

# IN SERVICE TO THE COUNTRY

This management and technology consultancy's four-figure growth rate is a testament to culture and mission

Competitive Range Solutions is one of few businesses that can say its work is 100 percent in support of its country. The company provides mission support and technology services to the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) and other federal agencies—a job that requires a precise skill set, experience, and a moral code. Most, if not all its employees are veterans—career mission partners who have dedicated their lives to their country. They connect to the company values, which reflect those of the military, including rigor, commitment, stewardship, agility, and professionalism.

Founder and CEO Noah Vasquez, a service-disabled veteran, is uniquely qualified to lead the business and an embodiment of the culture. He enlisted after 9/11 to serve in a combat engineering unit called Prime Base Engineer Emergency Force (PRIME BEEF), a rapidly deployable, specialized, civil engineer unit of the U.S. Air Force. After six years of active duty, he left a non-commissioned officer and transitioned to civil service with the DoD as an advisor and warranted contracting officer. But transitioning to the civilian sector was challenging; to him, the DoD was home. Vasquez launched Competitive Range in 2011 after earning his MBA.

From 2011 to 2019, Competitive Range grew from \$35,000 in revenue, to more than \$12 million. This year, it earns the No. 443 spot on the Inc. 5000. It also ranks No. 18 among IT management companies, No. 23 for IL companies, and No. 4 in St. Louis. It is not just their capabilities that set them apart. Vasquez and his wife, Vanessa, the company's COO, take great interest in employee wellbeing and are available to their people around the clock. "The military renders a lot of care to its people, and I picked that up," he explains.

## THE REALITIES OF GROWTH

Often, entrepreneurs are quick to discuss their achievements, but not so forthcoming about their struggles, notes Vasquez. He believes it is important to be real about the rollercoaster ride that is business ownership. Self-care



is essential, and self-doubt is inevitable, he explains. He wants entrepreneurs to know it is okay to be critical, but not self-defeating. He advises resisting the temptation to compare your journey to someone else's. He also notes that the C-suite is not exempt from professional development. Recently, he started working with an executive coach. It also helps to have a life partner. Vasquez describes Vanessa as "the heartbeat of the firm," and he credits her for building the operational infrastructure to support their fast growth. "I have no problem admitting that most everyone we have ever met comes away liking her just a tiny bit more than me."

Vasquez and Vanessa realize a key driver of their success is actually quite simple: they deliver on their promises to clients. That wouldn't be possible without a high-caliber team, says Vasquez. It is their energy and intellect that move the needle for their clients. With that in mind, they intend to grow the business to \$400 million in revenue within the next 8 years. But success is not about chasing a number. For Competitive Range, it is about duty, service, and stewardship.

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