



# Joe and Sabrina Ciceri

Leesburg, Florida



Electrical Works

## *Learn about Florida Entrepreneur Joe and Sabrina Ciceri:*

After 15 years of working as an electrician for his father-in-law, Joe Ciceri, owner of Electrical Works, decided it was time to be on his own. With the support of his wife and business partner, Sabrina, Joe put the wheels in motion to turn his lofty vision into a reality.

"My dad had a vision that wasn't as big as Joe's," Sabrina said. "Joe wanted more. He wanted to do bigger projects. We worked hard to get debt free before launching the business."

Joe added, "I took night classes and worked on weekends toward getting my license. I bought a truck that I could work out of and slowly prepared."

Electrical Works was founded in March 2008. Sabrina, who's a nurse by

trade, owned a small personal training studio at the time. She had experience as a small business owner, but nothing prepared Sabrina or Joe for the challenges they would face.

"When we started the business, it was right before the recession," Joe said. "Not long after, the economy completely crashed and things got a little rough. Part of the challenge was finding our own customers. When I left my father-in-law, I made a promise that I wouldn't take any of his customers. We had to start from scratch. We had one customer that filed bankruptcy and owed us a lot of money. We had no health insurance and then, I needed to have my gall bladder removed. It was a stressful time. Fortunately, we were small and stayed lean and did what we had to do. I looked at the business like failure was not an option."

Sabrina added, "Joe would do his billing on our buffet table late at night.

He had big dreams and always stayed positive. He also had a great reputation in the community. He works hard and takes great pride in his work. We stayed alive because of the debt we cleared before starting the business, Joe's excellent relationships with people in the community and because he was always honest, fair and did high quality work."

As time went on and the economy slowly recovered from one of the worst recessions since the Great Depression, Joe and Sabrina picked up more and more clients. Getting the right employees was a process, but after assembling the right team, the business began to gain traction.

"We read a lot and learned from a lot of successful people," Sabrina said. "We picked up some great insight and knowledge from people like Tony Robbins. We're a faith-based company and our culture reflects that. We put a lot of time and energy into our employees. We push our

guys to get their Journeyman License. We supply training DVDs and we reimburse them if they pass the exam. We'll also give them a raise. As they build their confidence and feel better, they're more engaged and happier. Our culture is something we're proud of, something we worked hard to develop."

To set Electrical Works apart from other electrical contractors, from the beginning, Joe treated the business like it was more than a one-man shop. He wore a uniform every day. He kept things clean and professional and took pride in his work. Funds were also allotted for expansive advertising.

"We advertised from the very beginning," Sabrina said. "Even though we didn't really have the money, we chose to advertise. At times, it was hard to commit to \$500 or even \$200 a month in advertising expenses, but we did it. Our efforts definitely paid off."

After 11 years in business, Joe and Sabrina have reached a point where they have flexibility. They've hired good people and don't have to put the business first every day. As such, they're able to take a step back and focus on building the business and setting future goals. Joe and Sabrina shared some of those goals and what success means to them.

"We're focused on building a strong company that will be there for the family," Joe said. "We also want a larger location in Lake County."

"We've outgrown our current location." Sabrina added, "We're very much focused on growing the business. The more successful we become, the more we give to the organizations we support. We've adopted four kids, given thousands of dollars to various charities and support groups like

the Leesburg High School's construction academy. Giving back to our community is very important to us."

Joe and Sabrina also have sage advice for aspiring entrepreneurs. "If you're going to do it, go into it full blast with no options but to succeed,"

Joe said. "You also have to be willing to change and adapt if things aren't working. Things that worked five years ago might not work today.

Be willing and able to change as you go."

"Don't underestimate the importance of advertising. We made the decision about a year and a half ago to sit down with an advertising agency and revamp our entire look and image. We changed our logo, colors, website and brand," Sabrina said. "That investment elevated us in the community. It caught the attention of a lot of big contractors and led to new business. Last, be willing to let go of certain things. When you've built the business from the ground up, it can be tough to give up some control. However, if you let others focus on certain things like advertising, while you focus on building the business, you'll get much better results."

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