

Instead, we need to reshape current ecosystems and support a new way of doing business with more female influence and perspective. I launched the event series Girls Raising to begin doing this. What started as a simple event has now turned into a global ecosystem called "The Vinetta Project" that will create and support the next generation of powerhouse female founders.

This isn't a social injustice play, it is about capitalizing on female founders, the female perspective and female influence. The result of which will be high social and economic returns.

## Why did you decide to change the name?

GirlsRaising was a name that cut straight to the chase in identifying our objectives. What we are finding though, is that this name is limiting our scope and target market. The word Vinetta means: influential and prevailing. We want to build the most influential ecosystem that leverages the female perspective for higher success metrics and we want this ecosystem to be gender balanced.

What is it you want women to gain from this community, aside from the fact that women can be successfully despite skewed gender ratios?

What started as a simple event series is now evolving into a full-blown ecosystem to support top tier female founders and their startups. This is no small task. We have workshops, mentors, advisors, pitch events, and a venture fund. It's much more than just an advocacy platform. Our organization is about bringing together an influential community of men and women that understands, encourages and leverages the unique value proposition that women provide. We are looking to take action and see results.

Sifting through applications to choose five startups must be a difficult task. How do you

## choose just five? Aside from the requirements, what else do you look for in a promising startup?

We ask ourselves a number of questions each time we review a pitch and they generally fall under the following three categories:

- 1. Team: Is the team positioned to better execute on this particular idea, at this particular time is this particular sector? Are skillsets of the founding team complimentary, who have they attracted to the project? Do they outsource their development?
- 1. Traction: Do they have money coming in or users? If not, is there a clear path to revenue generation and customer acquisition?
- Addressable Market: Are they solving a big picture problem? Is their idea unique and urgent? Is it scalable? Who is competing in this space or has a corner on this market currently?

How long did it take for Girls
Raising to get to the level of
success it is at now? What kinds
of challenges did the community face?

Everyone measures success differently; it's a moving target. We expanded the Girls Raising community very quickly because there was demand for this type of group and actionable environment across North America. Our success will increase as we continue to effect and measure the number of female founders we cultivate and the amount of capital we inject and help raise.

It's a struggle to build a startup that helps startups. You are running through the same issues you are trying to help your community with so it's a very unique situation.

What is the goal of the Showcase series and how exactly does it work?

The signature event in our community is the SHOWCASE event. This event runs quarterly in all of our chapter cities. At each event we bring



together an esteemed panel that consists of two investors and two successful startup founders along with five women founded startups who pitch their ideas. We invite a curated audience of investors, founders, entrepreneurs and service providers who can add value to the room.

The evening is an opportunity for top tier female founders to get exposure, build confidence, network with investors, entrepreneurs, and influential people who can move their businesses forward.

It also serves as an inspiration platform to educate and encourage future female founders.

Why is it so important for female founders to have a female ■ support system, such as Girls Raising?

This is specifically not an all-female support system; Vinetta is a gender-neutral ecosystem that supports the female perspective. It's important to have this type of community for two reasons:

1. There are a ton of advocacy groups for women. They are important and serve a purpose. However, Vinetta's ecosystem is about deliverable results and action. It's about proving that startup investments will consistently provide higher returns when we increase gender diversity at the founder level, and give more women access to venture capital.

1. We will get nowhere if we don't include men in the conversation, and would be hypocrites to do so. We want to invite in men that value this female perspective, as their voice and influence will contribute to changing the broken system. We are working on creating an innovation and investment ecosystems with a perfect balance, not one with reverse discrimination

## **About Vanessa Dawson**

Vanessa Dawson is the CEO and Founder of The Vinetta Project, a high impact ecosystem that accelerates founder's growth and facilitates access to capital. Vanessa began her career in retail finance and private equity in Vancouver and New York. Following that she worked at a top digital development agency consulting with fortune 500 companies and leading startups. She is also a serial entrepreneur having launched two of her own ventures the latest, Evry, a Crowd-funding platform for group activities.

## **About the Vinetta Project**

The Vinetta Project is a robust ecosystem established to supercharge a startups growth. We source high potential female founders, with proven business models and offer them unprecedented access to proprietary resources, exclusive networks and capital from vetted investors.