Stories

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FUELING AN ECONOMIC ENGINE

The Acceleration Project rewrites the playbook for scaling small businesses

Re: Jane Veron (MBA 1991); By: Jennifer Gillespie

Topics: Entrepreneurship Business Ventures-Business Growth and Maturation Management-Management Practices and Processes

Jane Veron offers strategic guidance to Justin Vaidyan, owner of Arise Physical Therapy in White Plains, NY, as part of TAP's mission to help spur business growth and uplift entire communities. (Photo credit: Benjamin Norman)

There are 33.2 million small business owners in the US, and **Jane Veron (MBA 1991)** wants to be sure they all have the ability to thrive. In 2012, she cofounded The Acceleration Project (TAP), a nonprofit that has provided 11,000 under-resourced entrepreneurs with the tools and support they need to overcome challenges and build sustainable businesses.

“Typically, a business owner enters the space because they’re really good at their product or service, ” Veron says, but they might lack training in strategy, operations, finance, or marketing—or the know-how to access capital and sustain themselves financially. That’s where TAP comes in. “We provide strategic and business advisory services—the scaffolding and support around whatever that small business owner does,” Veron explains.

TAP consultants work pro bono with clients across industries—from construction, childcare, and health, to food, wellness, and beauty. Through virtual or in-person coaching, they deliver curated, actionable content and do it in a way that is accessible to and respectful of clients. “That’s our secret sauce,” Veron says. Coaching may run for several weeks, and afterwards TAP works to maintain long-term relationships with clients, tracking progress and providing them with a variety of resources.

As CEO, Veron draws on her background in strategy and marketing at Bain and American Express, and in public service as a former mayor of Scarsdale, New York, to shape TAP's approach to building expertise among small business owners. She believes equipping one entrepreneur with the right tools can create a ripple effect—a "force multiplier"—spurring economic growth, generating jobs, and uplifting entire communities.

TAP's results have enabled it to forge strong philanthropic and corporate partnerships. According to a Bridgespan report highlighting TAP's social return on investment, every $1 invested in the nonprofit generates $10 in economic impact. Of the businesses it has served, TAP notes that 93 percent are still operating, 91 percent have created or preserved jobs, 93 percent report increased confidence, and 98 percent are satisfied with TAP's services.

The data reflect TAP's impact and fuel Veron's passion for her work: "I wanted to help small businesses—the engine of our economy—accelerate," she explains. "The Acceleration Project has exceeded my wildest dreams."