

# From Classroom to Boardroom

Here's how a former teacher created a multimillion-dollar outdoor living brand and how he plans to help other entrepreneurs do the same.

**ARCADIA**

#2040

2018 INC. 5000 RANKING

218%

3-YEAR GROWTH

50+

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES



**MEET SCOTT SELZER**, a former middle school teacher who built an outdoor living empire by iterating on a product that has been around for centuries. His business, Arcadia Building Products, produces custom

aluminum pergolas for residential and commercial customers. The company's flexible and elegant designs and commitment to customer service have helped to land it on the Inc. 5000 for four years in a row.

Selzer was teaching a unit on entrepreneurship to his sixth-grade classroom when it dawned on him: He had what it takes to run his own business. Selzer has always been handy, so he rounded up some teacher friends and started a business, School's Out Construction, to supplement his salary.

The company took off quickly, and by the spring of 2008, Selzer felt secure leaving his teaching position to run the company full-time. Then the recession hit, and builders and home owners everywhere cut back substantially on projects. Around this time, Selzer had a client who was looking for a way to cover his outdoor living space without sacrificing natural light. With a Google search, Selzer discovered the louvered roof concept—the pergola—and noted there were only a couple of manufacturers in the space. He bought a few systems and was struck by how quickly they sold.

Selling them was easy, remarks Selzer. Getting them installed correctly was not. "Existing products weren't up to snuff, and the customer service was bad. Arcadia was really born out of necessity. If there had been a quality pergola manufacturer out there, we might not be here today," he explains.

Selzer launched Arcadia in 2011. Now he could control the whole process, from manufacturing to installation. With technology, he improved upon existing designs, so much so that he secured a U.S. patent for his systems. But these aren't anything like the pergolas of Ancient Rome. Arcadia Pergolas use motorized overhead louvers, or slats, that adjust and pivot to any angle to create, sun, shade, or shelter.



Close the system to keep out the rain, or open the system to let in the sun—all with a touch of a button.

Selzer believes his products can make a dramatic impact on their customers' lives. "There is a reason outdoor living is the number one trend in the construction market," he says. "Think about it. No one goes on vacation to be inside. As human beings, we are wired to enjoy life outdoors." The problem, Selzer continues, is making the outdoor space comfortable. Arcadia Pergolas address this issue.

The concept caught on quickly with residential owners. Now the business's commercial arm is growing fast, too. As proud as Selzer is of Arcadia's growth numbers, he is most enthused about the opportunity to create jobs. Recently, he took this one step further with the Arcadia Pergola Partner (APP) program launch. The program provides an opportunity for like-minded entrepreneurs to launch and operate their own Arcadia Pergola businesses in their local markets. Applications are open to those who are interested and can be found on the company's website. Selzer is prepared to help his new partners build their own multimillion-dollar companies. "Our goal is to have an Arcadia Pergola dealer in every major market," he says. "With the right people, we will make that happen." ■