



# Keith Frederick

Vero Beach, Florida



LED Capstone

## *Learn about Florida Entrepreneur Keith Frederick:*

Originally from Warrenville, IL, a small town approximately 30 miles due west of Chicago, Keith Frederick, owner and founder of LED Capstone, graduated with a B.S. in Criminal Justice Sciences from Illinois State University. He started his career with the Illinois State Police in 1989. In 1993, Frederick was assigned to the Technical Investigation Unit (TIU). It was with the TIU that he discovered the world of LED and along the way, discovered a passion for developing out-of-the box creative solutions using lighting technology. When it came time to retire in 2012, Frederick had a plan to use his experience to start the next chapter of his life.

"A couple years before retiring, I married my wife, Annaki," he said. "With encouragement from her and her family, I started my first business, Boat Light Store, which is still in existence today. We provide LED lighting solutions for boats and RVs. This was my original exit strategy for

retiring from the Illinois State Police. When I officially retired in 2012, I moved to Florida and continued to expand Boat Light Store."

While Boat Light Store continued to grow, it was more of a side job for Frederick. In 2013, as a result of the great connections he made in the industry, he was hired by Scandvik, a leading importer of marine hardware, to further develop their LED lighting division. He traveled from Maine to Miami and all over the Midwest selling lighting products to retailers and OEM boat builders. After getting plugged in to the local market and making even more connections with boat owners and homeowners, Frederick identified a new need for LED lighting and took a leap of faith.

"Customers and contacts I developed were always asking about LED lighting for their homes or commercial buildings," he said. "There was a clear void in the market. I realized that and, in July of 2015, made the decision to create LED Capstone. I dove into the residential and commercial LED lighting market as quickly as possible. In September of 2015, we opened our showroom and gave local contractors and residents a place to find lighting solutions. Before, they were driving either an hour north or south to find what they needed."

Frederick shared that some of the early challenges he experienced with LED Capstone were centered around defining their identity. The original business plan was to operate on a wholesale level to contractors, not retail sales. However, the location of the store and the neighboring stores with complimentary products such as kitchen and bath products, tile and cabinetry, are what flipped the script and helped to drive the retail component of the business.

"I have a philosophy that if someone asks for something five or more times, then there's a void in the market," Frederick said. "That's what was happening. We realized that what we needed to be was an LED Lighting Specialist Retail Store. I always knew I wanted to have a showroom, I just didn't know how we'd get there. After attending a lighting expo, meeting the right people and receiving great advice, we re-defined ourselves and now have a solid identity."

For Frederick and his team, providing exceptional customer service is paramount. With plenty of competition, including big box stores and the Internet, giving customers an experience they'll remember and share with friends and family is what LED Capstone prides itself on. Employees are expected to be knowledgeable, attentive, courteous and provide customers with an experience that exceeds their expectations.

Frederick shared some lessons learned and what he enjoys most about being his own boss and working in the LED lighting industry. "Believe in yourself, trust your gut and have the courage to follow through," he said. "You can't second guess your decisions. Once you do, you have lost. I've learned to make a decision, plan around it and keep moving. When it comes to the business, I thoroughly enjoy what I'm doing. I'm passionate about LED lighting and driven by the fact that I'm helping people. I like to consider us "The 911 of LED". We respond to an issue, we listen to their concerns and we come up with a solution. I stress to my team the importance of listening to what customers are saying and finding out exactly why they're here. Maybe they're lost or confused and need clarification. Whatever it is, we're there to help. When I look back on my law enforcement career, I can honestly say that it helped prepare

me for what I'm doing today."

Looking ahead, Frederick's goal is to continue to grow LED Capstone and its sales by increasing his customer base through an emphasis on relationships and referrals. When LED Lighting and Lighting Design Services are being talked about, Frederick's plan is to be the company everyone thinks to go to. He admits that it's an ambitious goal, but not unrealistic. He's contemplating a second location and/or expanding the current location. Regardless of how quickly they decide to expand their operations, Frederick and his team of LED lighting specialists are committed to providing the extraordinary customer service that defines the LED Capstone experience.

What advice does Frederick have for aspiring entrepreneurs? "Find the void in the market and penetrate it as quickly as possible," he said. "Also never stop learning. For us, LED lighting is ever changing. We need to stay on top of it. Education and learning is very important on the tech side, but also on the personal side. It's important to continue learning and growing as a person. While still working for the Illinois State Police, I was given some great advice that was passed down from my wife's grandfather. He said, "Define your passion and what you love to do; that should be your driving force. Now figure out how to make money doing it'. I can be doing anything other than lighting, but it's the passion I have for helping people and solving their problems that serves as my driving force."

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