**Marisa:** Friends. Lend me your engineers. Now. If you're wondering why I don't sound like Paul Kelly, it's because I'm not Paul Kelly. I'm Marisa, and I am your new Lend Me Your Engineers podcast co-host and co-explorer of all things engineering. I manage marketing communications for the College of Engineering and Computer Science, and I am here with our awesome intern, Sofia.

**Sofia**: Hey, guys. I'm Sofia. I'm a senior here at UCF with the communications major. I team up with Marisa to help run all social media accounts for the College of Engineering and Computer Science. I'm super excited to be a part of this today.

**Marisa:** If you tuned into the first season of Lend Me Your Engineers, welcome back. If this is your first time listening to Lend Me Your Engineers, welcome aboard this crazy train as we journey through the world of UCF engineering, we'll explore the cool research being done by our faculty, the amazing accomplishments of our students, and the interesting work of our alumni. Today, we will chat with one of our alums, Abhishek Sastri, the cofounder of the startup Fluix. Abhi graduated with his aerospace engineering degree in 2020 and has defined what it means to be an entrepreneurial engineer. Without further ado, let's get to the interview.

**Abhishek Sastri:** Hey, everyone, it's me, Abhi. Can you hear me?

**Marisa:** Hey, Abhi. Yes, we can hear you.

**Abhishek Sastri:** Great to hear from you again, Marisa. And who else is joining us here?

**Marisa:** This is Sofia. She is our awesome intern and amazing new podcast co-host.

**Abhishek Sastri:** That's awesome. Well, it's a pleasure to meet you, Sofia.

**Sofia:** It's a pleasure to meet you, too. My first time doing a podcast. Just bear with me.

**Abhishek Sastri:** No, no worries. You guys sound great. I'm actually in Tampa, so I'm not that far away from y'all, so I'm happy to be back in Florida. I spent a few months in California. It's just great to be back. I miss Florida so much.

**Sofia:** I'm jealous. You're in Tampa? I'm from there.

**Abhishek Sastri:** Oh, really? Yeah, I'm in Citrus Park, so I'm not sure if you know where that's at.

**Sofia:** Yeah, that's like, ten minutes away from my house.

**Abhishek Sastri:** Oh, that's awesome. Yeah. We were part of a group called Tampa Bay Wave. They choose 20 companies to be part of their tech diversity accelerator. Other day, they got us to go to the Raymond James Stadium, and we had, like, an event over there. Yeah. I'm just saying, maybe MAE could pull some strings and get some entrepreneurs to the UCF Stadium.

**Marisa:** We should. That would be awesome. Yeah. Just let me know who to contact.

**Abhishek Sastri:** Yeah. There's so many entrepreneurs that came out of UCF. I mean, Marisa, I'm sure you know of some, but just to shout them out, like Jesse Wolf from O’dang Hummus. He was in Shark Tank season two, I think. Phil Dumas of Unikey, was he Shark Tank? I think he was on Shark Tank as well. Joe Sleppy from Capacitech. Oh, Mason and Derek from Source. Like, even old school and new school.

**Marisa:** Shout out to Mason and Derek.

**Abhishek Sastri:** They beat me in a pitch competition.

**Marisa:** Oh, did they really? That's awesome. I mean, that's not awesome for you. That's awesome for them.

**Abhishek Sastri:** But it's a healthy competition because me, Mason, and Derek from Source, we've been part of the upstart undergraduate accelerator at UCF since, like, 2015, since we started college. And then even throughout college, we were always battling out. Obviously, our business models had changed, but they would win some. I would win some. The one where I got them was UTVS. Do you remember that?

**Marisa:** Yes. Yes, I do.

**Abhishek Sastri:** I can't believe I won that one. So I was so happy. And then they beat me, most recently at Emerge Americas in Miami. So shout out to them. They definitely deserve that win. But Mason, Derek, if you guys are listening to this, I don't know if you guys are going to hear this, but I'm coming for you.

**Marisa:** Ooh, the war is on. Knights rumble. I like it. But seriously, I love how supportive that you guys are of each other. So tell me, what is it like to be a UCF entrepreneur? What is it like for UCF Knights who are in that space?

**Abhishek Sastri:** There are so many opportunities for entrepreneurship at UCF. UCF puts amazing resources out there for young entrepreneurs. I'll give you guys an example. Blackstone Launchpad did a partnership with UCF. It's ran by center of entrepreneurial leadership, Dr. Cameron Ford at UCF. It's in the student union. And it's amazing because entrepreneurs who've successfully sold their businesses, entrepreneurs that are operating a business that's doing more than $10 million a year, mentor students at the Blackstone Launch pad at UCF. So if people think that those type of entrepreneurs are not accessible, it's not true. At the Blackstone Launchpad, you can go into the student unit right beside the stairs, you'll find Blackstone Launchpad, and you can sign up for mentoring sessions. You can network with entrepreneurs. You can figure out business models. And it's a great environment because most people think, oh, my idea is going to get stolen. Please. That is not the case. They're there to help you out. They're there to ask you tough questions that you should consider before you spend your ungodly amount of time and money into an idea that might work or might also work, and they can connect you. So that's a resource that people should use. And obviously, upstarts accelerator, I'm not sure if it's still going on, but it's an amazing accelerator ran by Dr. Mike Pape, professor of practice at UCF. So these resources, if you're interested in entrepreneurship or starting a program, you should consider learning more about these resources.

**Marisa:** That's awesome. So let's go back to the beginning and tell us about Fluix and how it got started. How did you come up with this idea?

**Abhishek Sastri:** Yeah, just to keep it short, the idea really came out of necessity, obviously. I was an aerospace engineering student at the University of Central Florida. I started back in 2015. That's when I got into UCF. And everything was new to me. And everything that was new to me also came up with the great resources that were there, the great amount of friends that I met, but also some of the negative stuff for a student that's not prepared. And I was definitely a student that was not prepared. And some of the negative stuff is you might get in the wrong habits. I definitely should have gone to class more. I definitely should have managed my time in a way that I didn't miss assignments. And that's what happened in my first semester. I totally got into the wrong type of management of my time and what's prioritized, and that's where I kind of fell off in my studies. And I actually got placed on academic probation. So it was a rough start. And for me, that's definitely not the case. Obviously, the family that I come from and a family of a lot of people that might listen in this come from your parents definitely want you to do well academically. And I come from an academic family, so that was a surprise for everybody, right? So I couldn't go back to my parents and tell them all my scholarships that I got and all of the support that I had, financial support that I had, not just paying for my classes and where I'm living at the moment, right on campus. All of that was put into jeopardy because I was placed on academic probation, because that was all my fault, right? I can't blame anyone else. So, out of necessity, I went back into what I was doing in high school to make some money. And what I was doing in high school to make some money is I would build and sell computers, so gaming computers, high-performance computers used for simulation work or engineering work. And I would find deals on Facebook Marketplace – like graphics cards, motherboards – and I would put them together and build these computers and build it specifically for the needs of someone I might know. Like someone across the hall from me might be gaming, and they need a specific type of computer that can play their game. So I would put everything together, and I would charge a fee. And funny enough, in the first couple of weeks of doing this, I would find deals on Facebook Marketplace, eBay and stuff like that. But the first few computers that I built for customers, which was usually someone that lived across the hall, the word of mouth spread, and they would be like, oh, Abhi built me this PC. And then someone else would come out of the work and say, hey, I saw the PC you built for XYZ. Can you build me one too? So pretty soon, I mean, it took some time. It was rough, but pretty soon after about eight or nine months, I had this business, if you will, that was making a considerable amount of money for an 18-year-old in college that recently lost a scholarship. So, luckily enough, I was not able to tell my parents, which, in hindsight, I probably should have. But I had made enough money to pay for classes and to pay for school. So Fluix did not start yet, but it came out of that necessity for entrepreneurship. What really changed how Fluix started was when we looked back and I realized that we didn't have a differentiation. Anyone can build a mean you know, there's an art to it, obviously. But we realized the people that really could differentiate it was the people that had technology and a specific technology that could be differentiated or that had maybe a patent or a unique technology. And that's where we realized that the problem of computers overheating was a universal problem. And whenever computers overheated, they slowed down. So if you're working on Excel document or you're playing games and it's slow, you would get frustrated. So we started using what we learned in college with fluid mechanics, heat transfer, the stuff we were learning in engineering school, to develop a liquid cooling solution for computers. And that's kind of where Fluix got started. We started developing these solutions, and actually we went through another resource that UCF gave us, which was UCF I-Corps, which was a five-week customer discovery program where they match you with mentors to help you with this business. So we decided to build coolers for computers, and they give you $2,600 to build a prototype. So we went through that program as well, and that's kind of where Fluix came about.

**Marisa:** And tell us about some of the mentors that you've worked with, because you've worked with some pretty cool people in the community and in the industry.

**Abhishek Sastri:** Yeah. So, I mean, there's so many that I can't name, right? But if I'm looking specifically at UCF, the professors that I had, even at, I remember, you know, shout out, um, heat transfer professors, of fluid dynamics, professors that I've spoken, and all of that resources that I use for my classes, I would be the guy that, after a lecture, I would go up to them. I'd be like, hey, I have a question. I'm dealing with this. I'm trying to build this. And that was a great opportunity, because I got access to experts that had industry experience, because usually professors, they go into industry and then they come teach, obviously. So that was really cool. But the key for me was in these programs like UCF I-Corps, which I believe at the time was ran by Dr. Thomas O'Neill and Dr. David Metcalf. Shoot, all these names are coming back to me, but those are some of the earliest mentors that I had. And then obviously, on the school of, I wasn't a business student, but I would always hang around business students and business professors. But Dr. Cameron Ford, who ran the entrepreneurship program, he was definitely one of my earliest mentors. And I got to give a shout out to Dr. Mike Pape because Pape really helped us build a model that kind of worked for us in the early stages, and that was definitely a professor. But most recently, after you graduate from UCF, you have other resources. If you went through entrepreneurship programs at UCF and you don't have to be a business student to go through them, you get access after you graduate as alumni to the UCF Incubator. And UCF has nine different incubators. Carol Ann Dykes Logue runs the one in Research Parkway. Rob Penapinto is another one that's a director. And so all these people were integral in our early days of being mentors for me and for Fluix, that's great.

**Marisa:** And I love that we have opportunities, even for alumni. So even after you graduate, you're not forgotten.

**Abhishek Sastri:** And Marisa, I just want to bring up the fact of there's a lot of stigma around raising money, and there's many different ways of starting a business. Right. I'm definitely early in my journey. But in case you want to go the venture capitalist route, or in case you want to raise money for your startup alumni groups and the alumni that's part of your college is a huge group that you can pull into, not just for money and venture capital or angel investing, but also for mentorship. So UCF is unique because we're a big school, obviously, but that means we have access to variety of different alumni, successful alumni that have built very big businesses, that have sold their businesses, and now they are philanthropy giving back. And obviously you can approach these alumni or build relationships because we're all Knights at the end of the day. And if the relationship is built and it's the right fit, you can raise a lot of money from UCF alumni.

**Marisa:** Absolutely. Now that's a great point. I think staying connected with alumni is huge, especially for engineering, because, yeah, we have a lot of amazing, really successful alumni. So why not reach out to them, even if it is just for that mentorship. There's so much that they've learned that they can share, and I feel like I've heard that a lot. I feel like our alumni are really good at that. I've heard a lot of stories about how our students will go out and get internships or they go and meet our alumni and they're just so willing to pass on their knowledge and close the circle. They were mentored themselves, and now they get to mentor our current students. So, yeah, definitely take advantage of that.

**Abhishek Sastri:** I'm all for that, 100%, and maybe let me know when it's right time for this, but we at Fluix currently are hiring some already. We have two UCF interns. Right. You know, whenever I can give you my little spiel about the interns we're looking yes, yes.

**Marisa:** Give us your spiel and tell us a little bit too about what Fluix is doing right now.

**Abhishek Sastri:** So just to get into what we do right now, what Fluix is right now is actually an autonomous AI company. What we do is we help critical infrastructure such as data centers, greenhouses and power plants save on their energy costs by running their cooling, their HVAC and IT systems autonomously. So we have developed an autonomous AI that can control HVAC systems, lighting systems, and water systems to optimize for lower energy usage and save building owners on their energy costs. So we are an early-stage startup, but we have five data center customers that pay for our AI software. And we have a goal. So we've been growing. We're a team of four. Two out of the four are UCF affiliated alumni, and our goal is to get to 30 clients in the next twelve months. So right now we're looking for opportunities to save data centers, greenhouses, power plants on their energy spend. So the type of interns that we're looking for, and these are paid internships, and actually we're going to fill out some information on Handshake real soon. So you guys will see them, the UCF students will see them. But we're looking for interns interested in machine learning, AI models. It doesn't mean you have to have all the knowledge, right? We can definitely train you, and we believe in self learning and self teaching as well. But if you're interested in machine learning and you believe in our mission to help the world and the infrastructure that we use every day, such as the data center save on energy costs, you could definitely keep a lookout to our account on Handshake, it's Fluix Inc, and you can definitely reach out to Info@fluixpro.com. And another position we're looking for is a thermal engineering intern. So it doesn't mean you have to be a senior or take one of those. Some of the more intensive classes you could be in fluid mechanics one, but just if you're interested in heat transfer and fluid mechanics and how that can be implemented in the data center environment with HVAC systems, we are looking for interns right now, and those will be up on Handshake in a week or so.

**Marisa:** Go apply now. Go apply now. So the last time we were talking, you had just won $25,000 in the Reef Starter Innovation Challenge with your work on coolants for data centers. So it sounds like that's been taking off.

**Abhishek Sastri:** Yeah, so it was at that stage of the company, this was in November. So Orbital Reef is an initiative with a couple of companies that have come together. Blue Origin, Sierra Space, Amazon, all of those companies have come together. And there's other companies like Boeing, and it's an initiative to create an environment in low-Earth orbit called Orbital Reef. Think of it as the next generation space station and obviously go to Orbitalreef.com to learn more. So you can definitely check out, but just paraphrasing on what they're building. It's a next generation space station that's going to be used for multipurpose use. So to give an example of what multipurpose use is, it's laboratory space for startups, governments and universities. It's flex space to run experiments and also flex space such as tourism. Space tourism, that's something big that I think Jeff Bezos is trying to implement. And also some of the other leaders at Blue Origin. And because of that initiative, they were looking for startups that are looking to do experiments in microgravity and then see if their technology that they're trying to test in microgravity could have long lasting effects for the betterment of humans on Earth. So let me explain. Microgravity is a very unique environment, right? Every type of technology that was developed before we had the space program and we launched into space was developed under the conditions of Earth. And obviously on Earth we have gravity, we have air, we have different conditions. So the idea was, what new technologies could be developed when you don't have the noise of gravity, when you don't have the conditions that restrict us on Earth? And as you guys can imagine, you can probably Google it or even use ChatGPT to find out what technologies were developed in space. You will see a list of technologies from memory foam to different technologies that was developed in space because they didn't have the constraints that we have on Earth. Blue Origin and Orbital Reef and those companies created a program called Orbital Reef Innovation Challenge where they looked for startups developing technologies in the conditions of microgravity for the benefit of Earth. And where Fluix came into play was we were still trialing to solve the problem of data centers. Data centers are going to use a huge amount of energy in everything that humans do in the next couple of years. As you can imagine. This call that we're having, this podcast that you're having, this podcast that you're streaming any single time you send an email or make a video call that is using a data center somewhere, and as humanity's dependence on data, even using AIs like ChatGPT, all of that is using energy and servers in a data center. So our proposal to Orbital Reef was, what if we can create a liquid cooling technology that uses less energy and less form factor size because we developed a nanosuspension boiling coolant in microgravity. So to explain in microgravity, if you can remove the conditions of gravity, can we come up with a new chemical concoction, a new nanoparticle coolant that can boil away the heated surface of a computer chip without the need for a high wattage pump? So if a regular liquid cooling solution was using a water pump that uses 30 watts of energy, with this new innovation of a microgravity based coolant that we developed in microgravity, can we develop a cooler that uses five watts of energy. So that's where we wanted to test this solution. And testing two phase boiling fluid flow in microgravity is not new. The space program has been doing it for years. But what we wanted to test is specific proprietary nanoparticles that we were developing. And Blue Origin and Orbital Reef found it interesting enough that they gave us $25,000 for our proposal.

**Marisa:** That's fantastic. And have you been able to test it yet?

**Abhishek Sastri:** It's going to definitely take some time, right? Obviously, with what Flux is developing now with our autonomous AI solution to kind of pierce through the confusion, a lot of people are going to be saying, okay, are you a SaaS company? SaaS is basically software as a service. Are you a software company or are you a hardware company? What we're trying to solve is becoming an ecosystem, a cooling ecosystem for the critical infrastructure of the planet. And that ecosystem, if you're looking at companies like Apple, they have an ecosystem, right? They have a software ecosystem and a hardware ecosystem that works together to create all the technologies that we use regular day. Right? That's the long-term vision for Fluix. Can we become an ecosystem of software and hardware that works seamlessly together to build some of the most efficient infrastructure on the planet? What if data centers can be so efficient with our software and hardware solutions that they can be renewably powered? They can be all solar powered, and we can store that solar energy on super capacitors or energy storage, and then we can run it the data center at night, all from being so efficient because cooling is so efficient, because power systems are so efficient. So that's where Orbital Reef is kind of our long-wind strategy. What we're trying to do in microgravity is more of a long-winded strategy. What we really want to focus now is that autonomous AI solution. And we have customers paying us for this now. But to test what we're trying to accomplish in microgravity with the new coolant that we're developing, it's going to take some years, right? Launches happen consistently. It takes anywhere between a quarter of a million to three quarters of a million dollars to launch an experiment to space. The price of launching experiments to space is going to get drastically lower as we keep sending material to space. But the good news now is you as a student or you as a startup. And a lot of universities know this, and lab directors know this. You can launch experiments to space right now if you get in with the right partnerships like Blue Origin or SpaceX or any of these companies have these partnership programs where they're looking for innovative technologies. If you write a proposal, they will give you the funding to maybe even launch a Sat Cube or get your experiment to space. So although that's more of our long-winded strategy, our timeline for launching something like that would be a couple of years out.

**Marisa:** Okay, so definitely keep us posted on that because we want to know how that goes. So in the short term, I know that you're getting ready to pitch again at the TechCrunch Disrupt. Are you going to present any new ideas or innovations there?

**Abhishek Sastri:** So excited for -- you know, last year we presented at TechCrunch and just to give you guys a background, whoever's listening, TechCrunch Disrupt, as Marisa brought up, if you guys ever seen the show Silicon Valley, a lot of people have watched that show. At the end of Silicon Valley, Pied Piper and the whole team go to TechCrunch Disrupt, the first year TechCrunch Disrupt came up, and they present their technology to a group of investors. So now TechCrunch Disrupt is basically entrepreneurship and VC conference that happens in San Francisco run by TechCrunch. TechCrunch is choosing the top 200 companies and I think applications closed like three weeks ago or something like that. So if you're hearing this now, it's probably a little too late, but maybe next year you apply and thousands of companies apply, thousands of startups apply. And if it's the right fit, they will accept you to come to Disrupt to basically exhibit. And it's a great opportunity because top-tier investors, top-tier talent will be at Disrupt and they will come up to you, investors will come up to you. Big CVCs, corporate venture capital firms like Google for startups, or Microsoft or any of these companies, AWS Climate Fund, all of these companies converge there to look for startups and to look for opportunities to invest in. So it's funny because last year, some of the highlights from last year is obviously we met a couple of investors that are investing in us now from that program, but Kevin Hart was there.

**Marisa:** So is he any taller in person?

**Abhishek Sastri:** Well, maybe not tall, but his personality, as soon as he walks in, outshines a group, like you could have 3,000 people in a room and Kevin Hart will walk in and he will outshine thousands of people and that's just amounts of his success. I'm a huge Kevin Hart fan, so it was super cool seeing, you know, Marisa, you bring up a good point because we usually see Kevin as an entertainer. When we saw him at Disrupt, we saw him as a VC. He launched his Heartbeat Ventures and his fund is called Heartbeat Ventures, which is pretty cool. But he did a partnership with JP Morgan, which and please don't fat check me on this, but I believe JP Morgan put in something like $100 million into his fund. And most people think, oh, he's an entertainer, he's an actor or a comedian, he's only investing in enterprise or sorry, entertainment tech. No, that's not the case. He's agnostic. He's investing in deep tech, AI tech, software, hardware, climate tech, clean tech, like so many different things. And obviously maybe that might have been updated. So please check out Heartbeat Ventures too. So that was really cool. So many other celebrities were there, but seeing Kevin Hart was really cool.

**Marisa:** That is cool. Yeah. And by the way, the video of TechCrunch Space is up on our YouTube channel @ucfmae. So if you want to go see Abby's pitch, go check it out. He did an amazing job.

**Abhishek Sastri:** Can I talk about that a little bit?

**Marisa:** Yes, please do.

**Abhishek Sastri:** So the team at TechCrunch, I mean, everyone knows TechCrunch, right? You read TechCrunch articles. So when we were chosen as Top 200 last year, it was really cool to even be part of the program. There were thousands of people there. So we're like, oh, the team at TechCrunch doesn't even know us. They just picked us. That's not the case. The team at TechCrunch, they look at all 200 startups that make it. You have access to some editors. That doesn't mean like, you're in it, right? It just means they know who you are. And it's a great pipeline to be able to reach out to some of the editors or the people at TechCrunch. But the coolest thing is, after TechCrunch Disrupt, maybe like two months after, one of the head editors at TechCrunch emails me and she, you know, we saw what you were doing with Project Stellar. That's the technology, the microgravity nanoparticle solution I was talking about. We saw what you were doing in microgravity. We had this new session called TC Space in Los Angeles, and we're choosing three companies, space tech companies, to come and pitch. And I was like, well, we're not really space tech, right? We're more sustainability tech. But okay, that's cool. When is it? And she's like, oh, it's next week on Monday. And mind you, she emailed me on Thursday. And I was like, Wait. Next week on Monday I got to fly out to Los Angeles. She's like, yeah, fly out to Los Angeles. You'll be pitching to Bessemer Ventures, Seraphim Ventures, and all these venture capital groups are like, the top of the top VC groups in space tech, right? They invest in unicorns, basically. Anyway, that's going to be the judging panel. You'll have a few minutes to pitch. And I was like, oh, shoot. Okay. So I got ready. We went out to Los Angeles. There was maybe 1,000 people in the crowd, or maybe 2,000 people in the crowd. There were amazing these two other amazing companies that were actually space tech. They had amazing founders building amazing tech. And I saw ourselves as sustainability tech. But I got up on stage, I pitched in front of Bessemer Ventures and all the judges and all the VCs, and I got back down. I was like, we probably didn't win. We're not really a space tech company. I walked outside and I started networking. Out of nowhere, they all rush out and they're like, you won, you won. You won the pitch, and you beat out the other two space tech companies. I was like, no way. And they actually announced Fluix as the winner of TT Space back in December. And the perk of that is we get first dibs on coming back.

**Marisa:** That's amazing. So what is the secret to your pitching? Because you're so good. What is the secret sauce that you use? You've won so many of these pitch competitions, including UTVS, like you mentioned, which for the folks at home, that's the UCF Technology Venture Symposium hosted by the College of Engineering and Computer Science. And you won the very first UTVS competition. You won $10,000. So how did you get this good? Did you practice a lot? Did you get mentorship on how to do this?

**Abhishek Sastri:** Yeah, combination of both. I mean, it's funny because even now, I think I can become so much better at pitching, and pitching and sales and all of that is really how you communicate an idea, but you communicate an idea to the right audience. And as Marisa just brought up, I did get a lot of mentorship. I did do a lot of practice. But just so I talk about practice, we all practice differently. For me, specifically, I need to practice constantly to hit it home on a pitch. I don't need to do memorizing. I just need to get comfortable with the information that I'm talking about. I have a problem. And as you can probably notice in this podcast, I talk really fast when I get excited. That's another thing. So I can always improve, right? We can always improve. But I was practicing as I brush my teeth, as I iron my clothes, as I'm driving to the airport on the plane, the person sitting next to me is probably thinking like, oh, this dude is crazy, as I'm getting. So I just thrive in practicing as much as and I think, you know, the person I look up to that does that a lot, and a lot of people will see, this is Kobe Bryant. Kobe practiced all the time. He said, Championships are won in practice, right? Or something to the tune of that. So I love practicing, and even if I don't have the time and opportunity, I could. But another thing that really helped me in pitching is I found people that were better at it than I am. So there are a lot of pitch coaches online. There are a lot of pitch practice stuff that you can find on YouTube. But I was always part of programs and cohorts, like Techstars. Techstars invested in Fluix almost a year ago, and they went hard on Demo Day, which is basically our big pitch at the end of the program. And being around founders that I've been pitching all the time and kind of going up to them and asking them, hey, rip apart my pitch. How can I land this better? How should I position this? I was always asking it, and everyone really came in. So when I developed Fluix's Pitch, it wasn't just me looking at the pitch in a silo. It was other founders that cared about us and wanted to see us succeed. They also pulled in. So that's how I specifically handle a pitch. And now oh, man, Marisa, you're letting me know that I have to give all my secrets away because I know Mason and Derek are watching this. Mason and Derek, if you're watching this, don't steal my little pitch secrets, okay? Those guys know how to pitch, too, for sure.

**Marisa:** We won't give anything away. We'll hold some things back so you can beat Mason and Derek.

**Abhishek Sastri:** Shout out. I hope they come next. Are they going to come next on this?

**Marisa:** I would love to have them on. I would love to.

**Abhishek Sastri:** I challenge you, Mason and Derek, you better show up to the UCF MAE podcast.

**Marisa:** Now they have to. Now they have to do it. Yeah. I would love that. I would love to have more of our student and alumni entrepreneurs on. We didn't do UTVS earlier this year, but it is in the works for October 16.

**Abhishek Sastri:** I can't wait to come back and see it again just to be, like, an attendee for that, because that was really cool on what MAE did to set that up and everyone that came together.

**Marisa:** Yeah. And you judged right? Didn't you come back and judge UTVS one year?

**Abhishek Sastri:** Did I judge?

**Marisa:** I might be making it up.

**Abhishek Sastri:** It was the Joust. I think I was semifinalist judge. Oh, am I supposed to not say that? I don't know if I'm supposed to say it or not, but it already happened anyway. I was a semifinalist judge for the Joust. But UTVS, man, I'd love to even be like, maybe a screening committee or something like that. But, yeah, I'd love to come back. Is it going to happen this year?

**Marisa:** It is. It's happening on October 16. And the dean is leading the charge.

**Abhishek Sastri:** Is Dr. Peles or no, Dr. Georgiopoulos. Shout out to Dr. G. Dr. G is awesome. He really cares about students, and he really cares about succeeding. So shout out to Dr. G.

**Marisa:** Absolutely. G and Dr. Peles, who's also awesome. But you should, you should come back and be a judge for that.

**Abhishek Sastri:** I'd love to. One thing that really gets me excited is how can entrepreneurs work together? There's so many big problems. Actually, can I bring up something? It was a tough question that I had to deal with recently, which was I was speaking to a big VC in California, and the VC came back to me and said, hey, Abhi, you're working on something really awesome. I know a founder that's making a lot of money right now. He's working on a very big problem. You have you ever thought of you being the number five in an organization, not the number one? Working on a bigger problem, but as the number five. And that was tough for me, you know what I mean? I don't want to get too philosophical here, but it was awareness thing for me because I had to look into my heart and say, that's very interesting, right? Because there's a lot of ways to be successful. But if you can be part of an organization or a company solving a very big problem, and you could be like the fifth person or the 12th person or the 22nd person, it begs the question, the 22nd person in Facebook could probably buy the whole block if we're looking at financial success. Right. So if it's a big enough problem, if it's a big enough vessel or a company, sometimes I think I've come with it. That it's okay being like the sixth or eighth or 20th or 30th person if you're working together to solve a very big problem.

**Marisa:** Yeah, I think that's good advice for anybody to just think about it from a different perspective and not just your own, and to be willing to not necessarily be number one in the industry to succeed.

**Abhishek Sastri:** And don't get me wrong. If any of our investors are thinking are listening to this: Investors, I'm all, go on Fluix. If you cut me open, blue will come out. So I'm all gungho on Fluix. If any of our investors are listening.

**Marisa:** Invest now. Invest now. And did you say you got some investors from the Techstars accelerator?

**Abhishek Sastri:** Yeah. So Techstars invested $120,000 into Fluix, and we went through the Industries of the Future Accelerator, which was Department of Energy Oak Ridge Laboratory. So that's in Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee Valley Authority and University of Tennessee Knoxville was all partners in funding our Techstars program, which is an amazing program. If there's any entrepreneurs out there that are interested in applying to Techstars or having Techstars back them, please feel free to reach out to me, and I could definitely talk to you about that as well, or I can possibly connect you. And also, most recently, obviously we talked about the Orbital Reef Blue Origin Challenge, but the Venture for Climate Tech, which is a program that chooses the top 20 climate tech companies, thousands apply, and they only choose 20 companies, and if you're part of the top 20, they invest up to $100,000 in nondilutive funding. So that was the most recent news that came out two weeks ago. So we're super excited to be part of Venture for Climate Tech, which is supported by Nicerta and Nextcore and all those organizations. And Fluix is currently fundraising, so we're raising our preseed, and we are about to announce a couple of backers in the next couple of weeks. So if you follow us on LinkedIn, it's Fluix Inc. Or our Twitter, it's @Fluixcooling. I'm sure you can keep up with all the stuff Fluix.

**Marisa:** Yes, follow all things Fluix. They're always doing something cool and always something amazing. I'm always blown away. Every time I get on LinkedIn I see that you're pitching something else and being named entrepreneur of this, that and the other and it's just awesome to see how well you've been doing.

**Abhishek Sastri:** I really appreciate that. And Marisa, I really appreciate know it's always nice to know that our university and our alma mater has our back. So I just want to say thank you to UCF for always supporting us and being there whenever we need it.

**Marisa:** Absolutely. We're here for you. Once a Knight, always a Knight.

**Abhishek Sastri:** 100% always a Knight. I can't wait to come back to another football game. I'm so excited for the new season. I'm excited to come back and see some of the new entrepreneurs currently going through upstarts and at UCF. I think UCF does a great job. There's a lot of entrepreneurs at UCF that have built so many amazing. The next I'm not going to say yet, but in the next couple of months there's going to be some big news coming out of an entrepreneur that I know that's a UCF student that made some big wins. So when that news comes out, I'll retweet it.

**Marisa:** Cliffhanger. I'm excited.

**Abhishek Sastri:** So many successful students. It's hard to keep track of all of them.

**Marisa:** That's very true. That's very true. We're proud of all of our Knights but definitely interested in that big news. We'll be looking out for that. Give Fluix a follow and give us a follow at @ucfmae to keep up with our news and keep up with Abhi and Fluix. Anything else new on the horizon? Anything else that you want to shout out?

**Abhishek Sastri:** Yes. So obviously I talked about Disrupt. I talked about some of the other programs that's happening. Well, I have to reiterate. So if you're a UCF student right now looking for an opportunity, we are looking for a machine learning intern. We're also looking for fluid mechanics and thermal engineering intern as well. So please keep track of Handshake. And for our alumni or for recent grads, Fluix is hiring full time as well. So all of these positions are remote, but it does require you going to some pretty cool places, all expenses paid by Fluix if you're a good fit for us. So although these are remote opportunities, if you ever see yourself going to really cool infrastructure, like visiting some of the world's biggest data centers, like some of our customers going to greenhouses, going to power plants, stuff like that, we're a company that truly believes in being integrated with our customers. So if you think it's a fit, please check Handshake and feel free to reach out to info@fluxpro.com.

**Marisa:** Definitely go apply and go learn from a fellow Knight.

**Abhishek Sastri:** I can't wait to learn from you guys too. It's going to be really cool because I think if anyone uses ChatGPT on their application, I will find out. But it's okay. We're a very AI forward company. So if you use ChadGPT, it's okay.

**Marisa:** I mean, at least they're showing off their skills, right?

**Abhishek Sastri:** Exactly.

**Marisa:** Well, thank you so much for being our first guest of our first episode of the second season of Your Engineers. By the way, when can we expect to see you on Shark Tank?

**Abhishek Sastri:** You know what's funny? I was talking to my mom about this because my mom was like, I just want to talk about Shark Tank for a second because I love Shark Tank. I'm a huge fan, obviously. Right. Marisa? And Marisa, if you look at every single deal that we see on TV, obviously we can go to Jesse and Phil and some of the UCF alumni that have been on Shark Tank, but what we see as in our living rooms is like, obviously Mr. Wonderful is going to ask about royalties. That's his, then, you know, obviously Mark Cuban is going to come in on a deal, and if he doesn't like it, he's going to come out immediately after just to make the entrepreneur feel bad. So you pick up on all these small little things. But it's interesting because I may be classifying it wrong, but if you look at Shark Tank, there's a lot of CPG companies and consumer product, good companies, and which is obviously they have to cater to the audience watching the show, which is mostly consumers. Right. So obviously, Fluix is we sell to businesses, and we're like government tech, business to business tech. So we don't really sell to consumers. But we have been seeing in the most newest seasons of Shark Tank more B2B companies or companies that sell to not consumers come on the show. It's just valuations are so tough in Shark Tank, Marisa. You'll have a CPG company that's making food or merch or a gadget or a trinket, and they have a million dollars in sales. And then Mr. Wonderful is going to be like, a million dollars in sales. But you think your company is worth 10 million? No shot. Your company is worth 4 million. And I'll take 25%. I don't know about you, but giving 25% of the stage that we're at, it just doesn't make sense. But I'm seeing a lot more business to business companies come to Shark Tank, so maybe.

**Marisa:** You could be one of them. I could definitely see that, you know.

**Abhishek Sastri:** Would be a baller move, though. I'd love to be a shark. That would be super cool. Maybe in the future. God bless if everything goes well being a shark. And the one thing is, if I ever become an investor, obviously I'm a founder fundraising right now. So there's the stuff that founders go through that are fundraising. And obviously you can create a successful business without fundraising, too. There's many different options. Right. But if I ever get to the point where I'm investing in other companies, I think I'm going to have a process that's a little bit better for founders. I'm going to definitely look for founders that are maybe a little bit more minority founders or founders that are a little bit out of the box. And I know there's more VC groups, but that's kind of where I would invest into. So a little bit out of the box founders, because that's who I think I am.

**Marisa:** That makes sense. Would you be a little nicer than Mr. Wonderful?

**Abhishek Sastri:** Oh, no, I'm going to be rough. I'm going to be like, what are your sales?

**Marisa:** Yeah, royalties on everything.

**Abhishek Sastri:** I want 80% every sale.

**Marisa:** Exactly. We can see it. We can see it happening. I'm sure once you get on Shark Tank, you'll land on the cover of Forbes. So don't forget about us little people when that happens. Don't forget about your UCF peeps. You're definitely out there doing big things, which is what UCF stands for.

**Abhishek Sastri:** Thank you. And go know every night that might be listening to it. I can't wait to meet y'all and work with y'all. If you guys think you have a fit with Fluix and you want to collaborate, I'm very open to so please, please reach out. Love to speak to all the Knights out there.

**Marisa:** Awesome. Well, thanks again for chatting with us. And in the future, we will expect a brawl with you, Derek and Mason. So look out for that. A future episode will be Knights Rumble out in the Engineering parking lot.

**Abhishek Sastri:** I'm going to text Mason and Derek right now and be like, you got to get on the podcast.

**Marisa:** Yes, get on the podcast. Mason and Derek, balls in your court. All right, guys, thanks for listening to the first episode of our second season. I want to thank Abhi Sastri for being our guinea pig. And shout out to Paul Kelly for creating this magical podcast in the first place, and to Sofia, our amazing intern who helped me out so much with creating this. If you're not doing so already, please give us a follow on social media @ucfmae. And if you listened to the first season, you will be very pleased to know that we do have more than one post up on Instagram now. So go check us out at Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, YouTube, all of the things. Go follow MAE and be sure to reach out to Abhi at info@fluxpro.com if you want to get in on what he's doing because he's doing awesome things, or if you just want to learn more about the internships, be sure to connect with him. He's a fantastic person to have in your network. So, yeah, thanks again for listening in. Until next time.