

Brian Cummings

Hudson, Florida



Seabreeze Pest Control

Learn about Florida Entrepreneur Brian Cummings:

Some people take the traditional route of going to college and getting a job. Others, like Brian Cummings, owner and founder of Seabreeze Pest Control, are drawn to the world of entrepreneurship at a young age. Not long after Cummings and his family relocated to Florida from New Jersey, he started earning money on the weekends doing construction. He was still in high school but knew what he wanted. Cummings shared the story behind the evolution of Seabreeze Pest Control and offers up some great advice for those wanting to pursue their dreams.

"Seabreeze Pest Control started as Seabreeze Lawn Maintenance in 1987," he said. "I was fresh out of high school and knew I wanted to start my own business. It wasn't easy starting a business at such a young age, but I got through it. I learned a few things along the way including the importance of not hiring friends and being organized.

Going from a dozen accounts to over 100 was definitely a challenge."

Cummings made a big decision in 1993. He acquired a pest control license and took the first step towards adding pest control services to his offerings. According to Cummings, he saw an opportunity and didn't hesitate to pull the trigger.

"After being in the lawn service business for six years, I saw a great opportunity to add the additional services," he said. "At the time, I had over 100 accounts that I could also sell pest control services to. I already had the trucks, so it was just a matter of putting the tanks on the trailers and learning about the chemicals, diseases and insects. It was a pretty modest expense to add on the pest control part."

For several years, Cummings offered both lawn maintenance and pest control services to his clients. By 1998, he built the pest control side of the business to a point where he was generating enough income to sustain himself and one other worker. At that point, he sold off the lawn maintenance side of the business to focus exclusively on pest control. For the past 20 years, Cummings has built Seabreeze Pest Control into one of the preeminent pest control service companies in Central Florida. As Cummings shared, there are many ways they set themselves apart from local, regional and state-wide competitors.

"We concentrate heavily on servicing our customers," he said. "Our guys are instructed to follow up on any problem they see. Even before a client calls us, we're coming back out to rectify the problem. We also put our guys through extensive training. We want our guys to be better educated than other technicians. We send them through a program offered by The University of Florida in Apopka. They receive core training, plus training

in three distinct areas: Lawn and Ornamental, General Household Pest and Termite. We also keep our equipment clean and up-to-date and take pride in the technology we utilize to stay in touch with our customers. Invoices are emailed and customers know what's going on with their lawns and what to expect."

Looking ahead, Cummings is focused on growing the business at a steady pace. He's also hopeful that by the time he decides to retire, he'll have a few people interested in buying the business. One of the things he enjoys most is educating and training his employees and watching them grow in the industry. He's optimistic that one of his employees may one day take over the business.

What advice does Cummings have for aspiring entrepreneurs? "Put a good plan together and make sure you're ready to work 15 hour days in the beginning," he said. "If you're going to get into something, make sure it's something you actually enjoy. I've always enjoyed working outdoors.

Also, take advantage of local organizations and resources. I went through the CO-STARTERS Program offered through Pasco Economic Development Council's SMARTstart Small Business program. It was one of the best decisions I've ever made. I gained new knowledge and tools and made some great connections. Lastly, communication is key. Stay in contact with your customers. Better communication leads to happier customers which leads to more referrals."

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