



Rick Mills

Ocala, Florida



[Technology Concepts of Central Florida](#)

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Learn about Florida Entrepreneur Rick Mills:

Imagine having such a positive impact on one of your clients that they ask you to move to a different state to start a new business with them.

That's exactly what happened to Rick Mills, owner of Technology Concepts of Central Florida. Born in Albany, GA, but raised in the Clearwater area, Mills shared the story behind his journey from a steady career in Information Technology to an unexpected "hurdle" that changed everything.

"After I graduated from Largo High School, I moved to Atlanta to attend the Devry Institute of Technology," he said. "Shortly after I graduated with a degree in Computer Information Systems, I got a job with a small company in North Miami. This was around 1984. At first I was doing programming, but then we shifted to providing networking services. I

spent four years in Miami before moving back to Atlanta to work for a company that provided IT services exclusively to accounting firms. It started as a husband and wife team, but eventually grew to over 20 employees. I was responsible for flying around the country installing IT networks for accounting firms."

In 2002, Mills received word that the company was shutting down. He would have to make a decision about his future. Fortunately for Mills, what seemed like an unfavorable situation, turned into an opportunity to pursue his own entrepreneurial path.

"One of our clients, an accounting firm in Ocala, heard about what was happening and suggested I move there to start a local IT business with them," Mills said. "At the time, there was no one in Ocala providing those services at a professional level. After discussing the opportunity with my wife, Lucy, we decided to go for it."

Mills, who started the business within the offices of the CPA firm, shared that the experience was equally as nerve racking as it was exciting. Even though he had the support and funding from his three partners, it took about a year to gain some credibility. Slowly but surely business increased and, in 2004, Mills was able to hire his first employee. Between 2004 and 2008, business was good. Mills hired a second employee and things were looking up. Then the recession hit.

"Since construction was such a big part of Ocala's economy, the recession hit us pretty hard," he said. "In 2008, we went backwards. For several weeks, I was the only employee. It was tough, but I stayed focused and eventually things got better. I hired a new employee, who, after a few years became a partner. Simultaneously, I bought out the

CPAs. We officially went out on our own in December of 2014. That's when my wife joined the company and became a shareholder. Today, Lucy is our Office Manager and Bookkeeper."

Mills shared that what he enjoys most about owning and running his own business is the opportunity to build lasting relationships and to help his clients solve problems utilizing technology. With a staff of three, and a fourth on the way, Technology Concepts of Central Florida prides itself on its small and nimble team, capable of providing services for a wide range of industries. Whether it's a doctor's office or a manufacturing facility, they have the tools and expertise required to offer their clients an array of services including Network Management, Hosted Exchange, Offsite Backup, Vendor Management, Managed Firewall, Remote Monitoring, Endpoint Protection, Voice Over IP and more. For some clients, Technology Concepts of Central Florida serves as their Managed Services Provider (MSP).

"Rather than call us when they have problems, these clients sign an agreement that allows us to actively manage and monitor a large percentage of their network," Mills explained. "When an issue arises, because something always eventually happens, we're able to respond quicker. They also don't have to worry about the clock running on their dollar, since we're always monitoring their network. It's a great arrangement that more businesses should consider."

Looking ahead, Mills is focused on continuing down the current path, while always looking for ways to improve customer service and his understanding of the IT industry. With an IT landscape constantly under attack from security breaches and malicious hackers, Mills is

committed to staying one step ahead of the threats. To that end, he recently joined a peer group with nine other MSPs from around the country. Together, they share advice, insight and provide support to one another.

What advice does Mills have for aspiring entrepreneurs? "I would suggest they talk to four or five different entrepreneurs," he said. "No one's story is the same. Learn from their successes and failures. It's also very important to have savings. Lastly, take advantage of local resources such as your Chamber of Commerce and your local Economic Development Council. They do a great job of providing services for small businesses."