

Elvis Campos and Richard Weaver

Sanford, Florida



SignTek Graphics

Learn about Florida Entrepreneur Elvis Campos and Richard Weaver:

Originally from Guatemala, Elvis Campos, co-owner of SignTek Graphics, first moved to the United States 32 years ago. He lived in California before moving to Seminole County in 2005. When Campos first entered the US, all he ever wanted was a chance to work. Campos took advantage of every opportunity, worked hard and today, he his partner, Richard Weaver, not only work hard at their craft, they also work hard at running their own business.

"Prior to moving to Seminole County, Richard and I both worked for the same printing company in California," Campos said. "I was first to make the move and did so for the affordable real estate. My original plan was to get a job, but nothing panned out. That's when I convinced Richard to make the move and to start a business together. We found a company online that agreed to train us and hand us a turnkey sign operation for a

fee. It's similar to a franchise, in terms of the training, but unlike a franchise in that we didn't have to pay royalties and franchise fees. We went to Dana Point, California, for two weeks of training."

The support company even helped Campos and Weaver identify a location and assisted them with their initial marketing and advertising strategies. Nevertheless, they were largely on their own and the first few years were rough. "The biggest challenge was the money," Campos said. "The business was making money, but not enough to pay us. We went three or four years without paying ourselves. We survived on saved money and we both took out second home loans. I thought about selling and going back to work for someone else, but the freedom that comes with owning your own business is what kept me going. You can't put a price on the freedom."

Another challenge that Campos shared with us was having to go from a primarily behind the scenes role, as a computer graphics guy with his former employer, to a sales and marketing role with SignTek Graphics. "I never did sales," he said. "When we opened the shop, the people that trained us said we needed to identify one of us to do sales. My partner didn't want to be that guy." By default, Campos became the sales guy and, over time, learned to really enjoy that role. He joined chambers, the Rotary Club and participated in many networking events.

Putting himself out there and stepping out of his comfort zone has paid off. SignTek Graphics is well known in the community and has done work for major corporations such as Central Florida Regional Hospital, Orlando Sanford International Airport, Mercedes-Benz of North Orlando and more. "I've learned that it's more about developing relationships,"

Campos said. "Networking and meeting new people has actually become one of the things I enjoy most about owning my own business."

While Campos handles sales and marketing, Weaver does the bookkeeping, production and installation of the signs.

Campos offers up some great advice for aspiring entrepreneurs. "You won't die," he said. "Don't be afraid and don't live your life with regrets. If you are going to start your own business, make sure you have enough cash to survive during the first few years. We didn't think we would need extra cash, but we did. A lot of new business owners think people will come in and buy your product and then you'll be able to pay your bills and yourself. It doesn't work that way in the beginning. It's very easy to run out of money. Don't let that happen to you."

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