

Track Lines

Alumni share their career journeys, as well as some useful lessons learned along the way.



Chris Costello '11

Left Active Duty: 2017

Last Active Duty Job: Assault Force Commander, Direct Action Section 1, Maritime Security Response Team (MSRT)

Academy Major: Management

Advanced Degrees: MBA, New York University Stern School of Business

Current Job: Co-Founder, Roland Hall Partners

Chris Tarbell '11

Left Active Duty: 2016

Last Active Duty Job: Command Duty Officer, National Command Center

Academy Major: Management

Advanced Degrees: JD, Temple University

Current Job: Co-Founder, Roland Hall Partners

Describe your job in 25 words or less. We manage a fund dedicated to finding and acquiring one great business, with the goal of operating and growing that business for the long term.

Briefly describe your post-CG career and what led you on this path.

Costello: My goal was to get exposed to challenges and roles that would set me up to be a great business operator and leader, and work with people that I generally liked. When Chris Tarbell suggested we start a Search Fund together, a light bulb went off.

Tarbell: As an M&A/finance attorney, I had the opportunity to work closely with management teams running small and medium sized businesses. In that role, I realized how much I missed working in small, high performing teams as an operator—so I started looking for small business opportunities where I could leverage both my Coast Guard and legal experience. After learning about Search Funds from another parent at one of my son’s soccer practices, I almost immediately knew it was the opportunity I had been looking for. I called up Chris Costello a few days later and we haven’t looked back since.

Knowing what you know now, how would you approach your transition differently?

Costello: I would’ve geared my MBA and post-grad roles more toward entrepreneurship through acquisition, and invested more time in leveraging the Academy Alumni network early on. There are many successful (and super helpful) alums in the private sector.

Tarbell: I think it may be too early to tell—however, for now, I am not sure I would change much at all. I feel very fortunate to be where I am today and am excited about the opportunities that lie ahead.

Top tip for alumni looking to transition into consulting, big tech, or operations.

Costello: Take a step back and think about a role that you loved and excelled in. What made that job great? Who were you leading or supporting? Take time

to reflect on what makes sense for you. Work hard and never stop learning, the rest takes care of itself.

In your current job, what keeps you up at night?

Costello: Our mission is to find and acquire one great business in the lower-middle market. This requires a great deal of efficiency. I'm always thinking about how to improve our sourcing and diligence processes, and how we can better share our story to earn the trust of business owners considering succession.

Tarbell: A lot (and my three young children do their fair share, too). With Roland Hall Partners still in its infancy, so many of our decisions feel like they are make or break.

Professional accomplishment that you're most proud of.

Costello: Still to this day, it's leading a team at MSRT. The privilege of being a part of this exceptional unit had to be earned daily. I learned a great deal about perseverance, adaptability, and servant leadership. Those experiences have and will continue to serve me well in the business world.

Tarbell: Hard to say. Recency bias would lead me to say taking the leap into entrepreneurship full time. However, leading a boarding team and successfully interdicting ~ 2000 pounds of contraband is very high on the list, too.

The one thing you learned while at the Academy that has set you up for success within the Coast Guard and beyond?

Costello: When I was Delta Company Commander, Chris Tarbell was my XO. As my subordinate, it was my responsibility to teach him about leadership and being a good cadet. I'm glad I invested that time into his professional development then, since it's paying dividends now that we are business partners.

Tarbell: Stealing is okay sometimes. The Coast Guard is full of exemplary teammates and leaders. Copy them, mimic them, and "steal" from their playbooks, then learn how to add your own personal touch over time.



Costello and Tarbell underway in the Coast Guard

What was your most impactful CG assignment and why?

Costello: While at MSRT, I had the opportunity to deploy overseas for eight months, which was an amazing experience. We worked with the Navy and Marine Corps to conduct boardings in the Arabian Gulf and Red Sea, and had supported NSW in joint-training exercises with GCC partners.

Tarbell: My first assignment after graduation as a Deck Watch Officer on CGC SHERMAN. One of the most formative experiences in my professional career. To this day, I still look to and build on many of the lessons I learned in my first attempts at implementing the leadership skills and principles taught at the Academy.

Book or podcast that you can't stop thinking about.

Costello: The book *The Wager: A Tale of Shipwreck, Mutiny and Murder* by David Grann

Tarbell: The podcast *Think Like an Owner* with Alex Bridgeman

Anything else you'd like to share with our readers?

Costello: If you're reading this as a cadet, enjoy the time you have left living a few feet away from some of the best friends you'll ever have. For everyone else, if you know a business owner thinking about succession planning, or want to learn more about Search Funds, reach out!

Tarbell: A huge thank you to all of the folks in our Coast Guard network who have helped us along the way so far. It has been a lot of fun connecting with both old friends and new, and we greatly appreciate the generous support!