

Andrew Cohen



After graduating from the State University of New York (SUNY) in Albany, Andrew Cohen went to work for Bear Stearns as a trade analyst, but ultimately decided that Wall Street was not for him. So he went to Hollywood. There he worked and rubbed shoulders with the stars.

"I started as a production assistant for the Zucker Brothers, famous for the "Airplane!" movie, then I became a Director of Development and Production for other production companies and produced made-for-TV movies including "Dollar for the Dead" starring Emilio Estevez, "Behind the Mask" starring Donald Sutherland, and "Outlaw Justice" starring Kris Kristofferson."

When Hollywood turned out to be fickle, Andrew turned to the restaurant business, becoming the General Manager for well known hot-spots including Lush in Santa Monica and El Carmen in West L.A. After a number of years in restaurant management, he moved with his future wife to Las Vegas and started an upscale men's skincare line called Rod's Royal Treatment. The line was carried by 160 stores throughout the United States and Canada and was also available online.

"I traveled the country promoting the brand, and eventually sold the company in 2016," Andrew said.

He moved back to Los Angeles and began working with two separate startups, MMA Help which provides online mixed martial arts education and instruction from professionals in the various fields of MMA, and Playdates 4 Dogs, which he describes as Tindr for dogs. The website matches dog owners and personalities and sets up playdates for the canines.

He later connected with the SBDC hosted by Pasadena City College, joining the team of advisors there, and helping clients learn to structure their businesses, get business licenses, insurance, create budgets and more, telling clients the importance of creating the right foundation and base for their businesses.

To him, one of the most important services the SBDC provides is a listening ear. "I wish I had someone to talk to when I first started my businesses. I learned through making mistakes," Andrew said. "In my advice now, I tell clients it's better to speak with someone who has made the mistakes, so you don't have to make them."

Turning to someone who's already done what they're trying to do provides a great benefit for clients, Andrew said. "The SBDC makes a huge difference in the lives of entrepreneurs," said Andrew. "Being able to talk through the problems creates a sense of comfort, relief and safety and the feeling that it can be done. Sometimes clients feel overwhelmed, and I'm able to help them create a path for success."

All entrepreneurs will face challenges, Andrew said. "Anyone who's started their own business has gone through bad times, and when advisors pass that information down that's a great benefit to our

clients. Anyone who says they haven't made mistakes in business hasn't been in business long enough," he said.

Andrew recommends any new business owner, or even one with just an idea for a business, to contact the SBDC. "I would tell them to start at their local SBDC. It's offering a free service to potential business owners," said Andrew.

Part of what makes the SBDC effective is the team of advisors available to clients. "The beauty of the SBDC is we have access to a network of other consultants and advisors," said Andrew. "I like to lean on my other co-workers with expertise in a particular area. We work together to give clients our best advice possible. Sometimes that may mean handing them off to someone else."

Helping the diverse clientele that comes to the SBDC for help makes Andrew's work worthwhile. "I love it. It's a great way to work with interesting and motivated people with passion to move forward who might not have experience. I have the lifelong experience, and I'm happy and willing to pass on."

And clients appreciate that he's been through the struggle himself.

"I tell them if you do A,B,C,D,E in this order it will lead you to success. I know because I've done it myself. It creates a sense of comfort and relieves anxiety. That's what we're here for."

The success stories of clients he's advised is an added bonus. "I enjoy mentoring and advising, and seeing the growth from inception through hard dollar sales," Andrew said. "I receive emails from clients thanking me profusely for the time and energy I give them, and I don't know where else you

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