

**FAMILY
BUSINESS**

**iCape Solutions:
A first-generation family-
owned business with a
commitment to community**

By Alex Johnson

Making the decision to own your first business is a life-changing decision for anybody. But for Andres and Laura Remis, who had previously lived and worked in Mexico and Spain, purchasing iCape Solutions on Cape Cod was an especially big leap.

The drive to own a technology company was born out of the couple's experience in Mexico and Spain. Both have career backgrounds in technology and Andres had worked for about 20 years in the industry in Mexico before the two relocated to Spain. "When I left Cisco [in Mexico], I went to Spain with a Spanish company to actually start a new business unit. It was kind of a mix because it was a large company, but it was family owned," says Andres. "It was different from Cisco, which was a large multinational company. So that was the decisive point to start doing something that was ours, just by ourselves." Determined to have a company they could call their own, Andres and Laura began looking at companies for purchase – particularly in the United States.

"We were actually looking at the U.S. because it's closer to our family, I think culturally it's closer to us," says Andres. The sentiment is echoed by Laura: "The working culture in the U.S. is more what we were used to than in Europe."

Andres explains that the United States offers something different from their experiences in Europe. "I think, overall, just the fact that [people in the United States] look for different ways to do things ... always trying to grow, to improve, looking to different places." With the current economic climate in Spain, it would have been harder to find these opportunities, where starting a business is more expensive due to social programs.

So, why Cape Cod? The two were set on finding an area known for supporting technol-



Laura and Andres Remis, owners of iCape Solutions.

ogy and New England was on the list because Andres had already spent some time in the region. "One of the companies that I used to work for was called Cabletron, which was based in New Hampshire, so I used to travel to New England." Andres and Laura knew they liked the region and from there, they narrowed their search to Cape Mac Computers, a company that had been owned by Steve Ide since 2001. The Remises contacted Ide in February 2013, and the two parties started talking. It was around this time that the Remises visited the Cape for the first time.

It's not typical for most people to fall in love with Cape Cod in February, but Andres and Laura found something special in the Cape's late-winter charm a mere 15 days after a recent blizzard. "We didn't know [Cape Cod] until February when we came and we just love it."

Five months later, the Remises reached an agreement with Ide, and became Cape Mac's new owners in July 2013, changing the name to iCape Solutions. While rebranding is difficult, it brought an opportunity to put the Remises' own spin on what the company could offer. In addition to providing all the same retail services as before, the new brand emphasizes the Remises' commitment to providing technology services to local businesses. This includes adding product lines that Andres has worked with in the past, integrating Cisco



products as well as providing all the usual Apple offerings.

Andres sees a need for technology expertise for small businesses on the Cape: "When you're looking at the types of businesses that are in the area, they're companies that, because of the size or the focus for whatever reason, they don't have the dedicated technology people, and that's the story of any small business." The Remises' intention is to provide such a dedicated technology service, and with the nearest Official Apple Retail Store off-Cape, iCape continues to provide retail locations in Hyannis and Mashpee Commons. Andres continues, "We're already working with several local businesses and some of them have even told us that it has been a game changer for



them in the sense that it does help them to get more control of their business and even make a profit ... that's the type of impact that we'd like to make!"

Their intentions don't stop with providing business services – Andres and Laura can't say enough about their personal commitment to community, and it shows in their enthusiasm for learning about their new home. "Just getting to know people, it's been a whole set of different activities, but we try to be in different groups. It's something we really try to do," says Andres. "We just try to make sure that when we make an investment ... we tie it to our overall arc of objectives, which are just creating better opportunities for the people on the Cape, improving the community overall and

making a better future for our kids. When we are making a decision, that's something that we take into consideration."

iCape Solutions is still a young brand, reaching its first anniversary under the Remises' ownership this July. Despite the short period of time in the country, Andres and Laura have found a wealth of cultural learning opportunities. "It was like the first time for everything," says Laura, "so it was kind of exciting [learning about] what do we do for Christmas, what do we do for Thanksgiving ... so we're learning everything this year." Even the off season has been a fascinating change of pace: "It's different. Life changes a lot from one month to another. It's completely different and that's very exciting."

Along with their efforts to learn the area, its seasons and the cultural differences from Spain and Mexico, the Remises have been growing their new brand and gaining recognition with Laura running the company's marketing. On top of that, the two are experiencing for the first time what it's like to work together in a family business.

"It's been fun," Laura says. "It's different; you have to adjust yourself to different things and not get mixed up, but it's been a very good experience. It's fun and we are very happy. I think we have been doing good things." Andres agrees: "I think it's very fulfilling in many ways. It's been a change because we've never worked together before, but so far a good one." **CPB**