

Claudio Sorrentino

Boca Raton, Florida



Body Details, LLLP

Learn about Florida Entrepreneur Claudio Sorrentino:

Founded in 2006 by Claudio Sorrentino and Bryan Ballejo, Body Details has doubled in size nearly every year since opening its first location in Coral Gables. From the highs of earning \$900,000 in sales in their first 9 months of business and a recent streak of explosive growth to the lows of the 2008 and 2009 recession, Sorrentino and Ballejo have remained consistently committed to quality service, quick results and maintaining their distinction as Southeast Florida's largest provider of cosmetic laser services. Sorrentino, who serves as CEO, shared the journey, starting with the first business he and Ballejo launched to the story behind Body Details and their plans to take the concept nationwide.

From startup to second-stage

"Bryan and I first met in college," he said. "We were fraternity brothers

who co-founded a promotions company together. After we graduated, we both went in separate directions. Bryan worked for a different company and I was bartending and about to start my master's program. I was also big into working out and wasn't a huge fan of excess body hair. I ended up getting a job at a hair removal business mainly to get free services. I started as a phone consultant, but was quickly promoted to sales manager. Two months after I started, Bryan was laid off from his job. He said, 'Let's start another business together'. He was thinking pest control, but I had no desire to go in that direction. That's when I mentioned the idea of starting a hair and tattoo removal business."

Sorrentino and Ballejo got together and agreed to take action on the idea. They wrote a business plan and spent the next four months planning and acquiring the necessary capital. In early 2006, they opened their first location in Coral Gables, just south of Miami. The location was selected for a number of reasons including a need to satisfy a non-compete clause Sorrentino was under with his former employer. As Sorrentino shared, the first two years were chaotic. Sorrentino and Ballejo would wake up at 6am, meet at a hospital parking lot, close to where they were living at the time, and make the rush-hour drive down to Coral Gables and return the same day around 9pm. They did that six days a week for almost two years.

The first two years saw a tremendous amount of success, so much so that Sorrentino and Ballejo decided to open a second location in nearby Aventura. Once that location was up and running, they opened a third location in Ft. Lauderdale and eventually a fourth in Palm Beach Gardens. Business was booming, but there were a few challenges along the way that Sorrentino shared with us.

Keeping a competitive edge

"Our biggest challenge was doing business during the recession," he said. "Our clients had a tough time getting financing to pay for their hair and/or tattoo removal services. Almost overnight, we saw a 50% drop in sales. Prior to the recession, we were riding the high and making money hand over fist. The market had the capacity to allow people to spend a lot of money. That completely changed in 2008 and 2009. We had to reduce salaries, lay off employees, close locations and halted construction on several other locations. We learned a lot during that time. I like to say we earned an MBA from real life university. We weren't highly leveraged at the time, so we had to grow using our own cash flow. It took us nearly five years to climb out of it. When we reached 2014, we were able to raise capital from private investors. That put the business back on the growth track."

According to Sorrentino, Body Details was founded on the premise of aligning the company's interests with those of its customer base. A heavy emphasis is placed on educating the customer and offering a true lifetime guarantee. Body Details' packages will cover you for complete removal, regardless of how long it takes. Competitors will often sell a new package if the first one fails to produce the desired results. Sorrentino shared that Body Details loses money if they don't treat their customers in the shortest amount of time. Getting them in, done, and out is a win-win for both parties.

"In addition to our lifetime guarantee and focus on quick and effective results, we also have the best equipment operated by the best possible

practitioners," he said. "We also upgrade customers for free if we upgrade our equipment. If a customer from four years ago didn't see the results they wanted, and we upgrade to a new machine, they can come back in for free to utilize the new technology. Average machines are in the \$40,000 to \$80,000 range. Our advanced machines cost as much as \$250,000 each."

Body Details' marketing strategy revolves around education through various digital mediums. They've developed a strong brand and are aggressive with digital advertising focused on and catered to specific customers. They have a strong Google and social media campaign and make use of video and audio testimonials from influencers like professional athletes, Victoria Secret models and more. As Sorrentino shared, South Florida is an area where people aren't covered up in sweaters and coats for 4 months out of the year. As such, people want to look good, exercise and be "beach ready" and with that, comes a desire to remove unwanted hair. Florida is an ideal location for such a business.

Body Details' workforce consists of approximately 55 full-time employees. A heavy emphasis is placed on personal development and growth within the company. The environment can be described as young, fun and inviting. They do 'Champagne Tuesdays' in the corporate office, grand opening parties, Starbucks gift cards and a yearly bus trip to Halloween Horror Nights in Orlando. Employees all understand they have work to do and certain numbers to hit, but management wants them to enjoy their time and have fun. Privileges and promotions are based on performance not position or length of employment.

Notable community contributions

In terms of philanthropy and community involvement, Body Details gives back in a number of ways. They recently launched a scholarship program for hard-working and deserving students. They sponsor a Light the Night cancer walk and have donated hundreds of thousands of dollars in gift cards to non-profits who use the cards to raise money at silent auctions. They're also currently identifying a charity to do a 10% of profit donation day with. Sorrentino shared that more giving will come as they continue to grow.

What it means to be a Florida Companies to Watch Honoree

"It's really validation for everyone here for their hard work," he said. "They are the ones that have earned these recognitions. I'm the strategic planner to grow the business and create opportunities for our team members to grow, excel and be rewarded. We have fantastic sales people, practitioners and other team members. This is all because of their efforts.

In terms of why I believe we were selected, I think it has to do with how we position ourselves on the media side of things. We're in touch with current market trends, aware of where the market is going, and we portray that through our multi-channel messaging and marketing. We're hyper-connected to our customer base and we know what they're looking for and how far they're willing to drive. The future of retail will be ruled by service-based businesses like ours."

Looking ahead, Sorrentino's goal for Body Details is to have full coverage of the Southeast Florida market. Targets will include cities

from West Palm Beach to Kendall. Eventually they plan to move into the Orlando and Tampa markets and then, within the next five years, they plan to go nationwide. The ultimate goal is to be the nation's largest provider of cosmetic laser services.

Advice for aspiring entrepreneurs

Sorrentino offers up some tried and true advice for aspiring entrepreneurs. "Steve Jobs said it best, 'The reason why so few people are successful with a business is because it's really, really hard,'" he said. "The mental challenge and the pressure placed on an entrepreneur is overwhelming. Don't think for a minute that it's going to be easy. You'll need to temper your expectations and be prepared for the hardest thing you've ever done. When you leave a job, you're done for the day. As an entrepreneur, you never leave. You dream and constantly think about your business. Every decision you make affects other people's lives. It's a tremendous amount of pressure. If you decide to move forward, stay motivated and eliminate negative self-talk. You're going to be hit with so many challenges and there's no one to turn to. No one is going to say to the CEO, 'Hey great work. We survived today thanks to you'. You get very little recognition. The journey can be fun, but you have to go through hell and smile all the way though. If you never quit, you'll make it. Lastly, read books from inspiring people like Tony Robbins, Gary Vaynerchuk and James Clear."

Awards and Recognition

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TAKING SUCCESSFUL COMPANIES TO THE NEXT LEVEL

