

Old-Fashioned Attitude In A High-Tech World

ROLANDO POZO
FOUNDED COMPANY
AFTER LOSING JOB

By DEREK MAUL
Columnist

Rolando Pozo

Born: California, 1970
Children: Anthony, 7
Member: West Tampa
Chamber of Commerce

Entrepreneur Rolando Pozo is committed to West Tampa with a mixture of passion, energy, hard work, belief and accountability.

"There's no free ride," he said. "Everything comes at a price."

The lesson took when Pozo lost his second job in as many years. "I told myself, 'If I do this three times, I'm an idiot!'" he said. "I'd already gone down the same road twice, so I started working for myself."

The result was Rolando & Associates Consulting Inc. "Our motto is, 'Old-fashioned service in a high-tech world,'" he said. "We do basically anything that involves technology. Networking, tech support, data recovery, corporate training, desktop publishing, operational consulting, AV & DVD production, custom Web sites, database design and engineering."

It is a repertoire of service built via years of experience. "The school of hard knocks," he said.

In 1997, Pozo offered to save his boss the high cost of keeping computers running. After a year he became IT director. Pozo then gained operations experience and eventually worked with two technology businesses that experienced dot com meltdowns.

As a child, Pozo had been encouraged to make do.

"My father left Cuba in 1961," he said. "Apparently a lot of my relatives were in the government and they were

getting killed."

His grandparents reminisced constantly.

"Mostly it was, 'everything is better in Cuba,'" he said. "The water, the weather, the women, the doctors. All I've heard my whole life is everything is always better over there."

Pozo could not help but stir the pot. "I'd always say, 'Then how come every time I turn on the television I see someone on an inner tube trying to get over here?'"

The family moved in a constant loop between California and Florida. "I was always the new kid in school," he said.

But West Tampa made a good first impression.

"Having lived in Miami, it was a serious step forward," he joked. "At least people spoke English in West Tampa. Miami grew way too fast. There are only two classes there, rich and poor; there is no middle class."

"West Tampa has the elements and the flavors, without the breakneck speed."

After Jefferson High School, Pozo worked at car dealerships, completed his GED, and attended community college in order to meet enlistment requirements for the U.S. Air Force.

"I joined the military to straighten myself out," Pozo said. "I was a reckless teenager and I knew Uncle Sam

could straighten me out. It's either be good, or go to jail."

Pozo had worked as a Tampa party disc jockey and ended up on the air by the time he was discharged as senior airman in 1997. He also honed his latent technical knowledge.

"I've always had the ability to tear stuff apart and put it back together again," he said.

Unclear about the future, Pozo first and foremost valued family. "I moved back to Tampa in 1997 when my son was about to be born, and I wanted to be around family."

Although Pozo's 13-year marriage recently ended, his 7-year-old son, Anthony, serves as an enormous motivation for community service.

"I've seen all these statues and markers for the great people who have done all this amazing stuff in this area," he said, "and I thought, 'How cool would it be if one day my kid is reading a statue because of all the stuff I have done?'"

Pozo is motivated to see a bright future.

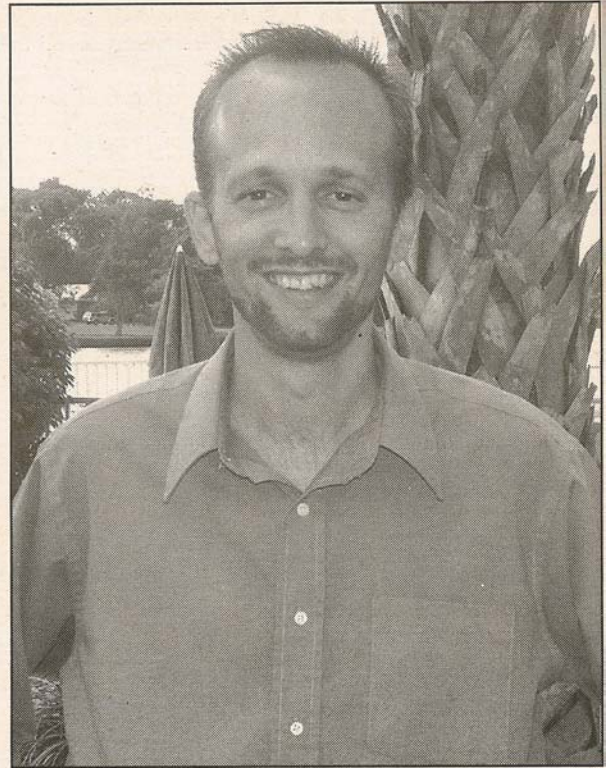
"I want to be involved in helping fix, repair, and bring-up-to-speed the neighborhood my kid grows up in," he said. "And hopefully one day he'll raise his children here and make a difference."

Pozo joined the West Tampa Chamber of Commerce when he launched Rolando & Associates (www.rolandoworld.net). Today, he produces the organization's Web site and newsletter.

"Now I'm communications and marketing director for the chamber," he said. "I want to get the message out."

While he believes positive change is possible, Pozo also understands the importance of personal responsibility.

"I had a major mental shift



DEREK MAUL/Photo

Rolando Pozo founded Rolando & Associates Consulting Inc. after losing his second job in two years. "I'd already gone down the same road twice, so I started working for myself."

when I lost that second job," he said.

"It forced me to live through my greatest fear. Fear is as useless an emotion as you could possibly have. You have to do stuff and then just pray for the best."

Making a difference can be counter cultural, but it is always possible.

"Getting involved in the community and having my own company were not even possibilities with the way I was raised," Pozo said. "I was raised to hold on for dear life, don't take a risk. Once I stopped listening to those voices in my head, that's when things started changing."

"People who are willing to take risks get the biggest rewards," he said. "That's what it takes."

For fun, Pozo performs

stand-up comedy.

"I'm 'the Cracker Cuban,'" he joked. "One day I'd like to make it a career, get a Winnebago and drive around the country. I'm serious about comedy."

He appears occasionally at the Central Ybor Improv, and DJ's at the Green Iguana three days a week. "I'd also like to get involved in radio again."

Without a motivation in your life "you're doomed," said Pozo. "I believe in the future here, there's no doubt in my mind. I've been here. But if you want something you've got to figure it out, you've got to make it happen."

What would Rolando Pozo say to those considering investment? "I'd say now or never. If you think about it too long you're going to miss your opportunity."