

FAST FACTS

NEET

Type of Business:
Service

Owners:
Rogastan Ellis

Address:
617 N. Swan Road
Tucson AZ. 85711

Phone:
(520) 907-6317

Website:
www.NeetsGreen.Biz

Business Began: 2006

Employees at Startup: -0-

Employees in 2010: 7

First Year Revenue: -0-

Revenue in 2010: \$236,300

Startup Capital: \$60,000

Source of Initial Capital: Owner
Investment from Retirement Plan

SBDC Counselor:
Tom Shambo
Microbusiness Advancement
Center SBDC
(520) 620-1241

NEET—Tucson, AZ



Rogastan Ellis, owner of NEET

NEET founder **Rogastan Ellis** is a Veteran business owner who knows that there's more than one way to be green — and he used that knowledge to build a business.

As a computer programmer for the Department of Defense, Ellis found that he was so allergic to the cleaning supplies used by the housekeeping crews in his workplace that he often had to work from his home in Tucson. That's where he and his wife got the idea to start a green cleaning service.

"We were talking about how there had to be a better way," said Ellis. "She suggested that I retire and open a cleaning business using green materials. I'm a computer programmer by trade, so I didn't know about that, but I calculated the numbers and took a leap of faith."

In 2006, Ellis attended an SBA workshop on starting a business, where he met **Tom Shambo**, who is now the **Center Director at the Microbusiness Advancement Center SBDC** in Tucson. Shambo explained government contracting processes, pricing and organizational structure.

Using money from a retirement plan to fund his business, Ellis started out preparing homes for move-in and home

shows. That led to work cleaning outpatient clinics for the Veterans Administration. Despite unsuccessful attempts to get a loan, Ellis kept moving ahead and won contracts with the Department of Homeland Security and the National Guard.

By October of 2007, NEET had three Federal contracts and had hired five employees. The SBDC helped once again, with assistance in strategic planning, GSA contracting and cash flow.

The company expanded its service offering beyond cleaning and floor care to be more competitive. "We needed to separate ourselves from other cleaning providers," Ellis said. "We did that by becoming a Facility Service Provider, which includes green landscaping (low maintenance live plants and metal plants) and green IT services for business." Green IT services include recycling old technology and offering ecologically sensitive products, such as the new Apple 'green' PC.

Ellis credits the business counseling that he received from the SBDC with 'keeping him going'. "Business in real life is different than workshop business knowledge," he explained. "I had my idea and my business plan in hand and I took off to make my way in the business world. I went down fast and the SBDC helped me regroup the business with counseling."

NEET's success has also inspired Ellis to create the Starving Mind scholarship, which he said will help underprivileged children living in under-developed areas.

"It's a lot of work, but I'm fulfilling the dream my wife and I had," Ellis said of his business. "Anyone who is thinking of starting their own business should visit their local SBDC. They are there to help and it's free."

His advice to aspiring business owners? "You have to build your company structure first," he said. "Don't get in over your head before you're ready, work hard and don't become depressed when times get tough."

Microbusiness Advancement Center SBDC



Microbusiness Advancement Center

The **Microbusiness Advancement Center SBDC** is located in Tucson, as part of the Microbusiness Advancement Center, a non-profit organization. Center Director Tom Shambo and his team served 365 counseling clients and 968 training clients in 2010. They can be reached at (520) 620-1241.



MAC SBDC Team, (left to right): Bob Fick, Business Analyst; Alex Cooper, Business Analyst; Tom Shambo, Center Director; Rozanna Bejarano, Operations Coordinator



Debbie Chandler
Executive Director
Microbusiness
Advancement Center

