Luis Pernia

PROA

“ I saw an opportunity to provide specialized solutions in safety and security through professional advisors. ”

COUNTRY	Mexico
INDUSTRY	Prof. Services
EMPLOYEES	92
YEAR SELECTED	2012
PARTNER	Luis Martinez
WEBSITE	www.proamexico.com/

COMPANY SNAPSHOT

PROA is making sure the Mexican construction industry doesn't collapse—literally. Ninety percent of construction projects in Mexico do not comply with international standards of safety and security. Through their comprehensive consulting, supply, and installation services, Luis Pernia and Luis Martínez hope to make Mexico's buildings safer while seizing on technological leadership in Latin America's nascent security industry. PROA relies on its deep knowledge of international building standards to advise its clients on building integrity and access plans, then sell equipment that fits those clients' needs. Sales of electronic security solutions alone in Mexico represented about US$400 million last year, suggesting a potentially huge security market. Pernia and Martínez have already established offices in Costa Rica and projects throughout Latin America. .

Pernia and Martínez are each from distinct but complementary backgrounds. Pernia graduated in 1998 from the Technological University of Monterrey with a degree in Business. He conceived the idea for PROA while participating in an incubator program at his university. Pernia's passion for addressing the deteriorating state of buildings in Mexico was clear: while at university, he also founded a non-profit, Cultura Cuidadana, with the objective of convincing the Mexican government to raise its construction standards and to mandate that all buildings in Mexico be handicap-accessible and environmentally sound. Martínez met Pernia at the Technological University of Monterrey, where the two were classmates, while he was pursuing a degree in Industrial Engineering. He received his MBA in 1997 from Texas State University before returning to Mexico to work in quality control for various companies including General Electric transportation systems. In 2001, he joined Pernia at PROA as his partner.

While he was still in university, Pernia went to Spain to visit his father's family and was surprised to see the advanced safety systems present in many homes. This inspired him to import and sell security doors in Mexico. After an unsuccessful attempt at this, Pernia then decided to make his own doors, which also proved a disaster and was more expensive than importing them! It was then that Pernia realized that the key to the success of PROA was in educating his market and working with architects and developers to create safety and security systems tailored to their projects. At this point, Pernia was working from a small office that was donated by the incubator program and completely overworked. His friend and roommate, Martinez, used to show up on Friday after his corporate job to help Pernia with finances, so that Pernia would finish faster and they could both go out on the town. Martinez volunteered his time helping Pernia, until one day in 2001 when it became obvious that Pernia needed an experienced partner to help him grow PROA. Martinez was just the person to help to institutionalize PROA and help his friend on a full-time basis.

Unlike its competitors, PROA offers its clients an integrated service for all their safety and security needs. PROA works with large developers and architects during the planning stage of a large construction project (hospital, hotel, etc.) in order to make sure that international specifications for safety and security are a part of the design. PROA has a team of consultants that are experts in safety and security who guide clients through the process, as the majority are not aware of the proper systems available to address their needs. PROA is the only company creating experts in the field of safety and security. PROA provides everything from doors to gates to complex electronic security systems from over 30 providers, and also includes the installation of all these products for its clients.