

Stanley Adwell

Leesburg, Florida



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Learn about Florida Entrepreneur Stanley Adwell:

Stanley Adwell, Co-founder and President of Intellisteel Group, LLC, has a 25 year career of buying, founding, building and leading companies across several unique industry verticals. As an innovator, investor, company leader and entrepreneur, Adwell possesses a certain set of skills that are required to take a new technology and disrupt an industry. His most recent journey into the world of on-site rapid cold formed steel framing design and manufacturing was initiated in 2013 when he received a phone call from a mutual friend and head headhunter of the founder of a new technology to the US construction industry.

"I was living in Brazil at the time," Adwell said. "I was taking some time off and didn't really have any intentions of getting back into business so quickly. A friend of a friend, of the original founder of the technology,

called and stated that he was thinking about tapping into the North, Central and South American markets, but didn't have the know how or the time to focus in those markets as his company was already the global leader in this technology. After several requests for a phone call to provide me with more detail, I accepted and the founder and I spoke for nearly three hours. He explained his plans to disrupt the construction industry in the US and the rest of The America's with his leading technology. I was sold. He put me on a plane and I went around the world looking at all of this companys major installations and projects. It was quickly obvious to me that the U.S. market was prime for this new technology."

Adwell joined the company and spent the next four years developing, implementing and executing The FRAMECAD Global Certified Design Build Network System throughout North, Central, South America and the Caribbean. He learned the business and, more importantly, learned how this advanced technology filled the problems and gaps that came with high-paced construction growth in a rapidly expanding economy. Using his previous experience working with the U.S. government and the companies work developing a mobile operations specification, Adwell, along with long-time friend and career construction litigator Phillip Smith, identified an opportunity.

From startup to second-stage

"Phil and I noodled the idea of starting a company that utilized the advanced, precision technology, but in a mobile, on-site application for the U.S. We felt like we were on to something and, in 2016, we took a leap and bought a couple of machines and software. We spent the entire

first year building out the process and the plan to bring our solution to the U.S. construction market. In 2017, we penetrated the market after holding a small Bar B Q/Demonstration of our idea and technology on a borrowed lot of a friend. There we were with our machine and a tent. During that Bar B Q/Demo we picked up three projects. The growth has been steady ever since."

Adwell shared that they originally considered deploying the business in Austin, TX, but ultimately decided on Lake County for several reasons.

For one, neither partner wanted to move to Texas and knew that managing operations from Florida would be difficult. Adwell also pointed out that Smith had a 25 year history in Leesburg, the cost of living was lower and, when they found out about Lake Technical College's Center for Advanced Manufacturing, they immediately saw the value of being close to a consistent, skilled talent pool and recognized an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of Lake County residents.

Even though Adwell and Smith knew their technology, methodology and process represented a significant opportunity to fill major gaps in the construction industry, primarily the lack of skilled labor, increased costs and decreased quality, and ever increasing project schedules they still faced an uphill battle educating an industry steeped in a tradition of incorporating inefficiencies into their everyday processes. Adwell explained, "When we launched, we thought we'd either be completely accepted or blown off the map. The reality was something in-between. We had to work to get the construction industry out of their old mindset and open their eyes to the new technology and methodology. The resistance to moving beyond the standard methodology was real. Cold

formed steel has been around for decades, but hasn't been seen much in the U.S., aside from interiors."

According to Adwell, the value they bring to customers is the assurance of speed, consistency of budget, quality of completion and predictability. Intellisteel is also extremely clean and prides itself on spotless job-sites.

They do all the cutting and pre-punching inside their machines, helping to eliminate errors and speed up production. The output is a very precise structure and template that benefits other trades such as electrical, plumbing, mechanical and cladding. There's also a measure of flexibility by manufacturing on-site that is absent from traditional construction. As Adwell shared, if there's an issue or something is damaged, a new part can be produced and assembled onsite usually on the same day.

Unique approach to hiring

Intellisteel's core team consists of machine operators, semi-skilled machine operators that do frame manufacturing, un-skilled labor that handles assembly, management and a sales team. Because the technology is so effective at driving the skill into the production, Intellisteel is able to build with two thirds less skilled labor than traditional methods. They currently have 17 employees and, to meet anticipated 2019 output of over three million square feet, they're looking to hire more. Adwell explained the company culture and how their unique approach to hiring has resulted in a dedicated and proud workforce.

"Aside from the operations and design coordinator, not a single one of our team had any construction experience," he said. "We went to a Goodwill hiring event and a recruitment symposium put on by Lake

County to find people who wanted a second chance and an opportunity to be part of something special. After that event, many of our employees asked us, 'Why did you hire us? We don't have any experience.' I told them they were specifically hired for a reason. We were looking for people that were hungry to learn something new and wanted to chart a new course together. I told them they don't have a ceiling and that there are no limits to their advancement. I can't tell you how much they appreciated that. I also explained to them that we're a pioneering company and that we're going to be challenged, but as long as we stick together, there's nothing we can't overcome. On our first job, I lived on the job site with our employees. We learned a lot together. After the building was erected, we all took a walk to appreciate the final product. The magnitude of their efforts really resonated with them as they toured the completed superstructure."

Notable community support

In terms of community support and philanthropy, Intellisteel works with Homes for Veterans to donate leftover materials and any pre-assembled structures, such as demo walls, they no longer need. They're also developing a process to apply some of their proceeds to help build homes for local communities. They also are working toward hiring injured veterans.

What it means to be a Florida Companies to Watch Honoree

"As new as we are and for how feverishly we've been working, the last thing we thought about was a nomination for an award," he said. "We've been working under the radar. Getting selected as one of the Lake County Florida Companies to Watch Honorees was a complete surprise.

When we got the call that we were nominated, I called the guys, took them out to lunch and made the announcement. Everyone jumped! I reminded everyone that this award is a reflection of all of our efforts and that we're all learning together. It was a big deal for us.

In terms of why we were selected, I hope it's because we're not only doing something that is challenging the norms and pioneering a process, but also because we're contributing back to the community as a whole. By operating out of Lake County and utilizing local talent, we're giving back to the local community. That's something we hold dear and we'll continue to nurture that relationship. People like Erika Greene, Associate Director of Workforce & Business Support for Lake County, Michael Rankin, Economic Development Director for the City of Leesburg and Dr. Diane Culpepper, Executive Director with Lake Tech, have stood behind us and supported us the entire way."

Keeping a competitive edge

Looking ahead, Intellisteel is focused on growth and continuing to educate the market about their capabilities. According to Adwell, customary obstacles such as materials, machinery and competition pose little threat to stifling growth and once customers fully understand what they do, there's little stopping them from taking their methodology nation-wide. The company is exploring a licensing model where customers in certain regions, who have a long history of experience, quality and a solid reputation, will have access to the technology, materials, steel, engineering and capabilities required to accomplish their objectives while expanding Intellisteel's footprint. On a personal level, Adwell's goal is that structural cold formed steel manufacturing,

because of the fact that it's 100% recyclable, has a high-precision assembly and erection and results in a higher quality product, becomes the preferred methodology for construction.

Advice for aspiring entrepreneurs

Adwell offers up some very true and poignant advice for aspiring entrepreneurs. "Embrace the suck," he said with a laugh. "You've got to get ready to embrace the lowest parts of the journey, because it's going to happen. You have to be willing to pour yourself into it and put in long hours. If you don't pursue your idea, someone else will, eventually. Be humble and make mistakes. Embrace your mistakes, learn from them and don't let them get you down. The journey will challenge your willingness to stay on, but don't lose focus. I had employees that had never been out of Lake County, living in Delray Beach on a job-site and working in challenging conditions away from home. I convinced them to stick with it and after working so hard and seeing their efforts, they felt great about what they accomplished."

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