

# Roger and Karen Marcil

Vero Beach, Florida



Absolute Protection Team

## *Learn about Florida Entrepreneur Roger and Karen Marcil:*

After graduating from college, Roger Marcil, co-owner and co-founder of Absolute Protection Team, went to work for his dad's security company, Florida Protection Service located in Palm Beach. After two years of working for his father and learning the business, Marcil's father's partner took ill. As a result, his father sold the business, but continued to work for the new owners in a sales role. Roger Marcil, who was under a non-compete agreement in Broward, Palm Beach and Martin County, decided to head north to start a new security company with his wife Karen and brother, David Marcil.

"My parents had a villa in Vero Beach they used as sort of a weekend getaway thing," Marcil said. "My brother and I went up there, stayed in the villa and took some time to look around. We checked out the area and competitors and really liked what we saw. Around September of

1987, we founded Absolute Systems Inc."

Marcil shared that some of the early challenges they experienced were coming up with the capital needed to start the business, a shortage of resources and developing a reputation from scratch.

"We started the business with just \$40,000," he said. Getting all of that together was tough. We also only had one car. I would drop off my wife, Karen, at the office and then I would do sales all day. She would get a ride home with one of the technicians in their install truck. We didn't make much money at all in the early days. As a result, it was challenging keeping everyone focused and on the same page. I did a lot of prospecting in the early days. That involved actually going out and physically meeting people. You don't make money sitting in your office."

Marcil and Karen originally thought they'd be in Vero Beach for a year, in order to allow the non-compete to expire, and then they'd head back down to Palm Beach County. However, they liked it so much in Indian River County that they stayed. They also developed, in a relatively short amount of time, an excellent reputation and a solid customer base. Marcil credits much of their growth and his ability to sell to the influence of his father who was nationally recognized in security alarm system sales. By 1995, it wasn't just customers who took notice.

"In 1995, Wayne Huizenga made us an offer to buy the business we couldn't refuse," Marcil said. "His company, Republic Industries, spent a lot of money buying up security companies and eventually selling them to even larger companies such as Southwestern Bell. From 1995 to 1998, I worked for the company that bought us. My first role was Branch Manager and then eventually I moved to Sales Representative. It was

tough going from the position of owner to that of employee and working for someone else. In fact, it was much harder than I expected. Also, the focus was based on the number of installations, not servicing existing customers. It was the opposite of what we used to focus on. By 1998, I had enough. Also, our stock from selling the business was falling. It was the right time to go back into business."

In 1998, Marcil and his wife, Karen, launched Absolute Protection Team Inc. Within three months, they had 75% of their customers back. Since then, they've grown the service area to include five counties and are proud to provide an array of services including residential home security cameras, alarm systems, central vacuums, gate entry systems, along with commercial security and fire protection, recorded video and access control. As a leader in residential security systems and commercial security systems integration on the Treasure and Space Coast, Absolute Protection Team prides itself on staying on the cutting edge of technology while meeting the ever changing needs of their customers.

Marcil shared what he enjoys most about owning the business and operating in the security industry. "I love meeting and interacting with our customers," he said. "I also enjoy doing repeat business with customers. In some cases we're providing services for their second home or their kid's home. I also enjoy reading about my industry and learning about all the new products. I try to go to as many conventions, expos and seminars as possible. I have always wanted to be an expert in my industry."

Looking ahead, Marcil is at a point in his life where he's ready to start taking some time off. He has no grand plans other than ensuring his

clients are taken care of and his employees are happy. When it comes to an exit strategy, Marcil shared that, because of the nature of the security industry, there are always companies wanting to acquire you. For now, it's business as usual.

What advice does Marcil have for aspiring entrepreneurs? "Come up with enough money to start the company and plan for some problems you didn't expect," he said. "If you think you need X dollars, add another 30-40%. That will keep you going when something happens you didn't plan for. Next, start small. You don't need fancy desks or a fancy office. A lot of people are underfunded and try to start too big. You want to be on a low budget when starting a company. Set a goal, that includes a realistic budget, and stick with it. Also, consider going to work for someone with a successful track record in the business you want to work in. Once you're in business, there are a few things you should keep in mind. First of all, competition is good. It gives you a lot of enthusiasm and energy to try to be the best. Next, take the time to properly analyze your market and go after the customers that have the money to pay you.

Lastly, if you're going into business with someone else, don't underestimate the importance of employment contracts. If something happens, you want a contract that explains how you'll part ways."

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