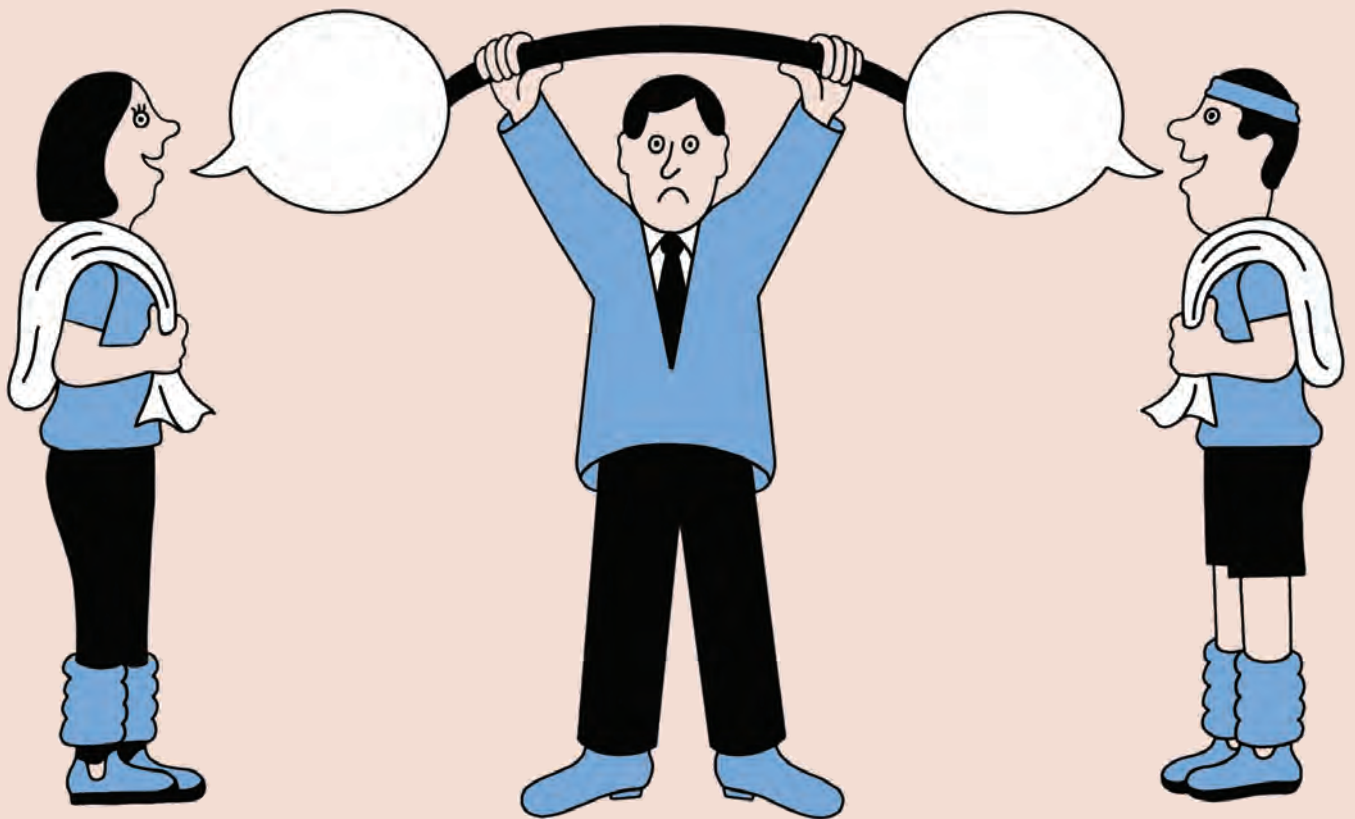

ACTION *items*

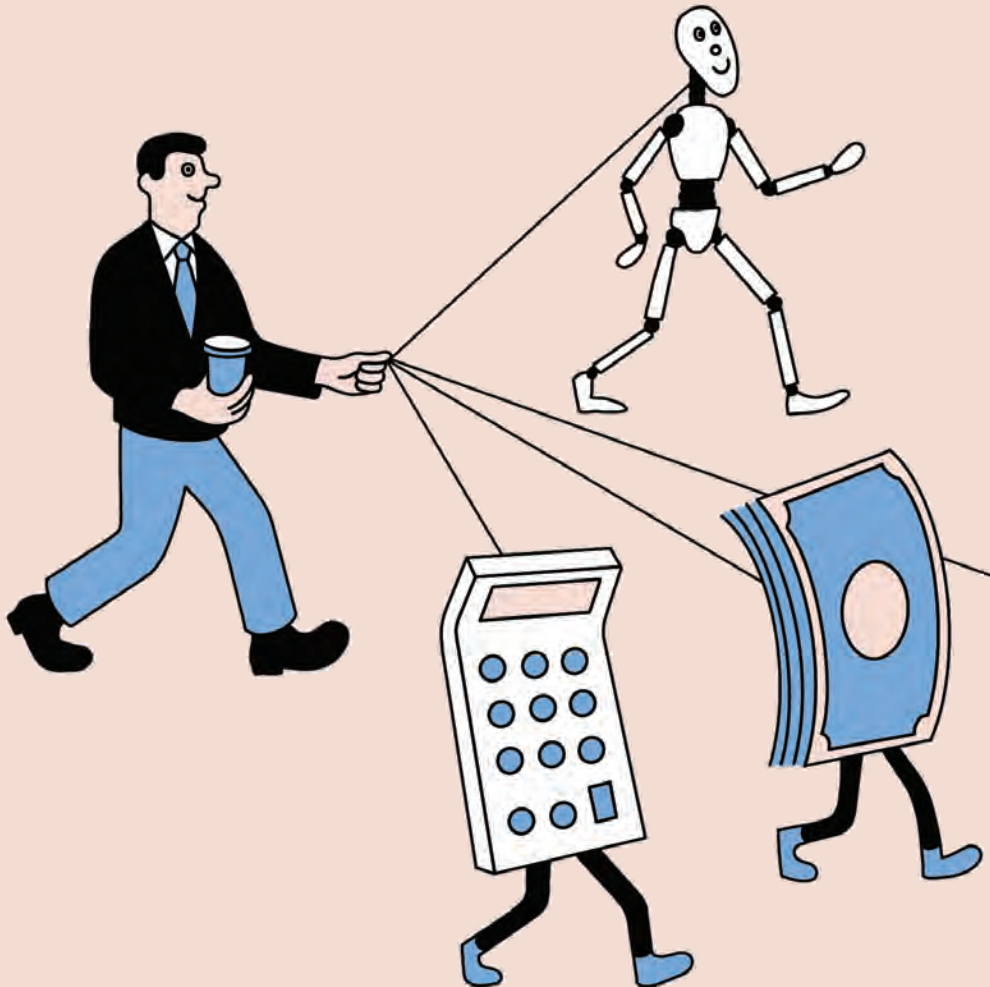


Are your Gen-Z employees struggling to meet expectations at work? You're not alone—75 percent of businesses have fired members of the youngest workforce cohort this year. But could the problem with Gen-Zers actually be a problem with their managers? New data shows that the latter may be struggling even more. If this sounds like your team, head over to the Leadership & Workplace section of this edition of Action Items to see how you can start making real changes today that will unlock your people's potential. We've also

got shopping tips for point-of-sale systems in Money, and a tax tip that might encourage you to make big equipment purchases before the end of the year. Meanwhile, if you want to begin 2025 with a fresh look, you can get pointers on building your own website without knowing how to code in Innovation, review ways to use AI while still hitting your sustainability goals in Tech, and learn how to expand your network while hitting those fitness goals via “sweat networking” in Starting Up. Finally, don't skip Sales & Marketing, which has a quick checklist to prep your sales team for Q1. —Tim Crino

With reporting from Chloe Aiello, Peter Cohan, Brian Contreras, Christine Haughney Dare-Bryan, Rebecca Deczynski, Ali Donaldson, Kim Jao, Sarah Lynch, Sydney Sladovnik, and Steve Strauss.

LEADERSHIP & WORKPLACE



CHECK IN WITH YOUR MANAGERS

Nearly half of all managers experienced burnout this year, according to a LinkedIn survey of more than 11,000 professionals. Individual contributors and directors have been faring better, but only slightly. High levels of manager burnout can be alarming, because managers play a critical role in their organizations, determining 70 percent of the “variance in team engagement,” Gallup has found. Fortunately, there are tried-and-true ways to make managers’ jobs easier and more satisfying, according to business leaders and management experts.

1 | MORE AUTONOMY

While building company-wide culture is certainly key, managers should also be free to create “norms within their team,” says Jessica Burkland, assistant professor of practice in organizational behavior at Babson College. At BambooHR, a Draper, Utah-based HR platform, CEO Brad Rencher espouses a “federal and state” approach. For instance, with AI, Rencher shared principles around ethics and data privacy to all of his 1,400 or so employees, but at the “state” level gave managers latitude around tools and processes.

2 | A SAFE SPACE

Companies need to create an environment that makes managers feel safe to innovate by taking risks, and sometimes failing, says Burkland. More than a year ago, C&R, an L.A.-based public relations agency with 28 employees focusing on travel and real estate, instituted monthly meetings for managers to update leaders on developments, and to create a forum for discussing goals and challenges, says co-founder Pieter Ruig. Crucially, such meetings are not “finger-pointing sessions,” he says. “It’s about collaboration and supporting one another.”

3 | CONTEXT AND CLARITY

Leaders need to communicate to managers how their work drives company growth, says Joe Galvin, chief research officer at executive coaching organization Vistage. Burkland notes that they need to update managers on their progress toward organizational goals. Unfortunately, she adds, “these conversations often don’t happen until the metric isn’t met, which is too late.” This doesn’t have to be an in-depth, lengthy meeting, she argues. Even quick check-ins on progress can help managers feel motivated and connected.

4 | TRAINING

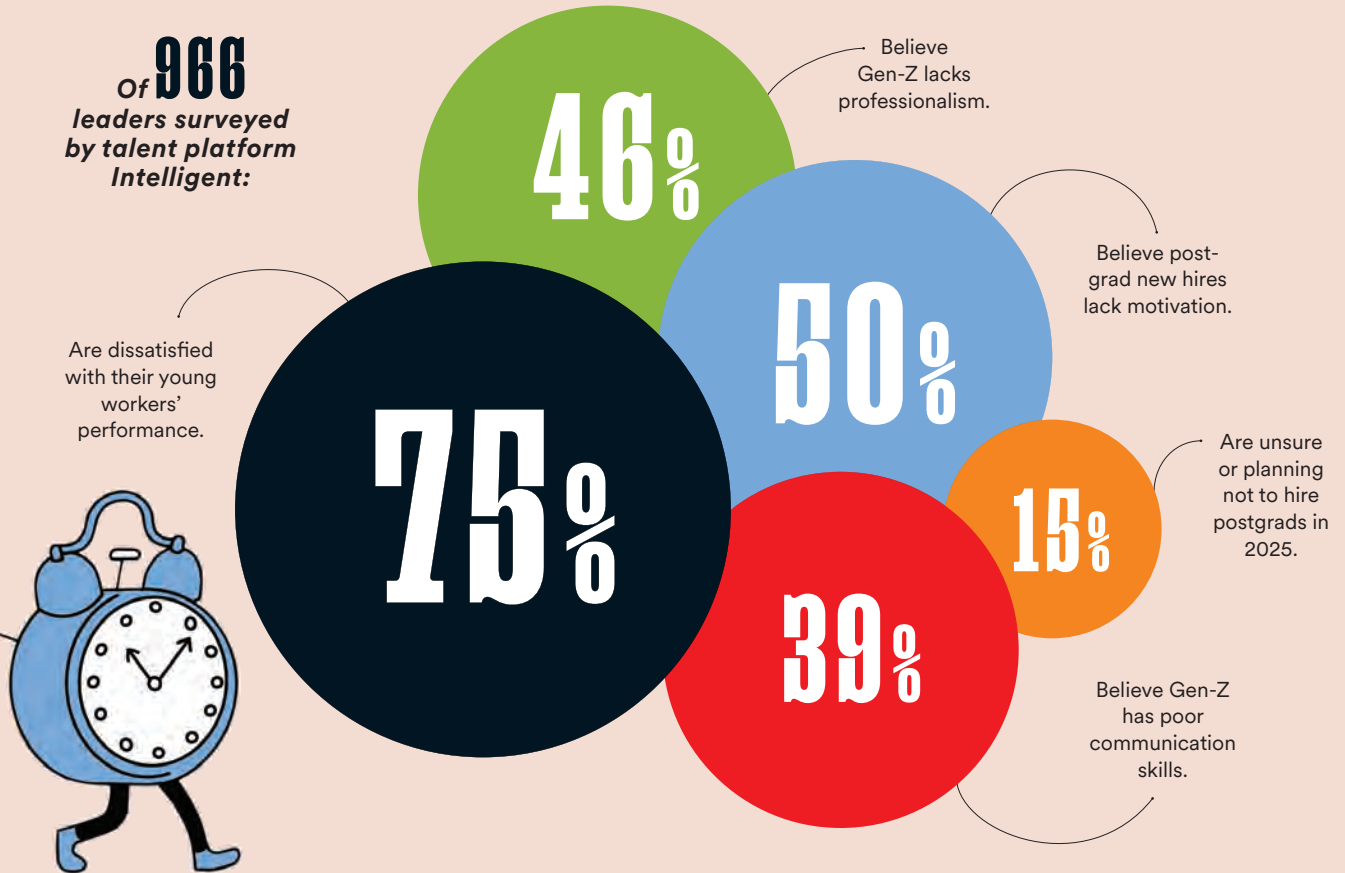
Examples of meaningful training topics might include how to delegate, how to communicate more effectively with teams, and how to build trust with a team, Burkland says. Galvin adds “managing a digital relationship with a hybrid employee” to that list.

5 | A REASONABLE WORKLOAD

Among the most important parts of the monthly manager meetings at C&R is checking in on managers’ workloads, Ruig says, to ensure they’re “reasonable and balanced,” and to lend support when needed. “Someone might say, ‘Hey, I need an account coordinator to handle the reporting components on the real estate side of things, which will free me up to spend more time on strategic thinking, pitching, whatever it might be,’” he says. But leaders should be wary of taking on managers’ work themselves to try to solve workload issues or control outcomes, says Emily Field, McKinsey partner and author of *Power to the Middle: Why Managers Hold the Keys to the Future of Work*. Leaders can’t get bogged down with even more work, she adds, and managers need to feel empowered and be held accountable in their roles to grow and contribute. —S.L.

Benchmark Your Gen-Z Workforce

Of **966**
leaders surveyed
by talent platform
Intelligent:



Learn to Manage Gen-Z

The transition into the workplace for Gen-Zers has been bumpy, to say the least. Roughly 60 percent of companies have cut Gen-Z employees they hired this year, according to education and career advisory platform Intelligent. Millennials also received plenty of grief as they entered the workforce, but have since ascended to managerial roles and forged their own paths in entrepreneurship. So, assuming that Gen-Z will shape the future workforce, what do employers need to know about working with this cohort?



1 | HELP THEM PRIORITIZE

Tenley Uttenreuther, 24, was laid off this year. She says that she and many of her peers are hard workers, and that she said yes to too many projects at her former employer, often pulling all-nighters. Though she's still willing to work hard, she admits she could have managed her time better. That's a skill that the right manager can help develop.



2 | GIVE HONEST FEEDBACK

Uttenreuther also thinks there is a divergence in generational communication styles. While Millennials might opt for a gentler approach, she prefers direct, honest feedback and constructive criticism. "Tell it to me straight," she says. "I don't want to be told I'm doing a great job all the time. There are things that I can improve on."

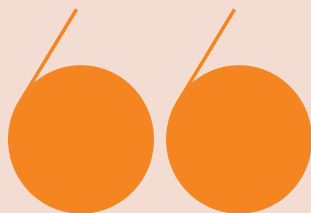


3 | TRAIN ON SOFT SKILLS

"Gen-Z wasn't raised [with] the same social skills as someone who was raised in the '70s or '80s. Many expect to be sort of parented by their managers," says Grace McCarrick, the Millennial founder of people and culture company Grace Note Strategies. She says employers should expect to train their Gen-Z employees on soft skills. —S.Sladovnik

STARTING UP

NETWORK UP A SWEAT

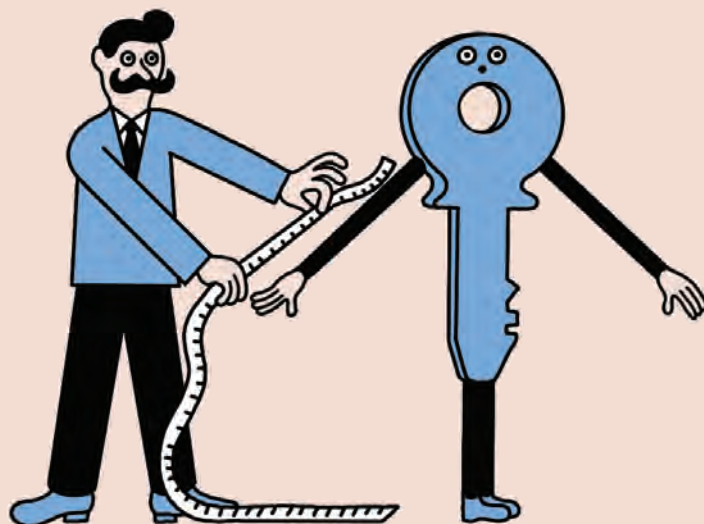


You spend a lot of time in Zoom meetings utterly distracted by your email, texts coming

in, kids, dogs—there are a million distractions. A workout, it's just the two of us. **The easiest way to get on my calendar is over a workout, because I need to put it in my day regardless, and I hate working out alone.**"

John Katzman

Founder of edtech platforms Princeton Review, 2U, and Noodle, and one of many entrepreneurs engaging in the newer trend of sweat networking. He works out with one person at a time, and chooses exercises that don't require a ton of focus.



Develop the Traits of a Successful Founder

Marcy Swenson is a three-time founder who now coaches other founders, and has worked with leaders of firms like Lyft, Twilio, and Turing. She says all successful founders share certain traits, tools, and assets, six of which she touches on here.

1 | STRATEGIC THINKING

Don't get so muddled in daily logistics that you neglect to make time for big-picture, strategic thinking.

2 | COMMITMENT TO GOALS

Great companies set goals, communicate them, and track them, Swenson says. "Ask yourself, 'How well did we do? Where could we have done something different?' And then with that information in mind, go back and set another goal."

3 | TRUSTED PEERS

Despite a founder's best-laid plans and goals, things often unexpectedly fall apart. When that happens, Swenson says, a founder needs at least two or three people they can call on for help or advice.

4 | THICK SKIN

The most successful founders don't shy away from tough conversations with team members. In fact, Swenson says, they come away with results, "making repairs when they frustrate somebody and also holding their ground."

5 | LEADERSHIP EXPERTISE

Building a strong executive team starts with hiring the right people, which could mean people who have more experience than the founder. But that's not all that's required. Swenson says that in a company's early days, founders and executives might operate in a hub-and-spoke model, with the CEO present for most major decisions. But as the company grows, the executive team should be more independent.

6 | DELEGATION SKILLS

This can be challenging for founders, Swenson says, since at the beginning, they touch the most crucial parts of the business. They will need to let go—or risk drowning in their to-do list. —S.L.

Inc. 5000

COMPANY SPOTLIGHT



NO. 1680
2024 Ranking

309%
3-Year Growth

\$70M+
2023 Revenue

130
Employees

Home Insurance Needed Disruption. One Entrepreneur Was Ready

Better technology means better decision making, and investors rewarded Bamboo's data-driven underwriting platform.

BAMBOOINSURANCE.COM

When most people think of home and auto insurance companies, they think of boring decades-old businesses—and they wouldn't be wrong. So, when John Chu, an insurance industry veteran, started considering what he wanted to do before he retired, he decided to try to disrupt the industry he had spent three decades working in.



→ John Chu, founder and CEO, Bamboo Insurance

In 2018, Chu launched Bamboo Insurance, a company that, unlike others in the space, uses sophisticated technology to underwrite and price more accurately. While most home insurers collect five or six pieces of basic data, Bamboo ingests significantly more, including the condition of the roof, the life of the heating system, the quality of the cabinetry, and much more. "We're better at matching the risk to the price," he says.

This is key to Bamboo's success: Many insurers get in trouble when rates are inadequate, and losses paid are greater than premiums earned. With more detailed information and greater pricing sophistication, Bamboo looks to ensure all policies are priced adequately for the risk taken over the long term. "I just knew that the homeowners space was ripe for change," Chu says.

Strategic partnerships

By 2023, Bamboo had \$250 million of premium in force—a figure he expects to double by the end of 2024. The bulk of

Bamboo's business stems from homeowners policies in California, but it also offers auto and renters insurance through its internal agency and aims to expand into other states in 2025.

The company also has found success partnering with other insurance providers, leveraging innovative technology and an easy-to-use platform Chu developed. Some of the largest name-brand insurers—businesses Chu had developed relationships with during his many years in the insurance sector—all jumped at the chance to work with him. They sell Bamboo's policies through their own agents, using the company's technology to determine pricing.

Long-term focus

Chu has always taken a long-term attitude toward Bamboo. While he could have sold policies for cheap and grown the company even faster, he wanted to create a profitable business with a solid foundation. In 2023 White Mountains Insurance Group invested \$297 million for a 73 percent stake.

The deal opened doors to new markets and customers, he says, but also proved that Chu's strategy of long-term growth versus short-term gains was the right one. "That validated that taking the long run was the right decision for us," he says. "We want to continue growing profitably and doing the right thing for the company."

Inc. 5000

COMPANY SPOTLIGHT



NO **3278**
2024 Ranking

2X
Inc. 5000 Honoree

125%
3-Year Growth

HQ
Richmond, Va.

Ahead of Its Time: A Performance Media Trailblazer With a 27-Year-Old Mission

Spurrier Group has built a sustainable, fast-growing performance media marketing company by staying true to its vision and investing in its workforce.

SPURRIERGROUP.COM

Historically in advertising, the creative team—those tasked with conceptualizing and designing ad campaigns—operated independently from the media team—the folks determining where and when to run ads to reach the intended audience. That never seemed right to Donna Spurrier, who got her start in the 1980s at an automotive advertising company selling the Toyota brand to the American market. When she shared her desire to understand audience behavior and learn from the creative team, colleagues reminded her of how things had “always been done.”

Ten years later, with a decade of advertising experience under her belt, Spurrier launched Spurrier Group, a woman-owned performance media marketing partner. Its mission is the same today as it was 27 years ago: to bridge the gap between creative and media to improve results for advertisers.

Integrating media and creative

Today *performance media* is a common, even overused term meaning advertising that is anchored in data, Spurrier explains. But when she was first pitching her philosophy, she often had doors slammed in her face. “I had to convince people that media mattered,” she recalls.

Her long-held belief that media is as important as creative has caught on, in

part because the media landscape is now so complicated. Finding consumers across a sea of social media, digital channels, and on-demand TV is undeniably challenging. Now that nearly everything in marketing is measurable, Spurrier Group can prove it is delivering return on investment (ROI) for clients, many of whom are tasked with doing more with every dollar they spend. “There’s an old saying in advertising: ‘Half my advertising’s working. I just don’t know which half.’ We do. And we know how to take that half and scale it to be your whole so there’s very little wasted money,” Spurrier explains.

Investing in a close-knit team

As the merits of creative-media collaboration have become more widely acknowledged, Spurrier Group’s business has surged. So, too, has the number of competitive services. What further differentiates Spurrier Group is a collaborative workforce of women who love what they do. Spurrier strengthens the culture by investing in people. She provides the tools and education they need to excel.



→ Donna Spurrier, founder, Spurrier Group, and her staff

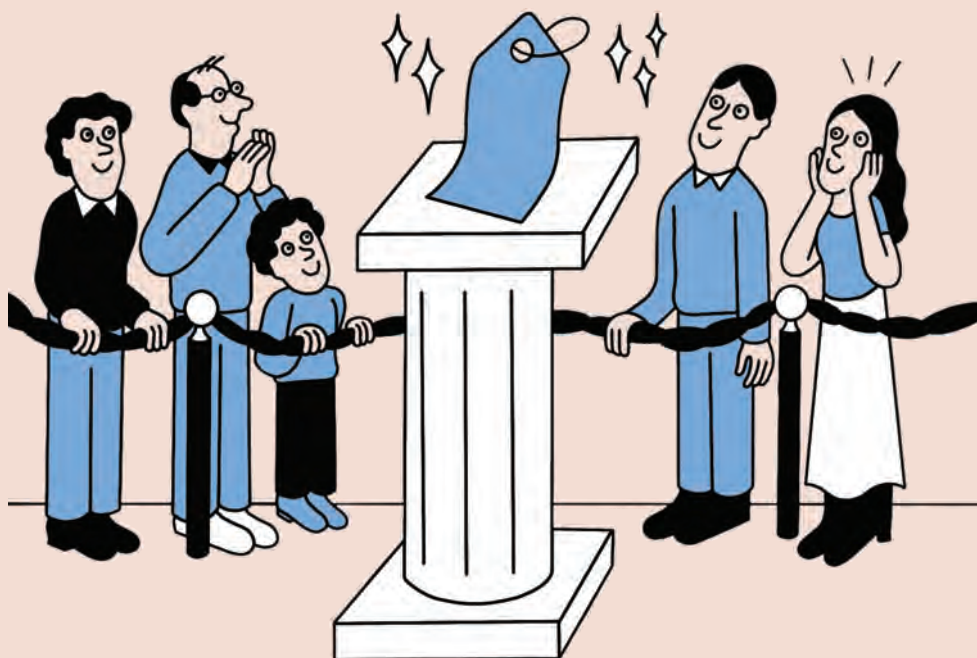
Realizing they are full people, not just employees, she brings in a yoga instructor and massage therapist once a week and gets everyone’s car washed in the office parking lot once a month. “Because who has time?” she muses. “We’re busy. We’re busy working. We’ve got kids or grandkids at home. We’re women. We’re doing 50,000 things at once.”

Spurrier Group’s tightly knit team are the heart of the agency’s differentiated service and proof that Spurrier’s ahead-of-its-time approach to culture complements her pioneering idea: to foster media and creative collaboration to improve advertising results.

SALES & MARKETING

Over the past three years, Bogg's perforated plastic totes—made of the same EVA material as Crocs and available in more than 50 colors—have become a viral phenomenon, generating more than 170 million posts on TikTok and securing shelf space in more than 4,500 stores, including Bass Pro Shops and Dick's Sporting

BECOME A CULT BRAND



1 | BUILD BUZZ

Cult brands build an entire world around their products, so that it's no longer just a water bottle or a tote or a pendant necklace, but a marker of identity. Social media helps with that—just ask jewelry brand Kendra Scott. In what's become a trend across social media, #RushTok, sorority girls document their outfits for each round of the recruitment process, and let their followers know they bought their jewelry from Kendra Scott. "You have to capitalize on those moments, because they're going to be fleeting," says Kendra Scott CEO Tom Nolan. "We try to align with the cultural zeitgeist."

2 | CREATE SCARCITY

To maintain a heightened level of customer interest, cult brands count on limited-edition products and buzzy collaborations to create a sense of freshness and FOMO (fear of missing out). Few have executed this playbook better than Stanley, thanks to Terence Reilly. The shoe marketing guru built on his experience at Crocs and Footaction to create drops for new Stanley cups. With a steady string of new colors and limited-edition versions, Stanley customers may not think of themselves as sneakerheads, but the drop mentality has translated.

Goods. During that time, Bogg's revenue grew 389 percent, landing it on the Inc. 5000 for the second time. The average customer has four Bogg-brand accessories, says founder Kim Vaccarella, who has seen customers showing off as many as 10 Bogg Bags on social media. Inc. asked her and other founders how to achieve cult status.

Review This Last-Minute Checklist to



Get Ahead on Q1 Sales

As planning begins for the 2025 fiscal year, companies need their sales pipelines to be as robust as possible. Key to that is the need for sales teams to decipher whether they're hearing false promises from clients, and identify churn metrics they may have missed. To do that, Chantel George, founder of the membership-based sales network Sistas in Sales, advises asking these questions. —S.Strauss



Are we talking to the decision maker?



Is there another solution they're considering?



Do we have the person's phone number to text them?



Do we know how many people behind the scenes have to weigh in?

Inc. 5000

COMPANY SPOTLIGHT



NO 458
2024
Ranking

979%
3-Year
Growth

\$2.1M
Annual
Revenue

HQ
Lawrenceville,
Georgia

Business Shows Doctors the Way to Financial Freedom

EntreMD helps physicians learn how to create profitable businesses so that they can live life and practice medicine on their own terms.

ENTREMD.COM

Before starting up EntreMD in 2018, Nneka Unachukwu—who goes by Dr. Una—was running a booming pediatrics practice, earning seven figures a year and working four days a week. But as traditional doctors' offices faced increasing competition from providers such as urgent care centers, after-hours clinics, and pharmacy-based clinics, she realized her financial success wouldn't last if she didn't adapt.

"My thought was, If I could no longer earn a living practicing medicine as I was, what would I do?" she recalls.

Several possibilities came to mind. As someone who had run a successful medical practice, she could teach others how to do the same, become a paid speaker, or be an author. With three good options, her next step was to acquire the skills she needed to pursue them. Soon after starting her own reinvention journey, she had another idea.

"I said, 'There are a million physicians who need to adapt, so how about if I show other doctors how to retool and how to build profitable businesses?'" Unachukwu says. "That was the impetus for EntreMD."

'Skill-stacking' beyond medicine

When Unachukwu began listing ideas for how she would provide those business lessons—speaking, writing, and consulting—she realized she needed a bit more



→ Nneka Unachukwu (Dr. Una), founder and CEO, EntreMD, is also a speaker, author, and podcast host.



→ Unachukwu says the mission of *EntreMD* is to give doctors the tools to live life and practice medicine on their own terms.

preparation for those roles. For example, the self-described introvert was terrified of public speaking, so she took some speaker training to overcome her insecurity.

"I had to learn that being an introvert is not a handicap; it's a superpower," she says.

Unachukwu discovered that she could do quite well at tasks like public speaking and networking, as long as she could later recharge her strength through solitude. She also took classes to learn more about the practical aspects of business operations, like hiring people and developing services.

Through *EntreMD*, Unachukwu is helping other doctors make a similar transition to becoming more than clinicians. Her ultimate goal is to teach 100,000 physicians how to build profitable businesses.

"It's not a transition away from medicine," says Unachukwu, who still maintains a medical practice. "This is skill-stacking."

Expanding educational programs

Just like its founder and CEO, *EntreMD* has evolved. It began by offering one-on-one coaching at a small scale: The first clients were six doctors who met with Unachukwu at an Atlanta restaurant. In 2019, the company presented its first

event, *EntreMD Live*, drawing 49 participants from nine states.

"That was a pivotal moment for us, because it was proof of concept that people really wanted this," Unachukwu says.

She used the event to launch a 12-week program called the Freedom Formula Masterclass. When her connection to the class participants ended once they completed the program, she dropped that short-term class and pivoted to a nine-month educational program called the Six Figure Club. In 2020, she opened the *EntreMD Business School*, a yearlong virtual study program with an option to renew. Unachukwu notes that several students from the initial cohort of 22 have stayed in the program all four years since it launched.

EntreMD operates the business school and coaching service with a four-person team consisting of Unachukwu, a success coach, a director of sales, and an administrator. More than 100 students are currently in the school.

Cultivating health care leaders

Unachukwu, who has become a speaker, best-selling author, and host of the popular

EntreMD Podcast since starting her company, reports that many of her clients have also achieved remarkable success both within and outside of their medical practices. Some have made the journey from medical employees to owners of multimillion-dollar practices in as little as two years. Others have built their own six-figure coaching businesses, written their own bestsellers, given TED talks, and been interviewed for major news outlets.

"They have embraced who they are as leaders in health care," Unachukwu says.

She notes that amid high levels of burnout within the profession, there's a dire need among doctors to feel more of that kind of empowerment. That burnout, she adds, often stems from frustration over issues like the loss of autonomy in making decisions about their patients' health care, increasing administrative burdens, and financial insecurity. She says the mission of *EntreMD* is to give doctors the tools to live life and practice medicine on their own terms.

"Yes, we are building profitable businesses," she says, "but the reason behind it is so that we can get our freedom back, have more impact on the health care space, and advocate for better patient care."

MONEY

PICK YOUR POINT-OF-SALE SYSTEM



To ensure steady cash flow and give customers a variety of payment options, many business owners use a mix of point-of-sale systems. Of the five business owners Inc. talked to for this story, three used at least two point-of-sale systems. Read on to find out why, and criteria to consider when selecting a payment processor.

1 | FEES

In addition to a flat fee, payment processors often charge a percentage fee for every transaction you make. Some charge yearly rates to use the software and a per-transaction fee, the latter of which might depend on the nature of the sale. For example, Shopify's card rates are higher for online transactions than for in-person sales. Regardless, be sure to look for something that provides a transparent, itemized breakdown of fees. That's why Angelo Lonardo, CEO of cookie dough business Out the Dough, uses Clover—the platform provides a detailed list of its monthly fees.

2 | CUSTOMER PREFERENCE

One of the most important factors in choosing a payment processor is whether your customer will trust the system you offer. That's why Katya Varbanova, CEO of marketing firm Viral Marketing Stars, and Thomas Phillips, CEO of custom pet art business Pet Portraits, both use PayPal—their customers told them they trust it.

3 | EQUIPMENT

Some POS systems offer terminals of various types to help with in-person sales. Clover is a standout, selling everything from handheld card readers to standing kiosks with clickable screens.

4 | SCALABILITY

Many POS systems, like Shopify and Stripe, allow merchants to upgrade their subscription packages as a business grows and requires more sophisticated payment software. Determine whether these upgraded features are available and how easy it might be to change your subscription as you scale.

5 | CASH FLOW

Phillips advises researching how quickly you'll get your funds from a POS system, and the ease of integration for apps that manage cash handling, time cards, and inventory. Varbanova suggests looking at how a payment processor settles chargebacks and disputes. She's found PayPal seems to favor consumers over merchants, and believes Stripe is fairer. —K.J.

Take Advantage of This Tax Deduction

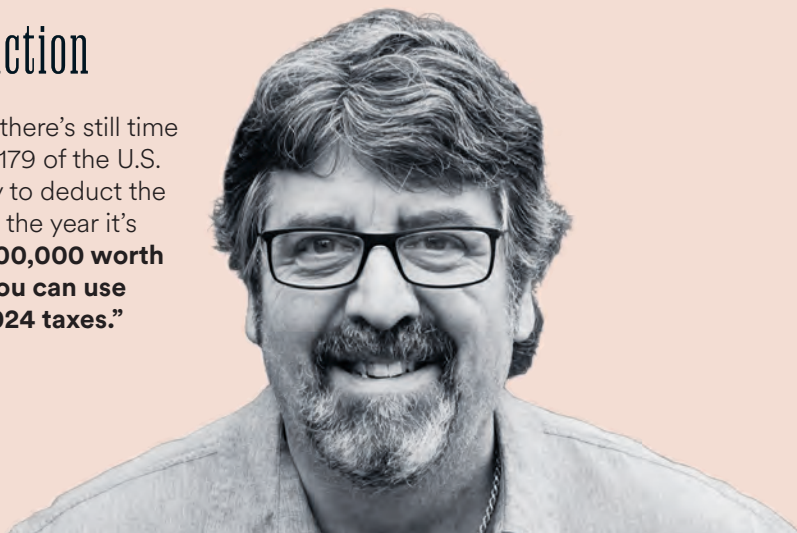


If you're reading this in 2024, there's still time to take advantage of Section 179 of the U.S. tax code. It allows a company to deduct the full cost of certain equipment the year it's purchased. **If you finance \$100,000 worth**

of eligible equipment this year, for example, you can use Section 179 to take a \$35,000 deduction on 2024 taxes."

Dan Furman

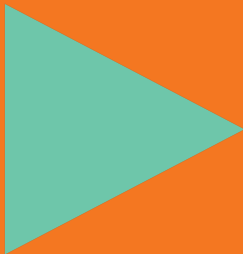
VP of strategy, Crest Capital



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DEADLINE: MARCH 7, 2025

Inc. 5000

COMPANY SPOTLIGHT

 InnoActive
Group

NO **350**
2024 Ranking

1,247%
3-Year Growth

HQ
San Francisco, Calif.

2017
Year Founded

The Industry Pioneer Turning the Built World on Its Head

InnoActive Group, a full stack consultancy with a visionary leader, uses advanced data analytics and AI to show the construction industry a better way to operate.

THEINNOACTIVEGROUP.COM

The construction industry is one of the last frontiers for data and technology, notes Sean Wahidi, founder at InnoActive Group, a tech-forward, data-driven consulting firm specializing in project management, software advisory and implementation, and data analytics for Fortune 500 companies and public agencies.

The company stands out for its game-changing approach, as well as for its visionary leadership. In 2016, when Wahidi and his wife, Lema Shah, founded the company, the idea of applying a data-first approach to an industry resistant to change was unheard of, Wahidi explains. But he was determined to close the gap between construction and technology by serving as “the owner’s rep for their entire construction technology stack and analytics.” He says, “We sit on the same side as the owner. We want to do what’s in their best interest.”

Tailored technology solutions grounded in education

InnoActive Group’s data-first, solutions-agnostic approach to designing, managing, and improving capital programs raised eyebrows at first, Wahidi admits. Owners were used to construction management firms that lacked data expertise, or software vendors that peddled specific solutions, regardless of the client. Wahidi focused on client education, taking the time to teach data and technology best

practices. At the start of an engagement, InnoActive Group’s technology experts evaluate a client’s existing tech stack, often finding redundant services that can be streamlined to save money. They also automate reports and processes to realize ongoing project efficiency.

Making a difference, here and now

In a tough economic climate, the efficiency advantages of the technology lever are business-critical, particularly for owners in the public sector, who are stewards of taxpayers’ money, Wahidi explains. Artificial intelligence (AI) is a sizeable opportunity for owners. InnoActive Group is leading the way in AI adoption in construction. Again, its experienced team takes the time to educate clients and dispel misinformation. “We are sitting on the same side as the owner, showing them what AI really is and what it’s capable of doing, and coming up with use cases and pain points,” Wahidi explains. “We’re not selling a pie-in-the-sky idea. We are asking, How can we apply it today? How can we apply it tomorrow? How can we create an overall AI strategy?”



→ Sean Wahidi and Lema Shah, co-founders, InnoActive Group

As the Inc. 5000 honoree’s clients include leaders in renewable energy, aviation, education, utilities, and public services, using data and technology to drive efficiency and improve project outcomes betters communities where employees work and live. This is a motivator for the firm and an underpinning of the company’s strong culture. “Construction infrastructure is meant to enhance all our lives,” Wahidi notes. He and the team keep that top of mind as they work to usher in a new, data-led era of construction project delivery.

INNOVATION



GET BETTER AT BRAINSTORMING

As 2024 winds to a close and 2025 takes its place, savvy business owners should use this time to plan ahead and brainstorm for the new year. Here's how to get started.

1 | REST

"Grind culture" is a prevalent topic on LinkedIn and might make a person feel like they need to skip meals and sacrifice time with loved ones to succeed. Don't fall for it, says Ben Goodwin, co-founder and CEO of prebiotic soda brand Olipop: "Grind culture can be really myopic and give you tunnel vision. That actually undermines creative problem solving." Set aside time to sleep, recharge, and explore hobbies, Goodwin advises. He likes to DJ on weekends.

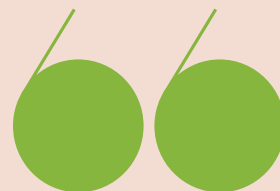
2 | TAKE A SHOWER

If you're like Date Like Goblins founder Lise Keeney, some of your greatest inspiration often hits while taking a shower. The marketing maven, who helped popularize dating app Hinge and is now launching her own social app for gamers, says she uses bath crayons made for kids to jot down (and remember) ideas that come to her before they swirl down the drain. "As a founder with ADHD, I need a place free from distraction to ideate. The shower is where I'm able to untangle problems and think freely," Keeney says. "Don't knock it till you've tried it—and successfully whiteboarded your entire Q1 marketing strategy in green crayon."

3 | WALK AND TALK

Long walks started as a pandemic wellness routine for the League dating app founder Amanda Bradford. Now she uses them to field casual calls with her team. Her only ask during her loop around the lake near her Austin home is to keep cameras off: "I almost feel like you can share more freely when you're not on Zoom," she says. On a video-chat, there's a formal demeanor or presentation that subconsciously gets in the way of free-flowing ideas. "On the phone, you can kind of riff and brainstorm. Sometimes the calls can be a lot more fruitful for brainstorming or if someone wants to tell you what they're feeling." —S.Sladovnik

Bring Order to Chaos



If I'm not structured, it's chaos. Writing things down helps me feel connected to what needs to be done. I have a journal for goals, which is basically my bible for work. It has everything in it, like lists, priorities, meeting notes—a leadership journal that is actually a Laurel Denise teacher planner, a Hobonichi journal for memory-keeping, and a reading journal. **A couple of years ago, I took off two weeks during Christmastime and I just watched bullet journal videos.**"

Mandy Teefey

Co-founder and CEO of mental health media company Wondermind, which she launched with her daughter, Selena Gomez, in 2022.



Inc. 5000

COMPANY SPOTLIGHT



NO. 1770
2024
Ranking

296%
3-Year
Growth

4,200+
Clients

200+
Countries and
Territories Served

Holistic Mental Health Support for Employees

CuraLinc Healthcare's seamless blend of digital and human-based mental health has led to the company's third Inc. 5000 list honor.

CURALINC.COM

Employers are investing in workforce mental health benefits more than ever before, but many programs require tough trade-offs. "Employees shouldn't have to sacrifice a personalized provider match for a shorter wait time," says clinical director Gladys Reyes, LCSW. "CuraLinc's approach eliminates those compromises."

CuraLinc differentiates itself from other workforce mental health providers through the flexibility it offers employees in how they access care, whether through the digital platform or a phone call with a licensed clinician. "We never push people to call or go online—the choice is theirs," Reyes says.

Core strengths enhance service

While offering options for connecting to care is important, CuraLinc's success is driven by three core elements that together enable the company to serve nearly nine million employees and have a measurable impact on well-being and productivity.

The first element is speed. When a CuraLinc participant calls for support, a licensed clinician answers in nine seconds, on average, clinical director Aimee Wilczynski, LCPC, LMHC, CEAP, says. Participants can begin their care journey by phone or schedule care through the digital platform, with access to ongoing care in an average of two or three days.

Wilczynski emphasizes that it's not just

about speed to the first available appointment: "It's also, 'How quickly can I actually get connected to someone who can guide me through this process?'"

Personalization is also a priority. CuraLinc's care plans are customized to each participant's unique needs and preferences—whether addressing mental health or broader life challenges. "Provider availability matters, but what's just as important is giving participants control over their care," says Wilczynski. "Our clinical team and digital platform are built to help participants find a provider they can feel connected to, in the format that suits them best."

Beyond mental health care, CuraLinc supports participants through external stressors and unmet social needs. "Our work-life team helps people find resources such as local childcare or financial assistance programs," adds work-life benefits manager Kimesha Huggins. By addressing these additional needs, CuraLinc ensures that employees receive holistic support, leading to better mental health outcomes.

While speed of access and personalized care are essential, quality of

care is equally important. CuraLinc wants to know if "the providers we are recommending are actually moving the needle on people's symptoms," Wilczynski says.

Care received has a positive impact

Although benefits utilization is one measure of success, CuraLinc is even more interested in understanding outcomes. The company has published several peer-reviewed studies showing its positive impact on depression, anxiety, alcohol use, productivity, and absenteeism—proving the effectiveness of its model in driving real results for employees and employers alike.

By taking a holistic approach to mental health care, CuraLinc provides a spectrum of mental health care for employees' diverse needs while enhancing the therapeutic relationship between participant and therapist.



→ CuraLinc clinical directors Aimee Wilczynski and Gladys Reyes, and work-life benefits manager Kimesha Huggins

Inc.5000

COMPANY SPOTLIGHT



NO **3718**
2024 Ranking

3
Locations

66
Employees

\$2.5M
2023 Revenue

A Former Journalist Helping Kids Thrive

The founder of Kidology is working with children to meet their developmental milestones and building a business, one pediatric clinic at a time.

KIDOLOGYINC.COM

A child of immigrants, Luba Patlakh Kaplun had a passion for people from a young age.

She initially wanted to be in front of an audience, going into broadcast journalism, but in her early 20s, she decided to forge a new path, one in which she could use her gift of gab while also helping people and utilizing marketing skills. She came across speech-language pathology, also known as speech therapy, and from there, her career began to blossom.

Over the next five years, she specialized in diagnosing and treating disorders related to communication and swallowing, becoming a speech-language pathologist (SLP) and a certified early intervention special instructor (SI). Both roles focused on helping children meet their developmental milestones.



→ Kidology founder Luba Patlakh Kaplun working with a child

In 2014, her Philadelphia-based company, Kidology—a mash-up of the words *kids* and *biology*—was born, growing into a thriving organization with two locations; 11 executive staff; 55 practitioners offering physical therapy (PT), speech-language therapy, occupational therapy (OT), and behavior therapy; and \$2.5 million in revenue in 2023.

"I'm about to have this business for a decade," Patlakh Kaplun says. "That's older than my kids. It's my first baby."

Truly multidisciplinary

Kidology's holistic and multidisciplinary approach to child development sets it apart from its competitors. Patlakh Kaplun explains that families have access to an entire team of providers assessing and working with their children, so they can get OT, PT, and speech therapy all from one place instead of three different locations.

The company's providers help children with cognitive or physical developmental delays, those who need rehabilitation after an injury, and those who have trouble

communicating or regulating their behavior. They also specialize in working with children and families whose second language is English to ensure the kids are hitting their developmental milestones and educational goals in both languages.

"We go above and beyond to review everything so that later, your child is doing amazing and not struggling with something else we didn't address," Patlakh Kaplun says.

A place to play—and learn

Each location has a Kidology Playspace, which is filled with all kinds of specialized play equipment designed to enrich a child's play experience. The Playspace functions as an open play area for all children, as well as a play-and-learn environment where Kidology practitioners can work with children on movement, sensory, and motor skills. It's also a birthday party space on weekends.

Patlakh Kaplun hopes to open more locations locally and in Florida, where she's also licensed. She attributes her success to her therapists, whom she'll need more of if she wants to expand. "We have wonderful people with amazing hearts and amazing abilities who make change," she says. "People know that. You hear them telling others, 'Hey, my kid went there, and they helped us so much. You should take your kids.'"

INNOVATION

BUILD A WEBSITE WITHOUT CODING CHOPS

“Can you make a website from scratch? For sure. But at the same time, you have all these tools you can use to quickly build a website, and then if you have the time or the capability, you can code,” says Jason Wingate, CEO and founder of marketing and holding firm Emerald Ocean. Wingate, who has coding experience, says he likes to use low-code platforms to build websites for his clients.

We talked to Wingate and other CEOs who built websites for their businesses to source their favorite tips, tools, processes, and lessons learned.

1 | PICK A PLATFORM

A website’s functionality and the skill level of the creator will inform which site-builder is best to use. In many cases, platforms that enable site building also offer web hosting and other services. Wingate says he typically uses Shopify for e-commerce websites, but uses WordPress when he wants to build a website that is intended to tell a story or showcase a service.

OthersideAI co-founder Jason Kuperberg turned to no-code tool Bubble to build an early version of a new AI research and writing app, HyperWrite, as well as a landing page for it. It offered a quick and easy way to test whether there was actually demand for his idea before he invested too much time and money into it. “It was really helpful, because we could build these different interfaces and change buttons and things quickly and easily,” he says.

Alec Chambers, founder and CEO of London-based artificial intelligence resource and



affiliate marketing site Tools-ForHumans.ai, chose Webflow. He says it felt like the “perfect middle ground” between a no-code platform like Squarespace and WordPress, which has no-code, low-code, and pro-code options. He also likes Webflow’s native CMS and template design options.

2 | ADD IN THE EXTRAS

Many website builders, including Shopify and WordPress, offer a market of free and paid applications—often built by third parties—that can enhance a website. Emerald Ocean’s Wingate uses Elementor to build WordPress sites, and Microsoft Clarity to see how visitors are using a given site.

Chambers also uses external tools, like Make.com, to stitch together various application programming interfaces and automate site functions.

3 | DON'T GET TIED DOWN

Sonia Urquilla built a website in 2023 that launched her small business, SEO by Sonia, using Wix. She chose the no-code and low-code platform because she had used it before. But after about 10 months with her business website, she says she’s already planning a change: “I really want to add more SEO juice into my website, and sometimes Wix is kind of limited with that. WordPress, on the other hand, is really robust when it comes to SEO.” —C.A.

Disrupt the Competition

You don’t have to be Steve Jobs to change the world. Anyone can start innovating in six simple steps. —P.C.



1 | FIND THE RIGHT PROBLEM

By observing the world, ordinary people can find unmet needs to fill.



2 | ASK WHY IT EXISTS

Think about the root cause of the problem to understand why it matters to people, why it resists solution, and the flaws in existing solutions.



3 | BRAINSTORM SOLUTIONS

Work in diverse teams to imagine a range of blue-sky solutions to the problem.



4 | BUILD PROTOTYPES

Develop quick models that communicate efficiently to potential users how your solution meets their need.



5 | ITERATE

Get feedback and try again. Use feedback from users on what works and what is missing to develop a new prototype. Rinse and repeat.



6 | IMPLEMENT AND SCALE

Finally, turn the prototype that best satisfies the initial unmet need into a product, invest in the capabilities needed to supply the product, and create and satisfy demand for the solution. Simple, right?