at <https://www.sba.gov/navigation-structure/all-small-mentor-protége-program>.



Robert J.(RJ) Blake is President & CEO of the Blake Willson Group - as the founder of BWG, he envisioned a consulting firm committed to helping federal agencies address audit accounting, and financial management related challenges; with the ultimate goal of enabling cost savings, strengthening controls and reliability, and providing financial information assurance.

Mr. Blake started his leadership endeavors as a Scout Team Leader for the United States Army counter-efforts during to Afghanistan in Operation Freedom (VI and nearly 7 years in he was honorably as a service combat Veteran.



where he led insurgency deployment support of Enduring VII). After the military, discharged disabled

He graduated at the top of his class from University of Maryland's R.H. Smith School of Business, where he obtained a degree in Accounting. He is now a highly rated Certified Public Accountant (CPA) in Maryland and Virginia, with previous experience in two of the Big 4 accounting firm's audit and advisory practices.

In late 2013, RJ founded BWG with Andrew H. Griffin (Vice President) and began generating revenues in 2014. They were able to bootstrap the company to 8 employees (offering a comprehensive/full scale benefits program - group health, dental, AD&D/STD/LTD, 401K plan, with profit sharing) and now have a line of credit that will allow them to scale in 2017. They are annualizing \$1.2 million in revenue.

They also graduated from the Veteran Institute for Procurement (VIP) Grow program in June of 2016 (<http://www.nationalvip.org/Home/Home>), which provided them with great insight and connections to other Veteran-owned businesses, as well as business consultants who can assist with growth.

When asked why he started your own business, RJ responded, "The corporate world in the public accounting realm provided me with great experiences and a new skillset in accounting, but I wanted more in terms of upward mobility; where I could put to use my leadership experiences and values/morals obtained from the Army and in combat."

"Not to mention, I also always had an entrepreneurial itch that needed scratching. Raised by a single parent Mom with little means, I understood quickly that I needed to earn my own way. Before age 10, I was selling lemonade or baseball cards on the corner. I even tried my hand at selling crabs I'd catch along the canals where I grew up. My most profitable was probably selling golf balls that found their way into the pond at the local golf course. These life experiences over time provided me with an aptitude and attitude that I didn't recognize within myself right away. A few close friends and mentors of mine did however recognize this and my grit and determination and coached me into starting an LLC and obtaining SDVOSB (CVE) status. Soon after, I was able to secure a couple subcontracts with another Big 4 company that I worked for previously."

"I met Charles McCaffrey (VBOC Director) at the monthly Objective Rally Point Veterans networking event (<http://www.dc-orp.com/>) just as we were getting started. We are very thankful for the support that Charles and the Veterans Business Outreach Center provided during our early stages. His insight and willingness to provide resources to help get established (who can beat free legal advice????) really supported us in building the foundation we can rely on for years to come."