



JAX CHAMBER

2024 SMALL BUSINESS LEADER OF THE YEAR



Aaron Robles Sr

Founder & CEO
Innovative Therapy Solutions, Inc.

Table of Contents



Part I

Application..... 3

Part II

History & Philosophy.....4
Growth.....5
Management.....6
Innovativeness/Response to Adversity & Competition..... 7-8
Leadership & Community Contributions..... 9-11

Addendum

Biography.....12
Statement of Merit.....13
Letters of Recommendation..... 14-16

Small Business Leader of the Year
Presentation Book and Interview Application



Part I:

1. Name: Aaron P Robles Sr Title: __Founder/CEO____
2. Company: _Innovative Therapy Solutions, Inc dba : Innovative Physical Therapy
3. Business Phone: __ (904) 280-2002___ Email: __aaron.robles@manualpt.com___
4. Business Address: ___232 Canal Blvd Unit 2 Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082_____
5. Are you a member of the JAX Chamber? ☒ Yes ☐ No
6. Your business is a ☒ Corporation ☐ Partnership ☐ Proprietorship
7. Year company established: ____2008_____
8. Percentage of the business which you own: ____100%_____
9. Industry Type: ☐ Financial ☐ Manufacturing ☐ Real Estate ☒ Health Care Services
☐ Technology ☐ Retail ☐ Other (specify)
10. Give a brief description of your company's products and/or services.
11. Number of outlets or offices: _____3 offices_____
12. Is the company headquartered in Jacksonville? ☒ Yes ☐ No
13. Gross annual revenue: ☐ less than \$1 million ☒ \$1-5 million
14. Number of employees: ☒ 1-25 ☐ 26-50 ☐ 51-100 ☐ more than 100
15. List Business/Trade/Professional and Civic/Service Associations and Positions held:
____OLLI (Osher Lifelong Learning Institute) - Course instructor
____Institute of Physical Art – Course and Lab instructor
____APTA (American Physical Therapy Association) District board member; Clinical Instructor____
16. Honors/Awards Received: _____
____Jacksonville Small Business Leader of the Year Beaches Division

_ Small Business Leader of the Year

I have reviewed this application and confirm that all information given is correct:

Signature: Date: 12/6/2023

Application



PART II: HISTORY & PHILOSOPHY

I moved my family of six with four young kids ages 1-8 years old to Jacksonville, FL from Atlanta, Georgia. This move took my wife from her home town with the hope of a better community to raise our kids and a place to follow the dream of owning my own business. I had an opportunity to do just that by partnering with a clinic owner who needed my leadership experience and treatment expertise to build the business. After a year of burning the candle at both ends and sacrificing time with my young family, my always supportive wife said, "if you are ever to start your own business, this is the time." Not having the security of a consistent paycheck was a scary venture, yet I soon found how welcoming the community of Jacksonville is by connecting with some of the business leaders for help.

Having no idea how or where to start a business, I met a local physical therapist who had owned and sold her clinics, and she helped me develop my business plan. After starting a S corp, I tried to apply to insurance plans for billing contracts but was immediately denied. I was then fortunate to meet another PT owner in the community who offered me an opportunity to franchise through his company. I signed as a franchisee with John Goetze Physical Therapy, Inc.

Through our stellar treatments, we soon had the reputation of helping with even the hardest, most chronic cases. To accommodate this growing need and to empower this population, I started an additional, separate cash only location to handle just these patients. Innovative Physical Therapy was born and has now grown to 2 cash locations.

With growth comes the challenge of trying to keep ahead of the tide to scale the business. I needed continued wise council to help with my business journey of going from owner-operator to CEO of the business.



PART II: GROWTH

Starting out as a single person business in one location and growing to close to 20 employees in 3 locations was quite an accomplishment for us. We were able to break the \$1 million gross revenue mark as a company just last year. We were able to grow from 2 part time cash-based locations renting rooms in doctor's offices to being able to purchase a space and lease another location of our own. We have now celebrated our 15th year as a business owner.

I have learned that growth and profit cannot come at the same time since the reinvestment of revenue back into the company is great during periods of growth. The growth periods are necessary to have the infrastructure to recruit the right staff, establish and nurture a cohesive environment and culture to then run a lasting, profitable company.

Having insurance based and cash based physical therapy clinics present with different challenges. With the insurance clinic, staying ahead of diminishing reimbursements and growing overhead is ever present. To realize additional profit streams, I had to embrace the mindset of encouraging cash services and goods within the insurance clinic, even though the practitioner side of me wants to just provide the best treatments and patient experience and assume that the profit will follow.

For more growth in the cash clinics, another mind shift was needed - learning to market directly to the public instead of the doctors. I found that utilizing relational marketing was the best method to reach those specifically in need of our skilled services. We focus on customer loyalty and long-term customer engagement rather than shorter-term goals, like customer acquisition and individual sales. The goal of relational marketing is to create strong customer connections to our brand that can lead to ongoing business, emphasizing customer lifetime value.



PART II: MANAGEMENT

Like most healthcare professionals, CPA's, and attorneys, etc., I was a practitioner first, for I was educated as a Physical Therapist, not as a business leader. Early in my career, I was promoted to management positions so quickly that I had to learn on the fly the skills that were required. Through these experiences, I realized I was capable of running a business, but I had a lot to learn to do so successfully.

After starting my own business, I recognized that to grow my business, I needed to grow first. I needed to surround myself with people who could provide me wise council. Having good connections through our great community and being involved in mastermind groups provided me the proper encouragement, education and accountability I required. I was able to become more organized and intentional with implementing systems for my business to be more successful. It has also helped me understand that I could not continue to scale the business while still being in the weeds of the business. This was a major challenge - to step out of the daily treatments and away from what I thought I knew best and what I did best. But what was best for the company was for me to focus on the operations of the business and to stay forward thinking - providing the vision, strategy and leadership for the company.

Becoming the CEO of a company is an ongoing and evolving process, and to be a good leader, I understand my employees are my best asset. I hold regular staff meetings: weekly one on one meetings with the managing staff and also with the therapists; monthly, quarterly and annually. We include a year-end meeting to review the year and plan growth for the next. These meetings to cast the vision of the company for the staff, review what we've done well and review what challenges are ahead. We have score cards for every position that are reviewed regularly to ensure clear expectations, to encourage growth and to provide open, frequent and specific communication and training. As a small business leader, I know I have to get it done. If I don't, it won't, and I have to keep my staff productive or the company doesn't survive.



PART II: INNOVATIVENESS/RESPONSE TO ADVERSITY & COMPETITION

I am the only Certified Functional Manual Therapist in North Florida, and one of only 10 in the whole state. Being highly skilled in advanced manual therapy treatments has allowed me to confidently treat the most difficult and the most chronic cases in town.

Emphasizing the whole patient experience and personal time with the patients is what sets our clinics apart from others. Patients feel heard and treated as a person first.

This innovation does not come without its challenges, especially with growth. Recruiting and keeping good therapists to provide the high level of care I expect is difficult, for the work ethic has been changing in the work place. Finding employees who like to be challenged and want to advance in their profession is more difficult these days. But the level of care that attracts patients to us, also attracts therapists to us, since the industry trend is less hands-on time with patients and more exercises to allow for higher volume patient loads.

Running a cash clinic and having to market directly to the public is something I was not accustomed to. Prior to this challenge, I was ingrained in marketing only to doctors, since patients need a doctor prescription for their insurance to authorize physical therapy treatment.



PART II: INNOVATIVENESS/RESPONSE TO ADVERSITY & COMPETITION



There is a study that shows only 7% of patients that are physical therapy candidates with low back pain are referred to physical therapy by their general practitioners. I want to reach the 93% that are not referred for therapy, instead of fighting with the rest of the PT clinics for that 7%. This takes more time, effort and money.

We are in the online world, and understanding the ever-changing world of online marketing is a full-time job alone. I have found the relational marketing system meets our needs best in cost and in effectiveness in reaching the right population. We have been successful enough to continually raise our rates and experience a greater influx of cash to invest back into the business. This allowed us to hire a marketing assistant to keep our presence in the community for continued growth.

We continue to advance our treatment skills by taking more hands-on educational courses than the minimum Florida licensing board requirements and also having weekly lunch and learn sessions with our therapists.

Keeping on the leading edge of premium care gives us an advantage, not only over corporate physical therapy clinics but over other cash based clinics as well.

PART II: LEADERSHIP & COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS

We have always been an advocate of providing the best services for our patients, so we intentionally partner with other businesses and practitioners in the community to do so. Joining the Chamber was just a natural transition to meet and to network with more businesses in the community, so we can grow our network to connect with reputable companies.

We have always been a teaching clinic, hosting and instructing courses biannually for therapists coming from all over the country. We have hosted therapy students' clinicals from UNF, University of St Augustine, UF, University of Delaware, Keiser University and FSCJ. I have given lectures and taught classes at the local universities and colleges covering topics of health, business, management and leadership. I have been able to present and hold workshops for the community in health fairs, the YMCA, assisted living centers and retirement communities on subjects such as: Age Does Not Equal Pain; Get Out of Pain & Back to Life, Get Back At It Masterclass (Get back to an active lifestyle.), Posture Workshop, Balance and dizziness, How to Work from Home Pain-Free, Back Pain is the Real "March Madness", Sit for Success (Posture and Working at a Desk), Neck Pain Masterclass, Low Back Pain and Sciatica Masterclass, Standing Shoulder to Shoulder (Should Pain Workshop), Get Your Swing Back (Back Pain and Golf Workshop), Back Out of Whack (How Not to Throw Your Back Out Masterclass), and Knee Pain Masterclass.

We also have been actively volunteering and sponsoring organizations that help nurture children and families.



PART II: LEADERSHIP & COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS



PART II: LEADERSHIP & COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS



ADDENDUM: BIOGRAPHY

I received a Master of Physical Therapy from the University of Delaware, and while there I had the opportunity to treat professional athletes from the NFL, MLB, NBA, NHL, as well as Olympic athletes. Through years of study, I gained exceptional manual therapy skills and achieved a certification in functional manual physical therapy through the Institute of Physical Art. As a Certified Functional Manual Therapist™ and through my extensive experience, I developed a reputation of excellence among the medical community in Jacksonville, where physical therapists and medical doctors seek my care. I strive to empower my patients to set their goals high and provide them the opportunity to further their success and grow. I have taught manual therapy courses and spoken on sports rehabilitation at continuing education courses. I have assisted in the hands-on lab instruction in courses through the Institute of Physical Art, and have been an adjunct instructor for anatomy and manual therapy courses at universities and physical therapy assistant programs. I enjoy my family life with my wife Brenda and four children and their new spouses.



ADDENDUM: STATEMENT OF MERIT

It is a great honor and privilege to be nominated for 2024 Jacksonville Chamber's Small Business Leader of the Year for the beaches and being a candidate for overall Small Business Leader of the Year for Jacksonville. Having to start my business from the beginning with minimal means, I had to first partner with existing business and then establish my own concurrently. I have had to continually grow as a business entrepreneur, manager, and leader to scale my business. I have been able to do this through networking, associating and surrounding myself with other like minded business leaders. I have always been an advocate to support local businesses and to build relationships with the people and families behind the name on the building.

I want to take advantage of the opportunities provided to me as the Jacksonville Small Business Leader of the Year to mentor others. I will share my successes, moments of truth and lessons learned to motivate and to nurture others to be the best they can be in their business. One of company's values is to help others become the best version of themselves. Because of this, we have been able to spur others to start their own businesses giving them the training early on that I did not have.

As a small business leader, I now have insight, knowledge and experiences to share with those just starting and with more seasoned business owners. I can help them understand themselves first to make better decisions to tap their full potential.

As a representative for the Jax Chamber, I will continue to encourage others to engage with one another to expand their network and help grow their business by building lasting relationships. Helping each other get to know the people behind businesses will build a more intimate community. I look forward to the ability to fill the cups of others as mine has been filled.

I am grateful for your consideration and look forward to the opportunity of serving and encouraging others in the Jacksonville community.





PART II: LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION



December 8, 2023

To Whom It May Concern,

It is my pleasure to recommend Aaron Robles of Innovative Therapy Solutions, Inc. for JAX Chamber's Overall Small Business Leader of the Year. Aaron's successful growth of his business, exceptional treatment of his patients and his tremendous contributions to the community make him highly qualified for this honor.

I first met Aaron several years ago as his patient. At the time, he was an insurance-based, sole practitioner. While he was focused on providing the utmost care to his patients during this time, Aaron was also learning to grow and run his business in areas like finance, human resources, recruitment and management of talent. He has since grown to a staff of six therapists and four administrative staff. He has also added two cash-based physical therapy clinics. Aaron has shown exceptional skill as a therapist, and also as a CEO.

While his professional accomplishments are important, I believe Aaron stands out even more for the ways he gives back to our community. He volunteers his time with many nonprofits, helping the homeless, foster children and providing physical therapy to indigent populations. Aaron also works to educate our community. He attends health fairs, community events and lectures at our local schools and universities. He presents at free workshops for the business community, educating on safety in the workplace, work place ergonomics, injury prevention and keeping employees healthy.

Aaron has shown outstanding commitment to his patients, his business and the Jacksonville community. He would be an excellent choice for JAX Chamber's Overall Small Business Leader of the Year.

Sincerely, John Peyton

President

GATE Petroleum Company

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John Peyton".

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ADDENDUM: LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION



November 30, 2023

To Whom It May Concern:

As a member of the Chamber and a business owner in the community, I am writing this letter on behalf of our company NAI Hallmark to recommend Innovative Physical Therapy ("IPT") and Aaron Robles for JaxChamber's small business leader of the year. As a commercial real estate services provider, we have worked with IPT for nearly a decade to help grow their footprint in the region. I have been thoroughly impressed with IPT's commitment to our community, IPT's commitment to working with other local businesses, and most importantly, IPT's commitment to their patients.

Personally, I have experienced the exceptional quality of IPT's services as I, along with others in our company, have chosen IPT for our own therapy needs. The decision to entrust Aaron and his team with our well-being has proven to be invaluable. IPT's holistic approach to treatment and genuine care for their patients distinguish them as more than just a typical physical therapy provider.

Aaron stands out as a leader who embodies the qualities that define an outstanding small business leader. His leadership style fosters a culture of compassion, excellence, and community engagement. The impact of IPT and Aaron's leadership extends beyond the realm of physical therapy; they contribute significantly to the overall health and vitality of our community.

In conclusion, I wholeheartedly endorse Aaron Robles and IPT for the Small Business Leader of the Year award. Our community is truly fortunate to have businesses like IPT and leaders like Aaron who not only contribute to economic prosperity but also prioritize the well-being of those they serve.

Sincerely,

Keith Goldfaden
Managing Partner

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November 30, 2023

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this on behalf of Aaron Robles, owner of Innovative Physical Therapy and John Goetze Physical Therapy.

I initially met Aaron at his first Physical Therapy office (which ironically was in my same building). I've been here for over 13 years. His business opened later, but it wasn't until I got injured in a surfing accident that I even realized his business was here. I never went to that side of the building.

Upon getting injured, I was referred for PT. I got a list of providers and ironically JGPT was on that list. I thought, "that's in my building!" So, our first interaction was me being a patient. Now, to paint a picture, I had been an advocate of body-work, chiropractic, deep tissue massage, etc. for years. I had never been to physical therapy, nor did I understand it. I naively thought it was more "occupational therapy" for people after strokes, etc. How wrong was I!

So, after tearing my MCL on my right knee.... I got PT with Aaron and his team for over 3 months. I returned successfully to all my crazy activities of surfing, mountain biking, kite boarding, etc. During those months of therapy, Aaron and I talked a lot about philosophies and we came to realize that we believed a lot of the same principles. As a cosmetic and TMJ expert in dentistry, I was dealing with a lot of patients with muscular instability, head, neck, and cervical problems. The more we spoke, the more I realized that I needed to start referring my TMJ patients to Aaron and his team.

Flash forward all these many years.....Aaron and his team have successfully treated hundreds of my clients and allowed me to provide better TMJ results.

While Aaron's expertise in PT is without question, the thing I find most intriguing and impressive has been his ability to scale his business to multiple locations with multiple demographics. He has done this all the while maintaining great communication and great service at each of his locations. Each location has highly trained team members and I know that as I often have visited the different locations for various reasons (usually for my own care).

So, my success has been highly intertwined with his presence. It's a special thing when others go out of their way to help you be successful. As a business owner myself, I understand the intricacies of keeping highly trained team members from leaving, keeping them challenged, and allowing them to blossom with opportunities. I believe Aaron has hit a home run in not only his individual private practices, but as a large system of integrated philosophies.

When you start with principles and are able to stick with them through growth, that is a sign of a real leader and savvy businessman. As a result, I have not only continued to be a client through his growth, but I have referred (and continue to refer my clients) with great success.

Regards,

W. Scott Wagner DMD, LVIF

PART II: LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION



**Davis College of
Business & Technology**
JACKSONVILLE UNIVERSITY

JC Bruce MSEE, MBA, PE
Associate Professor of Business and Engineering
STEAM 220
904-256-7490 Office

12/2/23

Re: Leadership recommendation for Aaron Robles, MPT

To Whom it May Concern –

It is my pleasure to provide a recommendation for Mr Robles' demonstrated leadership abilities. I have known Mr Robles for approximately 6 years and have witnessed many situations where he has shown his strategic, and far thinking business leadership. I first met him when he was operating his franchise, John Goetz Physical Therapy (JGPT). In that business I witnessed him work thorough the intricacies of how that business would day to day operate. From facilities, staffing, marketing efforts, and reimbursement through various insurance reimbursement companies.

Although JGPT was/ is profitable, and continues to be a thriving business, Mr Robles again demonstrated courageous strategic leadership in creating, from scratch, a sister business to JGPT; Innovative Physical Therapy (IPT). IPT being a solely owned noninsurance based physical therapy business. At considerable personal financial risk, he plunged into creating an entirely new business with a new revenue model. As a new noninsurance based medical company; where should the offices be located, rent/ buy, advertising, staffing, fee schedule, separation from JGPT, these were all serious questions, and issues, to determine/ resolve.

As a trained medical professional, Mr Robles business strategic thinking and execution came through on the job learning experiences. I know he spent considerable time educating himself, speaking to community leaders, his customers and family to create a new vision for his businesses. Through my own personal business leadership experience in; acquisitions, distributions, mergers and running a successful enterprise, I understand the courage, and effort, Mr Robles has shown.

In summary, I would strongly recommend Mr Robles be recognized by our community for his commendable creation and execution of a successful small business here in the Jacksonville area. Its citizens like Mr Robles that are key for the continued success of Jacksonville as a growing and vibrant city.

JC Bruce

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To whom it may concern,

I am writing this letter of recommendation regarding Aaron Robles of Innovative Therapy Solutions.

I have received treatment from Aaron for various athletic injuries over the years and have been extremely pleased with the results. I have referred college runners, soccer, and volleyball players to him, and they all had tremendous results. One of them even went on to win an NCAA Championship in cross country.

Aaron has consistently grown his practice. He started as a one man show, and now he owns his own building and employes twenty people. He has vastly increased his financial knowledge and runs a very successful business.

He treats his employees with dignity and respect, and they all seem very happy, and there is little turnover.

He is an excellent teacher, mentor, therapist, and businessperson.

Sincerely,
E Zimmermann Boulos

Zimmermann Boulos | President

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