



*by Lyle A. Regalado*

Since inception, the AIM Marketplace's goal was to allow Officers to take a bigger role in their hiring process. Human Resources Command (HRC) will no longer be placing people based on the needs of the Army. Rather, Officers are now given the opportunity in a free market to compete against their peers for positions. So, how should a young officer like you maneuver the marketplace? In the following sections, I have outlined a guide to ensure that future participants truly make the best decision for their families.

### **ARE YOU A FAMILY-MAN or CAREERIST?**

If there is one thing that I have learned about the marketplace, it's that no matter what, this is the one opportunity you can do something for your family while being in the Army. You will get your KD time wherever you go, but you can never influence the location of your work better than full participation in the marketplace. On one hand, this is a Soldier's chance to choose that interesting job, unit or post - or, on the other hand, it's their chance

to find a job that allows them to be near family, have time for family, or allow their family to find better work.

## **FIRST UP: YOUR AIM RESUME**

Many of my peers have not applied for a job since high school. There are many ways to formulate a resume, but based on my experience and my mentors', this is what I think works best:

1. Bullet points, not paragraphs.
2. All experience matters, just provide the "So-What." If you have traveled, volunteered, or been involuntarily told to do something, put it down. This is especially true for my young lieutenants who are trying to compete in a lieutenant market with minimal Army experience. Even if you visited Korea on a family vacation, you gained regional culture experience that can help you in the AO.
3. References - If they have rated you, put them on there. If they do not know who you are, leave them off. If you have friends or family of a higher rank, put them on there. You want people that can speak highly of you naturally. Be sure to ask these people if they are comfortable being your reference before including them on your resume. Be sure to ask if they know anybody at the unit that you desire because you could be one phone call away from being hired.
4. Do not wait until the marketplace to formulate your resume. Instead, have your resume updated at all times. I was chosen for three out-of-market positions without my knowledge based on my resume being up to date.
5. After you have your base resume, when the market comes up, tailor it to the job you want.
6. Have a base introduction email to accompany your resume and the last three OERs (or as many as you have as a lieutenant). Then, send an email to all the units that you are interested in, otherwise, they will not even know that you exist. Be proactive by asking them when they are available for an interview.

## **HAVE YOUR PRE-MARKET LIST OF PREFERENCES**

Before we get to job offers, caring about your family begins before you send your resume out to locations. It takes a long, hard talk with your spouse to decide where you even want to apply. If you don't include your spouse in your initial preferences, you are already a step behind.

When I entered the Marketplace, I had my wife think of locations that affected her life as a

mother, how she could raise our kids, and where she could potentially work. Separately, I made my preferences while only thinking of my career and what I think I would enjoy. We compared these two lists and found where we could meet in the middle. Additionally, if you're MACP, you must find a place where both of you can work for the Army and is realistic to your profiles (more on this later).

Besides just asking my wife to list places she liked, I also asked her to list locations she did not like. This allowed us to not only find compromise, but also have a full picture of what we envisioned was best for our family and my career. When you find a place that you both dislike, it sets up an easy system to discard locations at the bottom of the list

### **ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS IN THE INTERVIEW**

As important as it is to sell yourself during the interview, it is equally important that the unit sell themselves to you. The beauty of the Marketplace is that the interview process is a two-way street. This is a great opportunity to ask questions and get a feel for the unit and their values. This is also the time to get to know your future boss and get a sneak peek of what your day-to-day work life will be like before even walking into the office. Conversely, if it's a 20-minute interview of cookie-cutter questions not tailored to you, that is equally telling of the climate in your future organization.

If, in your interview, you aren't asking about the operational tempo (OPTEMPO) to understand what deployments or CTC rotations are coming up, or what the command queue is like, you are not doing your family justice. You should always have a general understanding of what major training events are coming up; this is time away from your family that you should communicate to your significant other.

Have your spouse in the room listening and understanding how they feel about the unit. This ended up being significant when putting together my preferences. My future boss spoke to my wife, which made her feel included in the interview process. Asking her what her reservations were about the unit or location was very telling of the kind of leader he was.

### **MACP CONSIDERATIONS**

MACP couples are at a severe disadvantage in the marketplace, especially if they are in the same branch. Gone are the days where Branch Managers will pluck one of you and place you in that desirable location with your spouse. You both have to compete in the market and you both have to find a place where you can get hired.

Here are some examples of MACP Considerations:

Couple 1: Soldier A is MI and can go almost everywhere in the world - to include Europe. Soldier B is FA, and their marketplace did not have any positions in Europe. This automatically scales their preferences to only places where FA can go - mainly BCTs.

Couple 2: Soldier A is Signal and has the resume to go to any location that they desire. Soldier B is FA - again, curbing expectations. Luckily, Soldier B also had an amazing profile and got their 1:1 match. Soldier A easily secured a position there as well.

Couple 3: (WORST CASE OF THEM ALL) Both Soldiers are MI and although they have unlimited options, they must find a place that has two MI positions for both of them. Additionally, they are subtly competing against each other with every interview. Branch says that they will help facilitate MACP, but that is false. Branch will tell you two to curb your expectations and find a place that both of you have the ability to get hired at - which will unfortunately be less desirable.

## **UNITS DON'T HOLD ALL OF THE CARDS**

Unfortunately, despite all the methodic systems that the Market puts in place, some units will still scramble. People will commit then go back on that commitment. Conversely, units will be readjusting up to the deadline. There are so many scenarios where things can change. Early commitments don't help anyone because you might think that a unit is perfect, but you meet your future boss, and they are not someone you would want to work for. Then, there's units that may not have been your number one and you end up loving your future boss. Keep an open mind, take all interviews, discuss the assignments with your spouse, and rack and stack as you go.

## **NOBODY IS REGULATING UNITS**

Each unit will conduct this process differently- there is no set standard. Some units will have a set schedule for an interview and selection timeline while others will hire you based solely on your resume. You have to remember that this is just another task on the hiring authority's whiteboard intermingled with their daily tasks, so some of them want to get it done as painlessly as possible. Many units will wait until the last week to release results- leaving the individual guessing for weeks. Others will have a rapid timeline asking you to commit early without having conducted all of your interviews yourself- incentivizing many of your peers to potentially lie to units to try to get selected. Keep all of these things in mind when you go through the process.

## **“CONGRATULATIONS! WE WOULD LIKE TO OFFER YOU A 1:1!” NOW IT’S TIME TO MAKE THE HARD DECISION**

The moment has finally come, and you have been offered a job. Is it the job that you wanted? If your resume is good enough, towards the middle and end of the marketplace, you will come to a crossroad where you have two job offers at two locations, and you don't know which one to pick. Ultimately, this is where you and your spouse should continue to have that conversation to narrow down what is best for your family. In the end, my wife and I chose the location that was not only desirable but would also keep us relatively close to family. This way family could visit, and we could fly home for the holidays without it costing an arm and a leg.

## **SO MAYBE YOU DIDN'T GET A 1:1 MATCH, WHAT NOW?**

For the last two markets only 70% of my peers received a 1:1, leaving many without certainty. You will be fine. Continue to rank the jobs or locations that you would like. Sometimes you will find that your #1 location has other jobs that your peers may have backed out of. There were many success stories for my friends that didn't have a 1:1 match getting assignments in locations such as Germany, Washington D.C., and Hawaii. Once the slate is published, you may find that branch may work to get you to the location that you've wanted but for a different job. Just continue to keep your hopes and wait those two long months before you get your RFO.

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