

Twisted Minds Escape Room

Building a business, particularly one that offers a unique, new, unfamiliar product or service, is the definition of a challenge, if not impossible. For a business concept that is completely novel with no precedents in place, the government regulations, permits, licenses and approvals alone can be too high a hurdle for many.

Fortunately for Palm Coast and Flagler County, Jessica and Steve Sherman are pioneers who saw an opportunity in bringing a new form of entertainment to the area, something beyond the existing movie theatre and bowling alley, that had a family development and team building element to it. But, after doing their initial market research, they realized they couldn't do it without some help. And so they turned to the Florida SBDC at the University of Central Florida (FSBDC at UCF) office in Palm Coast and its area manager and consultant, Ray Peter.

With the help of the FSBDC, the Sherman's set about to launch Twisted Minds Escape Rooms, an indoor entertainment facility featuring mental and physical adventure-based "escape games" in which players solve a series of puzzles and riddles using clues, hints, and strategy to unveil the secret plot which is hidden within the rooms. It's a fun and exciting way to bring people together, a place "Where Friends become Family, and Family Become Friends" as the Twisted Minds Escape Rooms tag line goes.

The City of Palm Coast had never seen anything like it, and there was no playbook for what regulations, permits, licenses, etc. might apply. But the City does have the Palm Coast Business Assistance Center (BAC), a partner in the FSBDC at UCF and a new program called Business Navigation Services. Designed to guide new and existing businesses through the process of securing development project approvals, such as federal, state and local permitting and licensing requirements. As implemented by the FSBDC, the navigation services were exactly what the Sherman's and Twisted Minds Escape Rooms needed.

"When we started, it seemed like it wasn't going to work," recalls Steve Sherman. "Then we met with Ray Peter at the FSBDC. Ray was able to coordinate with the decision makers anytime we had an issue. He was able to get the right meetings set up with the right City departments. And we worked with those folks to get the thumbs up we needed."

"Working with the FSBDC was great. Having them there as the focal point to guide us made it so much easier," says Jessica Sherman. "They were able to give us direction, guidance, take us through the process step-by-step. It made a huge difference for us to have someone in town who had our backs. We would absolutely recommend working with the FSBDC. It was probably the best resource we had and the best decision we made."

"Today Twisted Minds Escape Rooms is open for business. We have two games available, one opening soon and six more planned," concluded Steve Sherman. "It's been fantastic since Day One. We've been able to double our revenues month after month, and we're getting 5 Star ratings across the board."

Providing the tools, strategies, and expertise to help Florida's business community thrive.

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

The Florida SBDC at UCF is a member of the Florida SBDC Network, a statewide partnership program nationally accredited by the Association of America's SBDCs and funded in part by the U.S. Small Business Administration, Defense Logistics Agency, State of Florida, and other private and public partners, with the University of West Florida serving as the network's lead host institution. Florida SBDC services are extended to the public on a nondiscriminatory basis. Language assistance services are available for limited English proficient individuals.

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STEVE & JESSICA SHERMAN

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