

# Ricardo Garcia

Orlando, Florida



Havoc Media Group

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## *Learn about Florida Entrepreneur Ricardo Garcia:*

Born and raised in Puerto Rico, Ricardo Garcia, Owner and Founder of Havoc Media Group, commissioned into the United States Army after graduating from college in 1999. Following his service as an Infantry Officer with the 82nd Airborne, Garcia moved to Orlando to be closer to family and to pursue a Master's Degree at The University of Central Florida. Despite success at a young age, Garcia faced hardships, depression, uncertainty and, at one point, found himself homeless. His story showcases the power of determination and the importance of staying grounded and keeping your eye on the prize.

"After the Army, I worked for Walmart as a Grocery Manager, along with other positions," Garcia said. "Feeling inclined to make a move, I took a leap of faith and started working with a marketing firm. From that position, I moved into a marketing role with Sears which eventually

opened other doors. However, at some point, something happened."

Garcia continued, "I was successful with reaching many of my goals, but after my separation from the Army, I began to question myself and where I was at in my career. These thoughts, along with PTSD, brought on depression and led to some bad decisions. Long story short, I lost my car, my condo, storage units and basically ended up homeless. I was sleeping on friend's couches, not really knowing what to do or where to go next."

While working towards his Master's Degree at UCF, one of Garcia's fraternity brothers introduced him to Kaplan University where he found a job. He saved up enough money to get a car and eventually his own place. According to Garcia, being in the military taught him to deal with adversity and to get by with very little.

"Being homeless and not really having anything wasn't that bad," he said. "Coming from the Army, you're taught to live with nothing. Every day was a game to figure out where I'd sleep that night. From Kaplan, I was recruited back to Sears and then to a bigger marketing firm. During that time, I also thought a lot about my own skills in sales and marketing and what I could do for other people. At this point, the idea to start my own marketing firm became a reality."

Garcia discussed with his boss an idea where he would be allowed to maintain and continue to work on his portfolio, but under his own company. He would pay the owner a dividend of earnings, but would maintain the clients as his own. The owner agreed and, in February 2015, Havoc Media Group was officially launched as a full-service digital marketing agency.

"Even though I started the business with clients, it was still tough," Garcia said. "I had very little money and had to bootstrap the entire thing. Fortunately, I was able to get as creative as I wanted to, which allowed me to bring the business to where it is now. It's been a never ending process of ups and downs, but we're finally in a position where we've proven ourselves. We're getting calls from other owners, people in local government and even the Governor's Office in Puerto Rico."

As Garcia shared, the growth of Havoc Media Group can partially be attributed to the contacts he developed over the years. He's made a name for himself within the community and by working with political figures and various campaigns, the additional exposure has led to more interest from small business owners.

For Garcia, who enjoys the social media, public relations and event development aspect of his work, the future of Havoc Media Group looks extremely bright. His goal is to service as many families and business owners as possible. He not only wants to help them promote their business, but he's also focused on giving his clients the tools to create new businesses and opportunities.

What advice does Garcia have for aspiring entrepreneurs? "Never stop learning," he said. "I read about 29 books on different subjects per month. Also, with everything that happened to me, not having the right people around was a big thing. Another was not being able to manage money the right way. At the time, I wasn't able to handle success and large sums of money. It's important to know that, no matter how successful you are, there's always a possibility that something could

take it all away. Lastly, be engaged with your community. I'm a Congressional Action Team Member with UNICEF. We engage with the community and help to advocate for UNICEF's efforts on a global scale. I also sit on five different boards and recently received a proclamation from Orange County because we gave out 40,000 backpacks to kids in the community. Our efforts have impacted thousands of families throughout Central Florida."

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