



## The Big Push Fact Sheet

### Organization Snapshot

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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. 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, sales, public relations, and marketing. In addition, The Big Push gives female founders a familiar, supportive environment where they can connect with other professional women who can provide personal perspectives, advice, and support. The program spans 4-6 months and serves female entrepreneurs throughout the Toronto-Kitchener-Waterloo corridor. The Big Push also provide select opportunities for investment and follow-on funding.

The accelerator 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.

The Big Push delivers several benefits to female founded technology startups, including:

- **Hands on Support:** The Big Push collective rolls up their sleeves and gets to work developing and implementing strategic and tactical plans that address the unique business needs and challenges of each startup.
- **Large Network:** With more than 10+ years of experience in their chosen fields, the team of professionals involved with The Big Push have a wide network of contacts and can make the appropriate introductions when the time is right.
- **Diverse Talent Pool:** With 10 women from various backgrounds and industry specialties, The Big Push provides diverse knowledge and expertise spanning key practice areas from within a technology startup.
- **Capital Funding:** On a case by case basis, The Big Push may also provide funding for startups, and will actively open up its network of investors to help close out a round.

Startups that are a good fit for The Big Push have a female founder or co-founder, are technology driven or technology enabled, are incorporated, have a working Minimum Viable Product (MVP), a team of two or more, can show some demonstrated customer interest in the product, have the budget to support materials outlined in the project plan, and the ability to provide equity in the form of options or restricted stock units.

The program's success will be evaluated based on the ability of The Big Push to take early stage startups from customer validation to customer creation, with the resources required to build out sustainable growth and/or prepare them for the next stage in capital funding.

### Backed by a Stellar Founding Team

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The Big Push was founded by Sharon Zohar, a brand marketer and digital product entrepreneur with more than 20 years' experience founding, funding, advising, and operating technology, internet, and digital media companies. Her passion is in identifying and investing in new technologies and business models that have the potential to disrupt markets. While working with

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leading media companies and SaaS driven platforms, she helped to create innovative sales and marketing campaigns focusing on corporate social responsibility, and to promote brand awareness. As a serial entrepreneur, she has developed a number of mobile and software applications for health, finance, and media markets.

Founding members of The Big Push include:

- Karen Buidahazy, Founder and CEO, Goodfunder Inc. (Fintech, Sales, Marketing, Operations)
- [Jodi Echakowitz](#), Founder and CEO, [Boulevard PR](#) (Public Relations)
- Stephanie Fontaine, Founder, Stephanie K. Fontaine Enterprises Inc. (Business Development, Management Consulting)
- Jamie Hoobanoff, Founder and CEO, [The Leadership Agency](#) (Recruitment)
- Samiksha Khanna, VP Operations and Finance at Uberflip (Operations, Finance, Sales)
- Caroline Rouben, CEO and Creative Director of Straticom Group Ltd. (Fully Integrated Brand Promotion)
- Lisa Sorge, Founder, Seed to Success! (Strategic Communications)
- Eden Spodek, Founder and CEO of Spodek & Co (Digital Communications and Marketing)

## The Big Push Opportunity

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There is an enormous gap in venture capital funding. [Female entrepreneurs receive less than 3% of available venture funding](#) despite owning 38% of businesses. Even with majority women-owned small and mid-size businesses representing more than [\\$117B per annum of economic activity](#) in Canada, and creating tens of thousands of jobs each year, the support for female-founded companies remains low.

Toronto, [which ranks 16th](#) among the world's leading start-up ecosystems, is slowly moving beyond gender bias and recognizing the value female-founded companies bring to the world economy. Organizations and movements like [#MovetheDial](#), [#GoSponsorHer](#), and [SheEO](#) are creating solutions for leadership diversity in tech and other industries. In addition, several members of the tech community are offering their own female-focused opportunities. Examples include StandUp Ventures, which has a significant focus on women, Communitech's Women in Tech Mentorship program, and BDC's tech fund for women-led startups. But capital is not the only solution; female founders also need hands-on support, tools, services, and resources to achieve the next level of growth.

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.

The Big Push was created to give female founders a greater chance at receiving capital by getting them investment ready through a service-for-equity model supported by an all-female collective of senior executives committed to rolling up their sleeves and helping female founders with both strategic planning and tactical execution across key business areas. The Big Push positions female founders for revenue acceleration, customer growth, and capital funding.

Participants in The Big Push are not only putting their money where their mouths are; they are putting their sweat equity where it counts.

## Story Topics

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- The role of successful female founders/executives in supporting the next generation of female entrepreneurs
- Innovative ways to gain access to capital
- Steps female founders need to take to get investment ready
- According to Mark Cuban, sweat equity is the best equity there is. The bigger vision of The Big Push in creating a service-for-equity platform.

## Advisory Board

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The Big Push is supported by two advisory board members that will play an instrumental role in 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.

### **Kirstine Stewart – Board Advisor**

Kirstine Stewart is the Chief Strategy Officer for Dippy. Until the fall 2016, Stewart was the Vice-President of Media at Twitter, overseeing North American media partnerships across all verticals, including television, sports, gaming, news and music. She previously served as Managing Director for Twitter Canada, leading Canadian operations as well as advertising business and partnerships. Prior to joining Twitter in May 2013, Kirstine was the Executive Vice-President of CBC's English services, CBC/Radio-Canada, where she oversaw the network's English-language radio, television and digital programming and operations. Earlier, she was Senior Vice-President of programming for Alliance Atlantis, overseeing HGTV, Food Network, National Geographic, BBC Canada, and others.

### **Angus Frame - Board Advisor**

Angus Frame is SVP, Digital Product at Torstar Corp, where he oversees the creation of digital products and business strategies at one of Canada's best-known media organizations. Formerly VP of TribalScale and prior to that VP, Digital at The Globe and Mail, Angus uses agile methodologies and design thinking to help businesses refine their digital strategies and prioritize their product roadmaps.

## Media Contact

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Jodi Echakowitz  
Boulevard Public Relations  
905-709-9600  
[Jodi@boulevardpr.com](mailto:Jodi@boulevardpr.com)