

# Mario L Castellanos

Sanford, Florida



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## *Learn about Florida Entrepreneur Mario L Castellanos:*

Born and raised in Miami, Mario L Castellanos, serial entrepreneur and founder of Mystery on Main Street, relocated to Central Florida in 2008 in search of a slower pace. By sheer coincidence, a startup he connected with for contractual-based consulting work offered him a full-time position in Lake Mary. Unfortunately, two months after the company moved his entire family – and a month after his middle daughter got married – he was let go. After several years of additional consulting work, he made a connection that eventually led to the formation of Mystery on Main Street. Castellanos shared the story behind his entrepreneurial journey and described why his newest endeavor is such a game changer.

“I’ve been in sales and entrepreneurship my whole life,” Castellanos

said. “I started by hustling lawn jobs when I was five years old and by nine, I was selling newspapers on the corner of a very busy intersection in Miami. At the age of 18, I started my first official company selling car wash services to car dealerships. I was willing to do the work of washing and detailing cars at dealerships for less than they were paying their employees to do it.”

Since college, Castellanos has spent the past 35 years in the corporate and startup environment in various verticals including, Augmented Reality (AR), AI, Gamification Technology, Broadcasting and Media, Telecommunications, Security Systems, Energy, Sports, Employee Empowerment, and others. After being let go from his W2 position in Lake Mary at the end of 2008, as mentioned, Castellanos continued to provide Change Management, Business Analysis, Training, Operations, Sales, Marketing and Business Development consulting services as President and owner of New Ventures Technologies.

Around 2012, he and his wife – who’s a chef and an entrepreneur herself – launched a catering company called Kitchen Marcela. He also befriended Greg Partin, Founder and CEO of Fort Lauderdale based 3D HoloGroup, Inc., in November 2018, who eventually convinced Castellanos, in May 2020, to come onboard as COO. As COO, Castellanos has redirected the company to be more than just an AR headset reseller. “I realized there was more value for the company and our prospective customers, to become an AR software architecture and systems integrator because of the talent we already had with Greg and Tom Sablyar, our other co-Founder. We’ve since become one of the largest resellers of brand augmented reality headsets in the world.” In 2019, Castellanos was presented with yet another opportunity.

“I answered an ad for someone looking for a CEO,” he said. “We met and I had a chance to learn all about his product and his vision. He created a gaming app that he wanted to commercialize. We struck a deal and I became majority owner of a company I incorporated, called Once Upon a Crime, Inc. The app was called Once Upon a Crime and it focused on users buying memberships to play this game at different locations around town. We spent ten months working on the app before running into some legal and contractual issues in December of that year. Long story short, it didn’t work out and I went my separate way. From that experience, I created Mystery on Main Street.”

According to Castellanos, the purpose behind Mystery on Main Street is to help the small “mom and pop” type businesses struggling to compete against the Amazons and Ebays of the world. The game is designed to bring players into these retail locations. As Castellanos shared, the inspiration for Mystery on Main Street originated prior to Once Upon a Crime – it came from an experience he had while sitting on a park bench in Lake Mary.

“This was back in 2017,” he said. “I’m sitting there and I’m seeing all these people of every age group walking around looking at their phones. It looked like they were all doing the same thing, but I had no idea what that was. When I approached one of them and asked what they were doing, I found out they were playing Pokémon Go. Then I remember looking at the shops right across from where I was sitting and thinking, ‘someone needs a game that brings these kids into these retail establishments instead of having them congregate around trees’. That was the genesis of Main Street.”

According to Castellanos, Mystery on Main Street is similar to Pokémon Go in that players have to visit certain locations to play the game and receive clues. The clues, however, are found in retail establishments that sign up to be included on the “map”. Gamers are tasked with solving a mystery and earn prizes – usually in the form of cash – along with discounts or small gifts from the retailers.

“We’re getting them in the store and the store owner’s job is to encourage them to come back,” Castellanos said. “There’s also an augmented reality component to the game. Once inside the store, a character or arrows will take you to a certain part of the store.”

Castellanos is growing the business by contacting chambers of commerce and redevelopment authorities and encouraging their members to sign up. His goals are to develop “beta sites”, which consist of a certain number of local merchants who add their location to the game at no charge. Once the game is played and data points – such as name, contact info, location and gender – are collected, that valuable information will then be packaged and sold to retailers eager to learn more about their patrons. Long term, Castellanos is focused on growing Mystery on Main Street and his other ventures with the goal of eventually turning things over to his kids.

What advice does Castellanos have for aspiring entrepreneurs? “Just before you get too much into it, when everyone you know has told you, ‘you’re going to make it’, or, ‘you’re going to fail’, or, ‘you don’t know anything about running a business’, or, ‘you’ve already got a good job’, or, ‘where are you going to find the time’, or, ‘you’re too old/young’, etc., etc.,

etc., take a nice long weekend walk or a drive, and think about what those people have said. If the first thing you want to do when you get back home is write down a new idea that came to you about the business, you're ready."

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