

Robert and Melanie Markel

Port Charlotte, Florida



[Array of Cabinets, Inc.](#)

Learn about Florida Entrepreneur Robert and Melanie Markel:

After visiting family in Port Charlotte, Robert and Melanie Markel, owners of Array of Cabinets, Inc., were ready to leave the cold gray skies of Delaware for the warm and business-friendly climate of Charlotte County. Melanie shared the story from moving to a new city to helping Robert build his construction company and eventually launching her own business.

"Not long after we moved to Florida, I got a job working with Wells Fargo doing reverse mortgages," Melanie said. "Robert was busy re-establishing and building his construction business, Royalty Construction, after we made the move. I was with Wells Fargo for about five years until the recession hit. The reverse mortgage business was hit hard and I was laid off. That's when I decided to help Robert with the construction business."

Melanie and Robert worked together for about five years building Royalty Construction and establishing a solid reputation. She worked in the field and in the office and gained a lot of experience in the construction industry. Along the way, Melanie identified an opportunity for a new business. In January of 2013, she took action.

"With the construction business, we were doing a lot of remodels," she said. "Our customers were buying their cabinets from the big box stores and we'd do the installation. Unfortunately, many of the cabinets were the wrong size. We decided to start carrying a line of cabinets to ensure the measurements were correct and that everything was good for the install. I got to a point where I was tired of crawling around on my hands and knees and getting dirty. Around that time, we also started to get a lot of contractors wanting to buy cabinets directly from us. That's when I convinced Robert that we should open a free-standing location and separate business to service the DIY people, builders and contractors."

After working through some initial challenges, including licensing and dealing with the building board, Array of Cabinets officially opened its doors in March of 2013. They carry two lines of outdoor cabinetry and two lines of indoor cabinetry along with plumbing supplies, hardware, grills, indoor and outdoor refrigerators, wine cabinets and ice machines. As Melanie shared, she's very particular about the brands she carries.

"I meet all the reps and really take the time to understand their products," she said. "I need to know that the manufactures are solid and reputable. Of the four total lines we carry, there are different price points for different customers. We provide complete customization on any

piece and truly offer something for every project and every size budget."

Melanie shared that what she enjoys most about owning and running the business is being able to make her customer's dreams come true. For a majority of their customers, they provide a one-stop shop solution to many of their indoor and outdoor remodeling needs. Customers supply the vision and Melanie and her team make it a reality.

Looking ahead, Melanie is considering expanding and having a second location focused more on the outdoor side of the business. If they went in that direction, the second location would be somewhere in Punta Gorda and the size would be about half the size of the original 3,000 square foot location. She'll also continue her efforts in Tallahassee and throughout the state serving as an advocate and a lobbyist for the Florida Home Building Association. Melanie takes great pride serving as an advocate for her industry.

What advice does Melanie have for aspiring entrepreneurs? "Take the plunge," she said. "You'll be sorry if you don't do it. There's no other way to find out if it's going to work than to just do it. Also, make sure it's something you really want to do. If you want it bad enough, you'll figure it out. Lastly, it's okay to ask other business owners for help and advice.

Don't be afraid to ask questions and get involved. It's important to network and do things like the Leadership Program through your local chamber. In the end, it's hard work owning your own business. However, the perks are great!"

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