

Mentorship Lessons From Jeffrey Hollender

Profile in
Courage

SURVIVING
DISASTER,
SAVING YOUR
BUSINESS

Now What?

Our Experts on
the Future of
Business and...
Winning in 2021



PLUS: HOW APPAREL
FOUNDER **TY HANEY**
UNRAVELED, GOT
FIRED, AND DESIGNED
A COMEBACK

SARA MENKER, founder
of Gro Intelligence:

"Collaboration between
people of different
backgrounds
accomplishes
things that can
otherwise seem
impossible."

100 FEMALE FOUNDERS

Their Best Advice on
Ideas, Teams,
Culture, Money,
and Customers

WISDOM OF WOMEN

THE WOMEN OF THIS YEAR'S **FEMALE FOUNDERS 100**
SHARE THE LESSONS THEY'VE LEARNED
FROM BEING FIRST, FEARLESS, AND FORMIDABLE.

ONE OF THE MOST telling definitions of entrepreneurship, courtesy of Howard Stevenson, a professor emeritus at Harvard Business School, is also one of the simplest: the pursuit of opportunity beyond the resources controlled.

And let's face it: In 2020, no one has been controlling anything. Whether it's a pandemic, government-mandated business shutdowns, or unheard-of forest fires, the uncontrollable has erupted at a global level and filtered down to the trivial details of daily life.

But, as Stevenson tells us, if anyone has experience with the uncontrollable, it's entrepreneurs. In spite of the challenges, entrepreneurs continue to do what they do best: improvise, adapt, and make something from nothing.

In the pages that follow, the women on *Inc.*'s annual Female Founders 100 list show how to do just that. As our staff reports on startups and small businesses throughout the year, these are the women whose names keep reappearing. They are the most inspiring, the most creative, and the most tenacious role models in entrepreneurship—and therefore, the ones we are most excited to celebrate.

And, like Stevenson, these successful entrepreneurs are doing plenty of teaching. In fact, we've asked them to give us their best advice for company-building in five key areas: from vetting the idea, to finding the people and funding, to winning customers and creating a culture. There's a lot to learn—and a lot to admire. —KIMBERLY WEISUL

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THE SPECIAL SAUCE



There will be days when you're bootstrapping your business, and you pay everybody but don't pay yourself, but somehow you still have the energy and excitement to get up and go back to work the next day. That's when you know you're an entrepreneur. When you're a founder, and you believe it and live it, it becomes a part of your fabric or quilt that you're building for your life. It's a journey; it's not a sprint. It's about believing in yourself and having a mantra. If I didn't struggle, I wouldn't have an appreciation for what's possible. A wise woman told me that when you do what you were meant to do on this earth, you will help millions of people. It will not be a job. It's what you do. —**ROBIN WILSON** Robin Wilson Home



Don't try to do it alone. It's better to really align yourself with smart people with great networks. That's been key for us—having a real diversity of skills among a small team of people. And leaning heavily on all the wonderful networks of women supporting women. —**SONIA STROBEL** Skipper Otto



People need to find ways to be more sustainable. We're held accountable by our customers, but there isn't a system that requires people to be sustainable. So we've tried to measure ours with our impact reports. We publish them so people can see the impact of our programs. —**ANNA SHEFFIELD** Anna Sheffield



I had to get to where I was comfortable with the business not happening. And when I finally arrived there, the money came. When you release yourself of expectation or hope, it changes your confidence and your being, and people see that about you. —**JILL ANGELO** Gennev



Hire slow and fire fast. Even when you're running on fumes and you really need another person, take your time. There is so much value in making sure you find someone you completely trust and who trusts you, even if it might take a few extra months. —**SNIGDHA SUR** The Juggernaut



I've been nimble and adapted my business hundreds, if not thousands, of times—being willing to listen to my customers as to what I wasn't providing them and what they needed, and skating to where the puck was going instead of trying to sell them a puck they might not want. —**SHELLY SUN** BrightStar Care



Anyone can be a CEO. Anyone can decide to start a business. But to actually have a team of people who believe in your vision, who want to execute on it, who believe in you, and believe in the best of the company, that takes a lot of personal development and professional development. —**MELISSA BUTLER** The Lip Bar



Nobody can build anything by themselves. Yes, you can muscle through the first few months in the first few stages of growth, but the size and success of your business is going to depend on the talent you identify. —**SHIZA SHAHID** Our Place



Show up as yourself, be weird, let your employees in a little, show your vulnerability a little. I think companies function better and withstand pressures more successfully when people are allowed to and empowered to be people. —**ISA WATSON** Squad

Additional reporting by Cameron Albert-Deitch, Lindsay Blakely, Leigh Buchanan, Sophie Downes, Anna Meyer, and Tom Foster.

COURTESY COMPANIES EXCEPT SHIZA SHAHID, JESSICA CHOU