

Florida SBDC at the University of Central Florida

Dredging & Marine Consultants Shailesh Patel



Shailesh Patel, president and founder of Dredging & Marine Consultants, LLC

Dredging & Marine Consultants (DMC) LLC is a Volusia County based, minority-owned, licensed engineering firm. Led by President, founder and managing member Shailesh Patel, DMC is a multidisciplinary team of engineers focused on dredging and marine-related infrastructure and environmental projects and provides services for all project phases including design, permitting, and project construction and implementation.

DMC specializes in dredging away “muck” (fine-grained, organic-bearing sediment) – and yes, that’s a technical term – from waterways, lakes, creeks and other water bodies. Under Shailesh’s leadership, DMC has carved a niche business by taking on challenging muck removal projects to help ensure the best water quality for our lakes and estuaries. “In its place, Muck can be a beautiful thing!” says Shailesh. “Because it is high in nutrients it can be used to as a resource for enhancing soils.”

DMC also designs waterfront facilities and structures such as marinas, docks, boat ramps, fishing piers, pavilions, boardwalks, seawalls, retaining walls, and rock revetments and provides stabilization to shorelines and canal banks. Additionally, the DMC team provides various environmental services such as plant and animal population assessments, ecological community surveys, and species management consulting.

When Shailesh founded the company in 2002, mostly with his own money in addition to some seed capital from a couple of close friends who become initial investors, DMC’s future sustained growth potential seemed limited and, like all business owners, Shailesh faced challenges. While he had some success gaining major engineering firm clients, there was significant opportunity in the government market and he needed a strategy and plan to go after it.

Recognizing this, Shailesh sought assistance from the Florida SBDC at Daytona State College, a sub-center of the FSBDC at the University of Central Florida (FSBDC at UCF). They referred him to Derek Hudson, a certified business analyst and procurement specialist at the Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) at the FSBDC at UCF. Himself a former Navy Supply Corps Officer and consultant on state of Florida projects totaling more than \$700 million, Derek met with Shailesh and his marketing director and assisted them devising a positioning strategy for competing for government contracts based not

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only on the company's expertise but also based on government socio-economic programs including the state of Florida Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) Certification and the state of Florida Disadvantaged Enterprise (DBE) certifications. He also assisted them in registering to sell to multiple government agencies at federal, state, and local levels and pointed them towards a method to quickly certify as a Florida MBE and DBE company. As a result, DMC became recognized as a Florida MBE and DBE, a significant competitive advantage in their market.

A short time after implementing PTAC's recommendations, and obtaining MBE and DBE certifications, Shailesh received a phone call from a prime contractor with a contract offer. That benchmark phone call came as a direct result of DMC's being listed as a certified DBE. As an ongoing strategy, Derek coached Shailesh regarding identifying teaming and subcontracting opportunities and made introductions with key personnel within these firms in order to help Shailesh and his team develop mutually beneficial and profitable business relationships. Since receiving government contracting assistance, DMC's annual growth rate has increased by nearly 15%.

Today, DMC has an ever-growing client list comprised not only of major engineering firms but of state, local, and county government agencies as well. Says Shailesh in a note to FSBDC at UCF's PTAC program consultant Hudson: "You assisted, gave us connections of who to talk to, what to have ready and how to approach the task and three months later, the results came in!!! With your involvement and direct hands-on assistance, we were able to obtain our state FDOT/GOAA (Florida Department of Transportation/Greater Orlando Aviation Authority) certification in about 2.5 months!!! ...and landed an FDOT contract as a sub-consultant to a major engineering firm. We have picked up momentum because of your assistance. You have saved us time and money." Shailesh went on to say: "..., this (PTAC) is what a small business needs, a 'go-to' advocate that will focus on our immediate need and facilitate completing a task...and be there until it is complete."

In addition to profiting from the FSBDC at UCF's PTAC program, DMC has been the beneficiary of other valuable services from the FSBDC. They participated in its Growth Acceleration Services, receiving a detailed business analysis supported by expert, no-cost consulting; they have worked with the FSBDC at Daytona State College's resident certified business analysts on building a robust business plan; and they recently participated in the FSBDC at UCF's Small Business Institute®, a program connecting local small businesses to the resources and management expertise of UCF's College of Business Administration and the SBDC at UCF.

Based upon his experience with FSBDC at UCF, its sub-center at Daytona State College and PTAC, Shailesh said, "the SBDC should be used by both start-ups and second-stage companies as a resource for growth, marketing opportunities, educational training and corporate analysis."

The FSBDC at UCF is a member of the Florida SBDC Network, a statewide service network funded in part through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration, Defense Logistics Agency, State of Florida and other private and public partners; hosted by the University of West Florida; and nationally accredited by the Association of SBDCs.

State Designated as Florida's Principal Provider of Business Assistance [§ 288.001, Fla. Stat.]