

Big Advice For The Smallest Businesses

(NAPSA)—While large enterprises may make the most headlines, it's often the country's smallest businesses that are providing jobs, fueling innovation and growing the economy. According to the U.S. Small Business Administration, 62 percent of all U.S. businesses are microbusinesses, or businesses with fewer than 10 employees. These businesses also account for 75.3 percent of all private-sector employers.

These small but mighty companies often face a unique set of challenges. With fewer employees and resources, owners of microbusinesses often find themselves juggling all aspects of the business, including areas where they may not have expertise or experience in managing, while often competing against larger, more established enterprises.

To shine a spotlight on these inspirational entrepreneurs, Microsoft recently recognized 10 microbusinesses that are making the biggest impact. The full list includes Philip and Melissa Niu, Parachut; Jason and Sarah Kenworthy, Pink Helmet Posse; Noah Elias, Noah Fine Art; Dr. Agnes Scoville, Scoville & Company (Pacidose); August Graube, Fort Boards; Mikaila Ulmer, Me & the Bees; Jessica Matthews, Uncharted Play; Dave Ackerman, Tobacco MotorWear; Megan and Marshall Dostal, Further; and Kalika Yap, Citrus Studios.

These companies demonstrate what is possible with an idea and the determination to bring it to fruition. Whether you're an already-established small business or a future entrepreneur, below are some best practices cultivated from this standout group of microbusinesses:

- **Inspiration can be found anywhere.** From bee stings to childhood hobbies, inspiration for these business owners came from a wide range of places. Even if you don't consider yourself a creative person, being open to unexpected ideas and thinking outside the box are keys to discovering a new business, product or service idea.
- **Never stop listening and learning.** The businesses with the most loyal customers are the ones focused on continuous listening and learning. Whether in person or via software and social media, listening to your audience helps build trust and keeps them coming back. Be-



You can learn from small but successful companies how to better grow your own firm.

yond customer service, big data is another way to access a wealth of knowledge about your audience and business trends. Big data software like Microsoft Azure is also more affordable and easier to use than ever, allowing even the smallest businesses to benefit from enterprise-grade analytics.

- **Ask for help.** Launching a business can be intimidating, especially if you have little or no experience in all the areas necessary for your business to function, such as accounting or HR. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Reaching out to other small businesses in your area, finding a mentor or joining an online community can help you find the answers you need.
 - **Don't let anything hold you back.** From preschool kids to military veterans, the featured microbusiness owners are proof that success can be found at any age and at any stage of life. Time and time again, entrepreneurs shared that the most important thing to do is stop second-guessing yourself and just get started.
 - **Automate day-to-day tasks.** Technology, such as Microsoft Dynamics CRM, can help you work smarter and more efficiently. Automating your business processes lets you and your employees focus less on the day-to-day tasks so you can focus your time and energy on more important responsibilities.
- To learn more about the 10 all-star microbusinesses, including how they got their starts, tackled common small-business challenges, and the techniques and technologies that have led to their success, download the e-book at https://info.microsoft.com/10under10eBook.html?wt.m_id=AID608734_QSG_145084.