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Armed for Success

By Libby York Stauder
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While many young people embark on a somewhat lengthy and overly indulgent journey to "find themselves" as they transition to adulthood, Joseph Ram, president, CEO and founder of InfoSonics Corporation, had no such luxury. Instead, his metamorphosis came abruptly in 1980, courtesy of camouflage fatigues, combat boots and four years spent in the Israeli army.

Following high school, Ram enlisted in fulfillment of Israel's mandatory military service requirement. With no special training, he drew a communications assignment and received "excellent training" that he had no idea would serve him later in life.

It didn't take long for Ram to set his sights on bigger things. He submitted his request to become an officer and was selected for combat officer training. Ram says his military tenure gave him a broad background in a variety of things - radio, telegraph, mail, coding, war rooms. "Fax machines and cordless phones were the biggest, hippest technology at the time, but you live the transition," he says. "You have your core understanding and logic of how things work and you build on that as the technology evolves."

But perhaps even more important than his introduction to communications technologies, Ram says the army taught him discipline and the ability to think calmly and confront obstacles head-on. "In Israel, teenagers mature quickly," he notes. "You have that expectation that after high school you will be in the army. We looked forward to that day. By the time I was 20, I was responsible for people's lives. I spent two years in Lebanon - similar to the situation in Iraq today. You mature. You learn a lot."

In 1984, at the rank of captain, Ram left the army, re-entered civilian life and dove right in to the communications industry. By 1994, he was founder, president and CEO of InfoSonics, a company he calls one of the largest and fastest growing providers of wireless handsets and accessories in the United States and Latin America.

But he has never forgotten lessons learned in the military.

"The army decision-making process can be cumbersome," he says, "but once a decision is made, it's rallied around and brought to fruition. In wireless, we should rally toward a standard instead of wasting time, energy and resources and frequently ending up with nothing. The army is where I learned the most about leadership, motivating people, morals, ethics and doing what's best for the organization. At InfoSonics, we lead by example. If we ask someone to work hard, we lead the way and work even harder. Hard work will get you where you want to go in life."