

Eddie Edwards

Sunrise, Florida



CEI Staffing

Learn about Florida Entrepreneur Eddie Edwards:

Eddie Edwards Jr., Owner, Founder and CEO of CEI Staffing, left the Broward County Sheriff's Office where he worked as a Child Protective Investigator to pursue a path in entrepreneurship. After the Sheriff's Office, he worked as a subcontractor for family members out of Atlanta. They had a staffing firm and hired Eddie for a contract manager position in Florida. Eddie enjoyed the experience so much and saw the potential to do something similar in Florida that, when his contract was up in October of 2004, he decided to start his own staffing company. "I noticed that the Atlanta firm did a lot of business with the federal government," said Eddie. "They didn't do much business with city and county governments. I saw that as a possible niche and went after it."

CEI Staffing provides services for job seekers, private employers and government agencies. Their staffing solutions give employers the ability

to add talent to their teams without incurring the risk and cost associated with a traditional hire. Eddie explained, "They're not legally tied to that person and it's a great way to test the waters. If the employer likes the individual, they can hire them. If not, they can easily let them go." According to Eddie, the decision to focus on city and county government contracts was simple. "I was in the Air Force for five years and I know their perspective. With government contracts, you do the proposal, you get your ducks in a row and then they judge it on price and knowledge of the project." Eddie told us that that one of the things that helps CEI Staffing to stand out from the competition is their customer service and reach-ability. When you call them, you don't go through a maze of people to get an answer.

Over the past 14 years, Eddie has dealt with his fair share of challenges, as a result of industry innovation and business owner hurdles. "The biggest change has been the Internet," he said. "Before the Internet was being used to find employment, we would advertise in the local newspaper. Often times, to get someone onboard, you had to be in that city. Obviously, that's no longer the case. We have people working in Rhode Island, Florida, North Carolina and many other places. As far as hurdles are concerned, it's been rough at times, I've gone years without a vacation and months without getting paid. At one point, we lost one of our major contracts and with it, 70% of our business. Another client changed their payroll system in the middle of the year, which delayed our payment by five months. I had to take out a loan to cover payroll and worked with my landlord to allow me to delay payments. There have been some tense moments."

Mr. Edwards has some great advice for aspiring entrepreneurs. "Some

of the best advice I've ever received was that if the client can't meet your price to do business, then you need to move on," he said. "Stick to your guns. Don't drop your rates. You need to know exactly what it's going to take to make money. Then go up from there, not down." Eddie also recommends joining business and social networking groups such as chambers of commerce as a way to connect with other entrepreneurs.

This profile made possible by the following sponsors:

