

Anthony Damasco

Vero Beach, Florida



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Learn about Florida Entrepreneur Anthony Damasco:

Originally from Hightstown, a small town in Central New Jersey, Anthony Damasco, owner of Damasco Innovations and Gamer's Realm, spent the majority of his teenage years learning to program and design websites.

He'd go on to sell his services and, after receiving some formal education in business and programming, he landed his first "official" job in an IT capacity with a staffing agency. As Damasco's story proves, there are many routes to entrepreneurship, but one thing remains certain – it requires patience, the willingness to accept change and, among many other things, the courage to put yourself out there.

"My gig with the staffing agency turned out to be a great experience," Damasco said. "It was a small boutique agency with nearly 30,000

temps around the country. They grew faster than they anticipated and needed help with everything from their IT infrastructure to their website.

I would be out in the field at locations where the temps were staffed, assisting with computer issues. I did a lot of random things for about three years, but I was a full time 'IT guy' and I was happy."

Following his time with the staffing agency, Damasco was hired by an 'e-book' company before Kindle came on the scene. He spent the next two years helping them build their system. After the Kindle was introduced, the business exploded, and he found himself working with multi-million dollar CEOs and others who needed support. Eventually that company was sold and Damasco, with a severance package in hand, spent some time as a free-lancer before joining a marketing agency as COO. It was in this role where Damasco's entrepreneurial flames were reignited and an opportunity to expand Damasco Innovations, the side business he'd be operating, presented itself.

"It was in this role where I realized that marketing agencies, or at least the ones not focused on ROI, were kind of evil," he said. "The model is totally screwed up. In order for the agency to maximize profits, you need your account executives to spend less time with your clients and more time bringing in new business. I met with others in the industry and they affirmed that their agencies were also always over capacity. I was disgusted by this and by what we were giving our customers. Most of them didn't even know what they were paying for and very little value was being added. That's when I realized this wasn't for me and I decided to call it a day."

In the summer of 2015, Damasco and his wife sold their house in New

Jersey and moved to Florida where they began raising their family. They chose Indian River County so they could be near her parents. He spent the next two years selling websites and other services through Damasco Innovations, but got the itch to do something else.

“I noticed that there were a lot of arcades around, but none of them were like the ones I was used to back in New Jersey,” Damasco said. “That’s when I came up with the idea for Gamer’s Realm. It would be much more than just a regular video game arcade. The idea was to have more of a gathering place for gamers – a place for everyone to feel accepted.”

Together with his two business partners, Eric Young and father-in-law John DeBlasio, Gamer’s Realm went from idea, to plan, to establishment. It wasn’t without trials, but after \$200,000 in construction costs and equipment, seven months of dealing with the build-out and lease issues, Gamer’s Realm was officially open for business in August 2017. After dealing with some initial setbacks, including disputes with the landlord and four A/C units dying in the first year, Damasco’s vision of a gamer’s ‘hub’ has finally come to fruition. While the business itself operates at break-even, for now, the lessons he has gleaned from the experience have re-shaped his approach and enthusiasm for Damasco Innovations.

“After running a true brick and mortar business, I really understand the importance of getting customers in the door,” he said. “Impressions are great, but paying customers are what matter. This new insight re-shaped my approach to digital marketing. From that point forward, everything would be focused on ROI. If I couldn’t prove that I’m making you money, I would self-terminate the contract. I started working with customers

and running very specific campaigns with specific definitions of success. I also started to empower my customers and gave them the tools to make better spending decisions.”

The shift paid off. About a year ago, Damasco reached capacity but, instead of hiring outside talent, he gathered a group of young individuals and taught them the skills needed to flourish in the digital marketing industry. In addition to giving back to others, he really enjoys working with customers on their business. He’ll ask about margins and goals and will even make recommendations that go well beyond the scope of a typical digital marketer. He’s truly vested in the interest of his clients.

Looking ahead, Damasco is focused on growing both Damasco Innovations and Gamer’s Realm. He’s doing white labeling services for two major marketing companies in town and has partnered with the owner of City Guide to build a new online business directory. His plans for Gamer’s Realm include a heavier emphasis on the escape rooms and possibly expanding the concept to different cities.

What advice does Damasco have for aspiring entrepreneurs? “Make sure there’s a demand for your product or service, know your market, make sure your margins are there and do plenty of population research,” he said. “There are many tools out there for you to use, including Google Trends to see what’s being searched, Google Keyword Manager to see who’s doing the searching and Google Ads to reach your target market. Lastly, don’t get sucked into marketing companies trying to sell you overpriced services and always get three quotes.”

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