

## Digital Battlegrounds



### FELIPE BARRETO

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Being the first into a market can present risks for an entrepreneur, but it can also be a huge opportunity that offers significant competitive advantages. Those risks can be managed, however, if you are bringing in a business that has proven successful across the U.S. and the world. The major challenge is speed: can you set up and open your business before anyone else beats you to the punch? That’s the challenge that Felipe Barreto faced when he turned to the Florida Small Business Development Center at the University of Central Florida (FSBDC at UCF) for assistance.

Barreto’s vision was to be the first to bring an eSport videogaming arena and teaching academy to Orlando. Playing videogames and participating in eSports tournaments is a major entertainment option worldwide, but there are limits to how much fun can be had playing at home. Having a social presence along with interactivity brings another range of intensity, emotions and competitiveness to gamers.

Add to that an academy where participants – from novices to experts – can receive coaching and training to improve their game, and even become professionals. Teams and tournaments, supported by major sponsors, awarded over \$45 million in prizes in 2018 alone to professional gamers. This is a big business and it’s growing.

And so Barreto invented his new business, Digital Battlegrounds. He’d done extensive industry research, engaged in detailed business planning and attracted investors and the necessary capital. Now it was time to open his center and he came to the FSBDC for help.

“I knew that I needed local expertise,” Barreto recalls, “about how to set up a business, how to lease a space, how to hire people. It was clear to me that if I did it on my own, I would waste time, money and wouldn’t do it as well as I would if I had help.”

At the FSBDC, he worked with consultant Lisa Reineck who assembled a team of colleagues with specialized expertise in HR, marketing and business set up, including Jessica Ali, Chuck Wheeler and Jairo Batista. Together they assisted the client with finding a location; reviewing the lease; store design and layout; obtaining permits, licenses and inspections; establishing a hiring plan; and multiple marketing planning issues.

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Barreto achieved his goal: his is the first and only eSports arena and academy in Orlando. In less than three months, he had secured a lease, completed his buildout, installed equipment, and opened the doors for Digital Battlegrounds. And the company is living up to its motto: “Play. Learn. Win.” Gamers are gaming, receiving training at the academy and competing in tournaments, all with specially designed and supercharged gaming equipment, including 32 PC stations, 8 PlayStations and an MC booth for events.

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