



Wired for Success:

JOHN RUSSO '95 MBA TARGETS NARROW NICHE IN BROADBAND

Before he became the telecommunications consulting giant he is today, **JOHN RUSSO** '95 MBA worked on his father's farm, planting corn, picking okra and milking cows.

Then, he fried doughnuts in the Publix bakery.

While he was earning his bachelor's degree in marketing from the University of Central Florida, he worked in the school's admissions office.

He worked as a restaurant server, an assistant manager at Walmart Inc. and a salesman for AT&T Inc.

Through the varying positions in multiple industries, there was one constant: He worked.

"There are all these books written out there that say, 'You've got to do this to be good in sales,' or, 'You've got to do that to be good in sales.' I say, 'bull crap'—all you've got to do is work," Russo says. "If you want to be good at anything, you've got to have a work ethic."

It is with that work ethic that Russo founded Broadband Consulting Group (BBCG), today, the largest

telecommunications consulting company in the U.S.—essentially, by accident.

For about two years, Russo was a door-to-door salesman for a startup cable company, where although the internet didn't yet exist, he learned the ins and outs of telecommunications. From managing the door-to-door salespeople to pursuing the business of apartment developers, he wore many hats. He earned his MBA through Florida Tech's Orlando Education Center and was promoted within the company several times before it was purchased by AT&T.

Eventually, he left AT&T to work for a fledgling dot-com company that, unfortunately, filed for bankruptcy after about one year.

Russo reached out to one of his apartment developer connections, asking to represent him in his cable and internet contract negotiations while he looked for full-time employment.

Not only did he agree, but he told his other developer friends—who told their friends, who told their friends ...

"I kept growing and growing the business by default through referrals, and I said, 'Well, forget it. I'm going to make a run with this,'" Russo says.

Nineteen years later, BBCG is still entirely referral-based. Doing what, exactly? In short, technology advising.

Essentially, Russo and his team of eight keep up with the advancements of the telecommunications industry so that their clients don't have to—advising developers on how to best outfit their buildings for the cable, internet and phone services residents desire; consulting on how to retroactively update older buildings; and negotiating contracts with major cable and internet companies.

Ready to share his lessons learned with the new generation of businesspeople, Russo recently joined Florida Tech's College of Business Advisory Board and even spoke to a global business class in the spring semester. The takeaway: "I think any one of you in here can do what I did. Just learn."