
A RECIPE FOR AN ALL-STAR TEAM

SPONSORED BY THE
INC. HONOREES WHOSE
BRAND PROFILES
APPEAR THROUGHOUT
THIS SPECIAL SECTION



If you own a business and have employees, you've probably come to understand that the right or wrong teammates can make or break a company. So, how to be sure that you have the right cooks in your kitchen? Find out in the following pages, where we've assembled a silver platter of insights from repeat

Inc. 5000 honorees and other successful founders. They've shared their best practices for everything from determining your organizational hierarchy to designing C-suite roles and recruiting the right people to fill them. And if your menus aren't a hit, we've included some strategies for fixing them. *Bon appétit!*

SETTING YOURSELF UP FOR GROWTH

To avoid chaos in the kitchen, everyone needs to know what they're supposed to be doing and how their work relates to everyone else's. A winning org chart prioritizes collaboration, transparency, and accountability.



1 | Fawn Weaver
Founder and CEO
UNCLE NEAREST

"We ask each person to determine the role and title they want, and then ensure they know what their goals are and how to reach them."

Weaver's Shelbyville, Tennessee-based whiskey distillery is an Inc. 5000 and Inc. Best Workplaces honoree.

2 | Eric Crews
Founder and president
CREWS & CO.

"We've developed a tool called the role map to show us what roles we have in the organization today, what each role is accountable for, what roles we will need in the future—tied to financial targets—and when we will need to fill those roles."

A serial entrepreneur, Crews has made the Inc. 5000 six times with two of his Braintree, Massachusetts-based companies.

3 | Emily Hikade
Co-founder and CEO
PETITE PLUME

"The key to building a successful org chart is flexibility, especially when you're in growth mode. Sometimes you can see only around the corner in front of you and don't know what lies beyond."

Hikade's luxury sleepwear brand is based in Chicago and reached \$10 million in revenue last year.



4 | Marc Lore

Founder, chairman, and CEO
WONDER

“The most under-appreciated, underrated, powerful thing that any entrepreneur can focus on is the org chart. Build it by ranking success metrics and by assigning owners to each metric.”

Lore has built and sold four companies, including Jet.com, which Walmart bought for \$3.3 billion in 2016.

5 | Young Chang

Founder, CEO, and president
A-SHA FOODS USA

“In our organization, reporting is simple. We all work as peers and everyone has a voice. When there is a deadlock, we defer to the CEO to make the final call—and take on the decision risk.”

Chang's Alhambra, California-based healthy ramen noodle company is a four-time Inc. 5000 honoree.

53%

**OF EXECUTIVES SAY
SHIFTING TO TEAM-
BASED WORK HAS LED
TO A SIGNIFICANT
IMPROVEMENT IN
PERFORMANCE.**

Source: Deloitte

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION

(required by Act of August 12, 1970: Section 3685, Title 39, United States Code).

1. INC.
 2. ISSN: 0162-8968
 3. Filing date: 10/1/2023.
 4. Issue frequency: 6 times per year.
 5. Number of issues published annually: 6.
 6. The annual subscription price is \$19.
 7. Complete mailing address of known office of publication: 7 WORLD TRADE CENTER, NEW YORK, NY 10007-2195. Contact person: Kolin Rankin. Telephone: 305-859-0063.
 8. Complete mailing address of headquarters or general business office of publisher: 7 WORLD TRADE CENTER, NEW YORK, NY 10007-2195.
 9. Full names and complete mailing addresses of publisher, editor, and managing editor. Publisher, JOHN DONNELLY, 7 WORLD TRADE CENTER, NEW YORK, NY 10007-2195; editor, SCOTT OMELIANUK, 7 WORLD TRADE CENTER, NEW YORK, NY 10007-2195; director of editorial operations, JANICE LOMBARDO, 7 WORLD TRADE CENTER, NEW YORK, NY 10007-2195.
 10. Owner: MANSUETO VENTURES LLC, 7 WORLD TRADE CENTER, NEW YORK, NY 10007-2195.
 11. Known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities: NONE.
 12. Tax status: Has not changed during preceding 12 months.
 13. Publisher title: INC.
 14. Issue date for circulation data below: September 2023.
 15. The extent and nature of circulation:
 - A. Total number of copies printed (net press run). Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 280,534. Actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 271,493.
 - B. Paid circulation
 1. Mailed outside-county paid subscriptions. Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 257,994. Actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 249,137.
 2. Mailed in-county paid subscriptions. Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 0. Actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 0.
 3. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors, and counter sales. Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 1,589. Actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 1,200.
 4. Paid distribution through other classes mailed through the USPS. Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 0. Actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 0.
 - C. Total paid distribution. Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 259,583. Actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 250,337.
 - D. Free or nominal rate distribution (by mail and outside the mail)
 1. Free or nominal rate outside-county copies. Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 4,409. Actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 4,257.
 2. Free or nominal rate in-county copies. Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 0. Actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 0.
 3. Free or nominal rate copies mailed at other classes through the USPS. Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 0. Actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 0.
 4. Free or nominal rate distribution outside the mail. Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 8,202. Actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 8,139.
 - E. Total free or nominal rate distribution. Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 12,611. Actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 12,396.
 - F. Total distribution (sum of 15c and 15e). Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 272,194. Actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 262,733.
 - G. Copies not distributed. Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 8,340. Actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 8,760.
 - H. Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 280,534. Actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 271,493.
 - I. Percent paid. Average percentage of copies paid for each issue during preceding 12 months: 95.4%. Actual percentage of copies paid for of single issue published nearest to filing date: 95.3%.
 16. Electronic Copy Circulation
 - A. Paid Electronic Copies. Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 36,189. Actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 38,000.
 - B. Total Paid Print Copies (Line 15c) + Paid Electronic Copies (Line 16a). Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 295,772. Actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 288,337.
 - C. Total Print Distribution (Line 15f) + Paid Electronic Copies (Line 16a). Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 308,383. Actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 300,733.
 - D. Percent Paid (Both Print & Electronic Copies) (16b divided by 16c x 100). Average percentage of copies paid for each issue during preceding 12 months: 95.9%. Actual percentage of copies paid for of single issue published nearest to filing date: 95.9%.
- I certify that 50% of all distributed copies (electronic and print) are paid above nominal price: YES. Report circulation on PS Form 3526-X worksheet.
17. Publication of statement of ownership will be printed in the Winter 2023 issue of the publication.
18. Signature and title of editor, publisher, business manager, or owner: Mark Rosenberg.
- I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanction and civil actions.

Inc. 5000
COMPANY
SPOTLIGHT**Nº1365**
2023 Ranking**428%**
3-Year Growth**\$143M**
2022 Revenue**250**
Employees**Access**

How One Company Became a Destination Management Powerhouse

After a 16-month pandemic shutdown, Access is the industry's comeback story, providing high-touch corporate outings, conferences, and meetings.

By the middle of March, Covid had shut down all the events Access had planned for its clients for 2020. State and federal regulations prohibited large gatherings, and since Access specializes in events for large groups, the company was effectively out of business.

That month, there was "a complete halt," says Danielle Phippen, chief creative officer at Access. "Everything was canceled—hundreds of millions of dollars canceled—gone," she recalls.

There was no work in sight for months and no reliable forecasts for when business might resume. But Phippen and a small team of investors were confident the company could eventually rebuild, so they gambled, bought the company from private equity, and crafted a strategy for future success. Then they waited.

By early 2021, to the investors' great relief, clients began requesting proposals for upcoming events.

AN AWARD-WINNING TEAM

As clients committed to upcoming trips, Access began rehiring employees who had been laid off. Many were excited about the chance to rejoin the company.

That fact speaks to the camaraderie and culture Access had developed, says Phippen. Except for a brief break in service during the pandemic, many employees have been with the company for as many as 25 years, she says.

The employee count grew from near zero in 2020 to around 70 in 2021, to more than four times that in 2023. Revenue also rebounded, from next to nothing to a projected \$140 million in 2023.

A NATIONAL FOOTPRINT

Part of the reason for the quickly rising head count was the pace at which Access opened and reopened 40+ "destinations"—a.k.a. local offices—nationwide. Team members in each location are local experts who know the ins and outs of each city. That is true whether the potential event site is Atlanta or Miami, Chicago or San Francisco. "There aren't places in the U.S. that we don't operate events in," Phippen says. "We're everywhere."

Many other event planning companies specialize in a region of the country, but what Access clients wanted was a single contact, a single contract, and endless possibilities for creative solutions. Branching out to nearly all major U.S. cities and building a national staff to support local teams made that possible.

Perhaps even more important than the broad geographic service area is Access's commitment to inspiring people through shared experiences. That applies to clients and their guests as well as to Access team members. One sign that the company is succeeding on that front is its recent certification as a Great Place to Work.

While the accolade is welcome, even more valuable is the data that the Great Places to Work program provides as part of the selection process. Access prides itself on seeking feedback. It achieves a 95 percent response rate from clients, with a near 90 percent satisfaction rating.

"We say our culture is important; we say our people are important; and the data is supporting that we're doing the right things," Phippen says.

ACCESSDMC.COM



→ The Access team specializes in producing fun, engaging events.



One ingredient can make or break a meal—or a team. When selecting people to join the C-suite, take time to ensure each new addition shares your vision, and balance leadership potential with industry experience.

1 | Esther Poulsen
Founder and CEO
RAARE SOLUTIONS

“It is hardest to hire for a second-in-command, like a VP or COO. Laying out expectations and compensation for these positions can be challenging when you are used to running the show yourself. Build a trusting and open dialogue throughout the process, and be frank that you are learning how to create a hierarchy.”

Poulsen’s Paramus, New Jersey-based customer management company has appeared on the Inc. 5000 four times.

42%

OF COMPANIES CITE THE INABILITY TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN KEY TALENT AS A MAJOR BARRIER TO THEIR SUCCESS.

Source: Deloitte

2 | Ali Ghodsi
Co-founder and CEO
DATABRICKS

“Start to search before you need the person. Because if you’re doing this for the first time, it’s going to take you so long just to figure out who you need, let alone find the right person.”

Ghodsi’s enterprise software company, based in San Francisco, is a two-time Inc. Best Workplaces honoree.



3 | Phyllis Newhouse
Founder and CEO
XTREME SOLUTIONS

“Don’t always look for the best résumé. Don’t always check the boxes. Look for the person who has the greatest leadership potential.”

Newhouse’s Atlanta-based information technology company is a three-time Inc. 5000 honoree.



HOW TO FILL THE C-SUITE

1 | **Fadi Agour** Founder and CEO **BEST CASE LEADS**

“Use LinkedIn to identify and connect with potential C-suite candidates. Many executives maintain an active presence on these platforms.”

Agour's Houston-based legal services provider is a three-time Inc. 5000 honoree.

2 | **Barbara Corcoran** Founder **THE CORCORAN GROUP**

“When you're selecting team members to join your startup or small business, make sure you pick someone who shares your vision and is just as enthusiastic as you. That sounds like a no-brainer on paper, but watch out, because in real life the search can be difficult.”

Corcoran is a prolific investor and a co-star of ABC's Shark Tank. Her first company, a New York City-based real estate business, is now worth \$5 billion.

3 | **Chris Ploessel** Founder and president **REDNIGHT CONSULTING**

“To hire for the C-suite, we rely heavily on our industry trade associations and peer groups to help us qualify candidates. If someone has experience in our field, they will have run in these circles and will have left a wake.”

Ploessel's computer support service is a four-time Inc. 5000 honoree based in Aliso Viejo, California.

67%

OF C-SUITE JOB SEEKERS SAY THEY WANT IMMEDIATE FEEDBACK AFTER AN INTERVIEW.

Source: McKinsey



Inc. 5000
COMPANY
SPOTLIGHT**N°192**
2023 Ranking**2819%**
3-Year Growth**\$20M**
2022 Revenue**50**
Employees**Backd**
BUSINESS FUNDING

Becoming a Business Lending Trailblazer

Backd helps small businesses grow and scale through short-term capital injections—a feat nearly impossible with traditional lending sources.

Small business's access to capital remains a huge barrier to growth. Banks are tightening credit availability under regulatory pressure at the same time as small and midsize ventures are seeking to scale their operations. Backd has stepped into that void to help growing companies obtain the capital they need to expand, says CEO Xan Myburgh, landing itself near the top of the 2023 Inc. 5000 list.

Given that 99.9 percent of U.S. businesses are categorized as small—meaning having fewer than 500 employees—and were more than 33 million strong as of 2023, per the U.S. Small Business Administration, the market for small business lending is massive. At the same time, “banks don’t really play in this space,” Myburgh says.

Myburgh tested the concept for his company in his native South Africa in 2014, where small business funding opportunities are scarce. Backd’s launch in the U.S. in 2018 uncovered similar market dynamics.

“Our average client has \$5 million in annual revenue, our average deal size is about \$250,000,” says Myburgh, “and we’ll go up to \$3 million.” However, the range of business sizes the company serves is wide—up to as much as \$300 million in revenue.

OPPORTUNISTIC CAPITAL

“We’re not permanent capital,” explains Myburgh. “We’re opportunistic capital, from the entrepreneur’s perspective, meaning that they have some opportunity they can undertake” with sufficient funding. Those opportunities could include buying out their business partner, expanding their company through an acquisition, ramping up inventory levels before a busy period, buying equipment, or renovating a workspace, among other uses, Myburgh says.

Backd is for a short-term opportunity, says Myburgh, “where [the business] needs to move pretty quickly, and they need a capital injection. The benefit is that it’s not dilutive.” The payback period averages 12 months but can be as long as 18 months.

And business is booming at this tech-enabled venture. In 2022, Backd was underwriting an average of 200 applications a day. Today, “we’re doing about 450 a day,” Myburgh says.



→ Backd team members meeting to solve small business owner pain points.

PARTNERING FOR PROFIT

To connect with potential small businesses in need of funding, Backd has established new divisions within the company to generate deal flow. A relatively new division is its direct sales channel, which focuses on talking to entrepreneurs directly rather than through brokers and independent sales organizations.

This new direct division is in addition to the company’s “focus on banking partnerships, partnerships with mergers and acquisitions (M&A) groups, private equity firms, and later-stage venture capital,” Myburgh says.

Backd biggest challenge is market awareness, Myburgh says. “The problem with alternative lending is it’s a relatively new industry, and there’s not a lot of knowledge around which companies do what,” he explains. “A little bit of brand awareness could go a long way.”

“Alternative lending is very much a big and growing industry,” Myburgh says. “Banks are turning into utilities; they’re not in the business of servicing or capitalizing small to midsize businesses, and we’re happy to fill that gap.”

BACKD.COM

Inc. 5000
COMPANY
SPOTLIGHT**Nº720**
2023 Ranking**9**
Full-Time
Employees**815%**
3-Year Growth**\$5M**
Top Member's
Sales

This Online Book-Selling Business is on a Mission to Create Millionaires

By putting customer success first, BookProfits created a community of brand advocates and achieved massive growth.

There is a reason why Amazon started as an online marketplace for books, notes Luke Sample, co-founder of BookProfits, a technology and training company that helps existing and aspiring entrepreneurs build online businesses selling used books. Demand for books—particularly textbooks—is large and often predictable. And selling used books can generate a sizeable profit, as Sample first experienced by helping his wife, a college instructor, sell textbooks at the end of her semester.

The experience inspired Sample, a serial entrepreneur, to launch an online book-selling business with co-founder and fellow serial entrepreneur Jon Shugart. The two used their backgrounds in software development and online marketing to create several innovative technologies for the used books industry. Their decision to offer these proprietary software tools and training to other booksellers and online entrepreneurs led to massive growth for BookProfits and an impressive Inc. 5000 ranking: No. 720.

THE BOTTOM LINE'S THE BOTTOM LINE

BookProfits has grown so fast because it focuses on the success of customers (called members) who opt to pay for training, technology, or both. Its proprietary technology monitors book-selling websites for inventory and pricing, alerting members about underpriced books.

"The big difference between other businesses we have run and this one is ease and consistency in terms of getting great results for customers," Sample says. "Really anyone can come into our system and create an income stream by flipping books. We've had a 10-year-old little girl do it successfully, a 90-year-old, and everyone in between."

BookProfits's top-selling member has made more than \$5 million in sales, Sample says. Several have done more than \$1 million. In the next two to five years, the company's goal is to help 1,000 members do \$1 million in business and 5,000 enter six-figure territory.

"The bottom line is that we focus on the bottom line of our members, and that in turn takes care of our bottom line," Sample explains.



→ Co-founders Jon Shugart (left) and Luke Sample at a BookProfits seminar.

THE POWER OF COMMUNITY

Another important contributor to growth is the company's Facebook community. Sample and Shugart set it up about six months after launching the company as another support channel for customers. They hadn't predicted that members would be so eager to help one another, offering advice, encouragement, and success stories. The support of the community helps new members make money quickly, which is important to keeping people engaged. Satisfied members often recommend BookProfits to others, driving organic growth. As the customer base grows, the founders invest in more technology and training resources. These new innovations both increase the success of their customers and fuel the company's fast growth.

"The overall culture of our company and community is one of giving back," Sample explains. "Just this morning one of our members that has made over \$5 million was spending time answering questions from a new member that was just getting started. We have been so lucky—it has been amazing."

BOOKPROFITS.COM

Bad hires happen; roles often need to be adjusted and employees reskilled or reshuffled. Your job is to change direction as needed so your company can keep serving up excellence.



1 | Jen Rubio
Co-founder and CEO
AWAY

“Don’t sweep things under the rug. Even when you don’t know all the answers, share your train of thought and the direction that you’re heading in. Taking my team on the journey with me has really opened up new lines of trust and communication.”

Rubio co-founded her NYC-based luggage and lifestyle brand in 2015. By 2019, it was valued at \$1.4 billion.

2 | Heidi Zak
Co-founder and CEO
THIRDLOVE

“All leaders have strengths and weaknesses, and building a great team means balancing complementary traits. If your team is growing too analytical, pursue leaders more focused on creativity and strategy.”

Zak’s San Francisco-based women’s loungewear brand is a two-time Inc. Best Workplaces honoree.

3 | David Bezar
Co-founder and senior managing partner
THRIVE FINANCIAL SERVICES

“Neglecting to inform employees about the org chart’s existence and their roles within it can lead to confusion. To fix this mistake, we implemented communication plans and ensured that employees had the opportunity to understand their positions and relationships within the organization.”

Bezar’s insurance brokerage firm is a three-time Inc. 5000 honoree.

93%

OF CEOs WHO INTRODUCE UPSKILLING PROGRAMS SEE INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY, IMPROVED TALENT ACQUISITION AND RETENTION, AND A MORE RESILIENT WORKFORCE.

Source: PwC

