

Ocoos and the Ocala Power Plant Business Incubator



The life of Ocoos and the Ocala Power Plant Business Incubator have been deeply intertwined. The story begins in late 2010, when Jaye Baillie, the CEO of the Ocala/Marion County Chamber, asked Dr. Rahul Razdan to join the Ocala Power Plant Incubator board. Rahul was an ideal candidate because he had started several successful companies, and had recently sold the technology company WiPower to Qualcomm. It soon became clear to Rahul that one could not meaningfully impact company incubation without lowering the significant barriers small companies face around marketing, sales, internal operations, and simple business analysis. At meeting with Jaye Baillie, Dr. Razdan decided to take the project forward.

"After that meeting, I decided to keep my notebook with the notes in a safe place because I had a feeling that it could lead to something special," remembers Jaye Baillie.

The Team



After that meeting, Rahul immediately took the high level idea of the use of internet marketing technology with cloud services to help small businesses and engaged a team of four students pursuing various Masters degrees from the University of Florida into building a business plan. By end of the Spring semester of 2011, the idea was developed enough that Dr. Razdan and two of the Master of Entrepreneurship students, Daniel Sosa and Ryan McCabe, formed a company and Ocoos was born. Over the next 7 months, Ocoos raised investment funds, largely from Silicon Valley, and built a strong software development team with Zhenbo

Shi and Fang Cao, graduate students from the University of Florida's computer science program.

In late 2011, the Power Plant Incubator project was reaching a critical stage with both the City of Ocala and Marion County. "At the time, we were still residents of the brand new Innovation Hub Incubator at the University of Florida," said Daniel Sosa, founder of Ocoos. "In Gainesville, we defined the basic architecture of Ocoos and attracted several world-class advisers such as Mark Bertolami, the President of P&G's Duracell division." said Ryan McCabe. Meanwhile, Ocoos was reaching a point in its development where the team needed to settle into a concentrated period of core software development.

There was a significant need to show that clients would be willing to move into the Ocala Power Plant incubator once it opened. "Dr. Razdan's decision to move Ocoos to Ocala was a very good indicator for the county commissioners" said Carl Zalak, county commissioner for district 4. "The fact that the Power Plant is at capacity a mere 7 months after opening has confirmed our intuition, and this is why the county will continue to fund the incubator for 2013," said Commissioner Zalak.

In early 2012, Ocoos continued to add staff including native Ocala's Andrew Gianikas and Zack Ackerman, as well as students from the UF computer science program. Gianikas explained "working at a silicon valley

backed startup such as Ocoos has been an invaluable experience which I had not expected to find in Ocala. [Incubator Director] Kevin Reed has done a remarkable job creating a vibrant start-up culture here where everyone just enjoys coming to work every day. Where else in Ocala can a recent college graduate find an opportunity like this?"

In September 2012, Ocoos released its basic software platform which offers the customer "Amazon for services." That is, a place on the internet where customers can buy services as simply as they buy products from a company such as Amazon. With a business model similar to "LinkedIn,"

Ocoos provides an enormous amount of value to the small business provider with a "premium" package costing just \$15 per month.

"Once I saw the platform, I knew that it would be a great help to non-profit community in Marion County," said Barbara Fitos, the director of the Ocala Marion/County Community Foundation. "I was amazed that we were able to pull together a live working website in less than 90 minutes with full ability for people to donate. My colleagues were amazed that I was able to manage the system." said Mrs. Fitos.

"Our time in Ocala Power Plant has been a delight for me and the Ocoos team, and I have been especially pleased with the reviews that we have been hearing from the beta testers." said Dr. Rahul Razdan. "We have even started something called Ocoos University, where those interested in our platform (www.ocoos.com) can take free training classes. Much of the training is available on-line on our website, but there is also a weekly training given via webcast every Friday from 10:00-11:00 a.m. We invite all to our platform and to our training classes.

It is exciting to see Ocala at the forefront of the next stage of the information revolution." said Dr. Razdan.



Fast Facts about Ocoos

- Ocoos was founded in 2011 by Dr. Rahul Razdan.
- Ocoos launched its basic software platform in September 2012.
- Ocoos is the "Amazon for services."
- There are nine people on the Ocoos team.
- A premium Ocoos package costs \$15 per month.

Want to learn more?

Visit: www.ocoos.com