

Worldwide Sportswear

For many businesses serving the hospitality, travel, or food and beverage industries, the COVID-19 pandemic proved disastrous. Many did not survive. Fortunately for Nanu Manek, president and owner of Worldwide Sportswear, the Florida Small Business Development Center at the University of Central Florida (FSBDC at UCF), and its CARES Act-funded Business Recovery Team (BRT) program was there to assist him.

Based in Port Orange, FL, Worldwide Sportswear provides screen-printed and embroidered products such as t-shirts, sweatshirts, hats, and tote bags to the hospitality and tourism industries, including resorts, restaurants, state parks, and other vacation destinations.

Worldwide Sportswear is known for capturing the latest trends and operating as a fashion company, producing Fall and Spring product lines every year. Its clients praise the company for its high-quality products and fantastic customer service. Worldwide Sportswear grew rapidly until COVID-19 struck. “The pandemic brought us to a complete halt,” Manek recalls. Fortunately, he was already in discussion with the FSBDC at UCF, seeking to join its award-winning Advisory Board Council (ABC) program.

Designed for established, second-stage companies, the ABC program provides no-cost, customized teams of volunteer professionals who offer advice and counsel to help small businesses grow. “Establishing a board for our company interested me a lot because we were growing by leaps and bounds at the time,” Manek says. “But when the COVID-19 shutdown hit, the FSBDC contacted me and shifted me to their Business Recovery Team (BRT) program. And it was phenomenally helpful to us, getting us through the pandemic and back to where we needed to be to start growing again.”

Launched to assist Central Florida businesses in overcoming the economic disruption caused by COVID-19, the FSBDC’s BRT program assembled its expert consultants on teams that were ‘custom-fit’ for the participating business to conduct in-depth strategic and business planning focused on financial, marketing, and operational issues aimed at returning the company to health and growth.

Led by FSBDC consultant Jose Molfino, Worldwide Sportswear’s BRT team included experts in sales, marketing, and finance. “The BRT Team has been fantastic,” says Manek. “Everyone is knowledgeable and really knows what they are doing. They guided us in a straight line, keeping us focused and doing a great job of it,” Manek declares. The BRT’s contributions at the company included a financial review that helped reduce costs, build budgets, and create a 12-month cash flow forecast to monitor progress. It put in place a customer relationship management (CRM) system that has added new clients and industries as revenue sources. And it guided the company in building a robust and highly effective social media and digital marketing campaign.

“While the business is currently still below pre-pandemic levels, the good news is that it’s trending positively. Business is up 100% more than it was during the pandemic, and sometimes 200% to 300%. The projections are definitely good and, once tourism really opens up, we feel that our business is going to thrive, and we’ll be above pre-pandemic levels by a lot,” Manek reports. “For me, and for Worldwide Sportswear, the FSBDC has been indispensable,” Manek concludes. “Without it, we wouldn’t have had the guidance we needed to survive the pandemic.”

With the Business Recovery Team, we were able to stop the bleeding, set up a plan for the reopening and be positioned for a bright future.” Worldwide Sportswear