



Entrepreneur.com

Surviving Business Boot Camp

Programs nationwide offer budding entrepreneurs lessons in startup.

By Nichole L. Torres | [Entrepreneur Magazine - October 2008](#)

URL: <http://www.entrepreneur.com/magazine/entrepreneur/2008/october/197496.html>

Twin brothers Kevin and Russell Otway knew they wanted to start a business. So in 2007, they attended boot camps run by Florida International University to learn the basics. Kevin wanted to learn financial modeling, and Russell participated in the marketing boot camp. That same year, the 29-year-olds started Veterans Energy Solutions LLC, which provides energy-consumption audits and green-energy designs to residential and business customers. "I had ideas on how to piece things together, but going to the boot camp helped give me direction to build something that's logical and flows," says Kevin. "It's not just saying, 'I'm going to make \$25,000.' Instead, it's, 'This is what I need to do to make \$25,000 to break even or make a profit.'" That direction helped the pair grow their Miami company to \$500,000 in sales this year--and FIU's boot camp is just one of many programs offering budding entrepreneurs intensive training on starting a business.

Marketing, financing and writing a business plan are three areas the Eugenio Pino & Family Global Entrepreneurship Center at FIU covers in its series of boot camps, which cost from \$50 to \$95 each. "The main thing [boot camps] help with is perspective," says Colleen Post, founding associate director of the [Pino Center](#). "When you're working on something so long, you forget to look at the big picture. We get them to look at how the whole monster works." You don't have to be a student to enroll, but requirements vary according to university, so check with the boot camp you're interested in for prerequisites.

Boot camps provide in-depth training, but attendees must be committed to get the most out of them. "You have to bring passion and a great idea--we can't supply those," says Mike Levinson, CEO of DreamIt Ventures, a company that provides seed funding, mentoring, and legal and accounting advice to startups during a three-month summer camp in the Philadelphia area. "We can give you the tools and the sounding board, but we can't build the business for you. You have to do it yourself." Go to dreamitventures.com for application deadlines.

[Y Combinator](#), in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Mountain View, California, is another firm that offers boot camp-like funding cycles. Aimed mostly at software and web service companies, they run for three months, featuring weekly dinners with experts. The program culminates in presentations to Silicon Valley investors, ultimately earning an investment deal in exchange for a stake in the startup. The DreamIt Ventures and Y Combinator camps are free for participants, but acceptance is competitive.

Crunched for time? You can still benefit from a weekend boot camp, such as the [Derby Management](#) Entrepreneurship Boot Camp held in Boston from October 22 to 24, for \$975. There's no deadline to apply, but spots are limited. "Boot camps aren't designed to delve into every nuance of mid- to later-stage growth," says Jack Derby, founder of management consulting firm Derby Management. "The focus of a successful boot camp is on those [first five] years. [It] should provide architecture for the entrepreneur to create a solid foundation that will stand up for the long term."

Copyright © 2008 Entrepreneur.com, Inc. All rights reserved. [Privacy Policy](#)