

Jon Arguello

Kissimmee, Florida



PBM Specialties

Learn about Florida Entrepreneur Jon Arguello:

Originally from San Francisco, CA, Jon Arguello and his family moved to the Orlando area when he was just eight years old. Much of Arguello's hard-work ethic, inspiration and interest in business comes from his parents. His mother and father, both originally from Nicaragua, met after moving to the United States. His mother barely spoke English, but found a job as an AT&T Operator. She eventually worked her way up to a CFO position. Arguello shared that at a young age, he remembers his aunts and uncles, many who also worked at AT&T, talking about the challenges and obstacles with their jobs and helping each other solve problems. Arguello shared the story behind his entrepreneurial journey from an early interest in business to becoming CEO of PBM Specialties and serving his country along the way.

"Right out of college I got into journalism," he said. "I eventually migrated

into the corporate communications field. Focusing on the market share strategies. For example, telephone companies ferociously compete for a small percentage of people that are eligible to and do eventually go back and forth between companies. The focus of my career, has been on winning those small groups of influence-able customers and increasing a company's market share percentage against their competitors. After working in the communications industry, I joined the Army. I was 28 years old, which was older than most people who first enlist, but I always wanted to be in the Army. I remember memorizing the military ranks from studying my parents encyclopedias when I was five. I always knew, at some point, I would join."

After honorably serving his country for six years, Arguello left the Army in 2008 and got into strategic consulting for political campaigns using his market share competition experience. He worked on the Romney presidential campaign, congressional and state races. It was through these channels that he met the founders and owners of PBM Specialties, Doug and Ruth Coberley.

"We talked about what the company needed and they liked the skill set I brought to the table," he said. "They offered me the job and, in April of 2015, I became CEO."

PBM Specialties was founded in 2011 as a consumer research and development company. Initially they were focused on building consumer items for large corporations such as Disney and Universal. The original strategy proved to be harder than anticipated after the retirement of Disney's president, who they had established a relationship with. They needed a new strategy to generate revenue. Arguello's addition to the

team turned out to be a true turning point for the company.

"When I came in, we realized the signage industry had the same type of equipment that we had, but on an even smaller scale," he said. "In fact, we had the equipment of a much larger sign company. As such, we manufacturing signs as an additional revenue stream. That side stream eventually became 87% of our revenue. Now we compete extremely well in this space. Every year has been our best year."

Today, PBM Specialties is pre-qualified with more than 40 general contractors and has relationships with developers throughout the country. They design, manufacture and install all of their own signage. Signs include the ADA-compliant signage on bathroom doors to the high visibility signage on top of buildings. They also design and manufacture custom awards and are the official provider of awards for the Orlando Business Journal, Jacksonville Business Journal, the Orlando City Foundation and other organizations. They continue to their patent pending specialty items including their Premium Display Lamp™, Premium Sports Light™, Business Card Holders, License Plates, Custom Name tags and other premium branded promotional items.

Arguello shared how PBM Specialties sets themselves apart and what he enjoys most about his role as CEO. "There are so many reasons I love leading this team," he said. " Before we got into signage, we were making custom awards for Florida's premier events which requires extreme attention to detail and doing a lot of things by hand. It's kind of like building a watch. We bring that same philosophy when building signs. We put our heart and soul into every sign, even if it's going on a bathroom door. Everything we do comes with a level of old world

craftsmanship you'd expect 50 years ago. There's a lot of gratification in that. We also contribute to our community, hire a lot of vets, embrace a diverse workforce and a family-like culture. There's also not a strict linear pecking order. We operate more like a rugby scrum than a baseball team where everyone has a specific position. Whether you're a graphic artist or in accounting, we encourage everyone to contribute to the team however they can best serve the mission. It makes for a rich environment and one where employees feel appreciated."

Looking ahead, Arguello's goal is for PBM Specialties to become the most recognizable name in signage in the Southeast. He wants to expand throughout the East and Midwest, while still maintaining the same level of service and care current customers have come to expect. He wants general contractors and developers to see PBM Specialties as the go-to signage company for quality, dependability, and exceptional service—traits essential to clients.

What advice does Arguello have for aspiring entrepreneurs? "Between high school and when I joined the Army, I was partial owner of a furniture store that didn't do so well," he said. "I can say that there's a lot of risk with owning a business. If you're going to start your own business, put some serious thought into your decisions and be as disciplined as possible when executing them. There is no substitute for diligence and tenacity, combining them will get you far. Lastly, be prepared for the long-term. It will take time. As they say in politics, you don't usually win your first election."

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