



The Big Push Launches to Get Female Founders Investment Ready

New female-led accelerator uses an equity-for-service model to take female founders from Seed to Series A

TORONTO – October 26, 2017 – Announced today is the launch of The Big Push, an all-female led business accelerator that gets female founders investment-ready using an equity-for-service model. Going beyond the traditional startup accelerator model, The Big Push provides hands-on services, support, and resources to female founders through a collective of female senior executives with expertise across key practice areas spanning finance, design, law, research, public relations, sales, and marketing. The program spans four to six months and serves female entrepreneurs throughout the Toronto-Kitchener-Waterloo corridor.

“The Big Push is a new category in the technology startup accelerator space. Our singular focus is on advancing female founders by helping them achieve their goals through a service-for-equity model,” says Sharon Zohar, founder and CEO of The Big Push. “We give true meaning to the concept of ‘sweat equity’ by providing female founders with the backing of an entire network of senior female executives that are willing to roll up their sleeves to help get startups to the next level of success.”

The Big Push was created to address the resource gap that many early stage startups, especially those led by female founders, face during periods of critical growth prior to securing larger seed or Series A funding. The Big Push provides the necessary skill sets these founders need to achieve the key performance indicators (KPIs) that investors require to trigger funding.

[Female entrepreneurs receive less than three percent of available venture funding](#) despite owning 38% of businesses. By preparing female founders so that they are ready for venture investment, both the startup community and the Canadian economy at large wins, [based on research](#) that women-led technology companies achieve 35% higher ROI and 56% higher revenue when backed by venture capital.

Artery: first portfolio company for The Big Push

The Big Push plans to work with approximately 10 startups per year, and is launching with [Artery](#) as its first portfolio company. Artery is tackling the next frontier in the sharing economy: culture in private spaces.

“The Big Push is a rare collective - each and everyone involved is a force. They’ve built successful business and created impact in their communities and, as entrepreneurs themselves, really understand what it means to be on the front-lines of accessing capital, growing a team, and trying through it all to hold onto your north star,” said Salimah Ebrahim, co-founder of Artery. “That they’re a group of women focused on supporting women-led ventures is important to me, especially in tech where the gender gap not only exists but in some areas feels like it’s calcifying. It’s a game-changer for Artery to be able to push forward together, share perspectives, and have that experience behind us as we grow the business.”

Giving Startups a Big Push

The Big Push delivers several benefits to female founded technology startups including hands on support, access to a large network, a diverse talent pool of highly established female senior executives, and select opportunities for investment and follow-on funding.

The Big Push self-selects high-potential, early-stage, female-founded startups and invests both the time and expertise needed to not only develop a strategy but to also implement a tactical plan to help them achieve their goals. Startups selected for The Big Push will receive between \$50,000 to \$100,000 in professional services in return for three to five percent equity, depending on the degree of services



required. While the primary business model is based on service for equity, The Big Push also provides options and flexibility of terms to best support the needs of the startup.

“The Big Push goes beyond writing cheques and offering occasional mentorship. The approach we are taking through a service-for-equity model is high risk, high reward, and a relatively new approach,” says Zohar. “Ultimately, we are creating a new model and category in the startup ecosystem specifically designed to advance female founders. We are doing more than giving lip service to the problems facing female founders by actually rolling up our sleeves and getting to work on changing the status quo. We are supporting founders in a way that actively changes the current landscape to ensure we move the dial.”

Advisory Board Includes Kirstine Stewart and Angus Frame

The Big Push is supported by two advisory board members: [Kirstine Stewart](#), Chief Strategy Officer at Dply, and [Angus Frame](#), SVP, Digital Products at Torstar. Both will play an important role by helping the accelerator build its profile through one-to-one networking, implement its go-to-market strategy, and make connections with corporate sponsors and other funding vehicles. They will also provide mentorship and support to startups selected by The Big Push.

"The advancement of women in tech and in other leadership roles is slowly gaining ground. While the conversations are happening, there is still a lot of real work to be done to change the status quo and get female founders the support they need to succeed," says Kirstine Stewart, Chief Strategy Officer at Dply. "With their hands-on approach to working with female founders during this critical phase, The Big Push will be instrumental in helping this important community in our tech ecosystem position their companies for global success."

"The need for talented founders in our community has never been greater, but we have created a system that places more than half of our talent pool at a needless disadvantage. The current power structure in the innovation ecosystem makes an already difficult path even harder for female entrepreneurs. The Big Push is here to provide additional support, services, and mentorship to women who are building great companies," says Angus Frame, Senior Vice President of Digital Products at Torstar. "All of us — including men in the startup ecosystem — can help by talking about and actively working to change the gender imbalances that limit opportunities for women entrepreneurs today."

About The Big Push

The Big Push is a Toronto-based business accelerator that gets early stage, female-founded technology companies investment ready using an equity-for-service model. With support from The Big Push, early stage companies can scale faster without the need to pay for additional labour costs. Hands-on services, support, and resources are provided to female founders through a collective of female senior executives with expertise across key practice areas spanning finance, design, law, research, sales, public relations, and marketing. The program spans four to six months and serves female entrepreneurs throughout the Toronto-Kitchener-Waterloo corridor. For additional information, visit thebigpush.ca.

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