

# Becoming an Entrepreneur

By Rob Castellucci

Sunday was always my favorite day of the week growing up in my small New Jersey town. It was the day that my father would teach my friends and me martial arts in our basement. It started when I was six years old and by the time I was ten, my father had over 150 students. That same year, I began instructing the beginner's class and helping to handle the finances of his business, collecting class payments and balancing books. By being exposed to this entrepreneurial venture at such a young age, the seed had been planted and it would be another ten years before it began to blossom.

Flash forward to my junior year at the University of Florida and my entrepreneurial potential had yet to be realized. As fate would have it, I became involved with the Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, participating in their workshops and listening to lectures. I had an interest in entrepreneurship; however I did not consider myself an entrepreneur. Another lucky move (with luck being where opportunity meets preparation) occurred when I became a Synogen intern. Synogen is a seed-stage venture fund that co-founds medical technology companies in conjunction with University of Florida patented technologies. I interned throughout the summer and then asked to stay for the fall since I enjoyed the work so much. Over the next two years, I had three promotions until I reached my current position as Associate. At Synogen, I get the opportunity to work hands-on with start-up companies developing technology that will change the world. Synogen's portfolio companies offer everything from seizure prediction and nerve regeneration technologies to the world's first non-invasive glucose monitor. The people at Synogen serve as a powerful reference group of entrepreneurs, a set of individuals that I model much of my behavior after. In fact, my co-worker Elena Casson took the great photo that you see above!

With the confidence and knowledge accrued through my education at the University of Florida, CEI and Synogen, I co-founded U-Match last summer. Our first product is called RoomBug, which offers roommate matching



software to student apartment complexes and university housing divisions. With RoomBug, students will no longer have to worry about the "nightmare college roommate" and instead, can choose their own roommate online using Facebook. I started this company because I have worked in the leasing industry and saw the problems with the current matching system and I am also enamored with Facebook. The education that I have experienced over the past year has been phenomenal. Synogen and U-Match have been synergistically linked to serve as catalysts in my professional development.

I did not view myself ever becoming an entrepreneur, even a year and a half ago. According to the Kaufmann Foundation, 70% of college graduates will start a business sometime in their lives, making it as likely as getting married or having children. So if you are reading this, thinking that you are not an entrepreneur, perhaps one day you will blossom into one.

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