

Sarah Pinasco, Shieldwall Solutions

By Lorrie DeFrank

Not yet two years old, the business that high achievers Sarah and Logan Pinasco founded is already barreling down the highway of success. Shieldwall Solutions, a full-service trucking company based in Ponte Vedra Beach, doubled its fleet the first year and is continuing to grow this year.

According to Sarah, chief operating officer, they were living in California and pondering starting a business that would give them stability and more control of their financial destiny. She holds a doctorate in physical therapy with advanced credentials in neurology. Her husband, a Marine veteran with experience as a mechanic and driver, was working in the mortgage industry. When they settled on independent trucking, they decided to launch their business in the Jacksonville area for a variety of reasons.



The name Shieldwall, an ancient protective military tactic, reflects the company's focus on safety as well as employee health and well-being. Following extensive research and planning, the founders knew they wanted to start by contracting with FedEx because of its dependable large freight volume, despite lower profit margin. They started their business in January 2023 and the next month purchased a FedEx contract. But they still needed to provide trucks and drivers. Within six months, they had four trucks rolling and started interviewing for additional contracts. By the end of last year, they owned eight trucks and have since added six.

"We do everything," Sarah said of responsibilities that include hiring and training drivers in addition to transporting freight nationwide.

Their success notwithstanding, the owners, both accustomed to continuously pursuing professional development, actively sought entrepreneurial mentorship. "We were looking for structure for our business and to better our skills instead of climbing the corporate ladder," Sarah said. "We found The Pitch Factory."

When she connected with JAX Chamber, she learned about The Pitch Factory. The six-week workshop designed to bring businesses to the next level is offered in partnership with the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce, Jacksonville Women's Business Center (JWBC) and JAX Chamber. It helps entrepreneurs develop their pitches to leaders of large organizations and refine their business strategies. It is free to participants thanks to a JWBC grant and North Avenue Capital, its sponsor.

"The Pitch Factory is so awesome," said Sarah, who completed it this summer. "Most people who go into business don't have a four-year business degree. I had never made a capability statement. I had written a business plan, but it was check-the-box and not structured in a way that I could ever take it to a bank. We funded our business ourselves and now that we're getting bigger and the capital expenses are growing, we want to pursue other opportunities. Now we have a business model and a business plan that are much better than I had originally."

Sarah highly recommends The Pitch Factory for anyone who wants to start or grow a business, maintaining that it is an invaluable resource that will set them up for success by teaching them things they never thought about.

She also praised The Pitch Factory for helping to identify their target customers, which are more mid-size warehouse firms than giant corporations like FedEx. Now they are pursuing more compatible contracts and have an impressive capability statement to take to the interviews, she said.

As their business continues to grow with a priority on safety, Sarah uses her professional skills to provide such services as ergonomic assessments, coaching and behavioral health training for drivers. With new trucks costing \$200,000 and because they are heavily reinvesting in the company, measuring success in dollars will take a while. Yet with 20 drivers, signs of success are evident. “Right now, we are at max capacity for what we can do without more staff,” Sarah said.

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