



Ari Horie

CEO of Women's Startup Lab. Graduated from California State University in 1997. Founded Women's Startup Lab in Silicon Valley in 2013 to conduct intensive live-in training programs for female entrepreneurs. Selected as one of CNN's "10 Visionary Women" and *Marie Claire's* "20 Women Who Are Changing the Ratio."

Series: Japanese Individuals Contributing Worldwide

Helping Women Entrepreneurs Thrive, from Silicon Valley to Beyond

Selected as one of CNN's "10 Visionary Women"

There are many "accelerators" that support entrepreneurs, but the one called "Women's Startup Lab," managed by Ari Horie in Silicon Valley, is a bit different. As the name suggests, Horie's company offers live-in immersive training and support programs focused on helping female entrepreneurs flourish. But where did she get the idea to focus on women?

According to Horie, the impetus can be traced back to the momentous occasion of becoming a mother. Horie came to the U.S. when she was 18, and after graduating from university, she was hired by IBM U.S.A. where she worked for the global marketing team in Silicon Valley. Next, she worked her way

through several Silicon Valley startups, and then in 2003, she went through the experience of giving birth and starting to raise a child. That's when she learned a startling truth: "Even though I was living in Silicon Valley, the moment I began raising my child, everything became low-tech, from changing diapers to communicating with the school." Horie says, "I was in a world disconnected from IT. The whole day I was running around with pen, paper, and phone in hand." It was then that she realized for the first time that in fields like education and caregiving, in which men participate comparatively little, technology is not yet utilized very much.

Then in 2011, when Horie had founded an

education-related startup of her own, she ran into three obstacles faced by female entrepreneurs: “The first problem was that investors were mostly men whose experiences didn’t resonate with business models dealing with childrearing, caregiving, and the like from a woman’s perspective. The second problem was that the overwhelming majority of entrepreneurs and engineers in Silicon Valley being young men made it rather difficult for the few women among them to gain acceptance within those networks. Finally, the third issue was that women in this industry had competing priorities in their lives related to family, making it more challenging to focus on their startups.”

It was then that Horie decided to found Women’s Startup Lab in 2013, with the belief that society needs more women business leaders in order to bring new and positive change to the world. Remembering the problems she herself had faced as an entrepreneur, she began to devise innovative approaches that utilize the support of industry experts and influencers to help female entrepreneurs succeed. At Women’s Startup Lab, Horie and her team are joined by entrepreneurs from the U.S., Japan, China, and many other countries, where they eat and sleep together for two weeks while attending workshops and discussions. According to Horie, what markedly distinguishes her accelerator from others is that it “nurtures” the entrepreneurs as people, rather than focusing just on their startup companies. The training consists of units in which the entrepreneurs re-examine their goals and learn

the entrepreneurial mindset to help conquer fear and uncertainty. For the curriculum, Women’s Startup Lab brings in well-known entrepreneurs and investors like Phil Libin, the founder of Evernote, and the content includes interactive advising sessions on managing a startup, improving one’s leadership skills, and training of “mind, action, body” especially tuned for women.

“The Japanese kanji symbol meaning ‘person,’ pronounced ‘Hito,’ consists of two humans supporting each other [人]” explains Horie. “At Women’s Startup Lab, the synergy of people gathering and ‘1+1 becoming 5’ is referred to as ‘Hitology.’ It is one of our goals to raise leaders, match participants with the right advisers, introduce them to the right key people that can offer further expertise, and to create meaningful life-long connections between people that will continue to support their endeavors, even long after the two-week residential program is over.”

Horie advises female entrepreneurs that “when starting a business, what’s most important is that you don’t fall in love with your idea, but fall in love with solving the customer’s problem and make a product that they love. Once in a while, you even have to throw away all the ideas you hold precious. If you keep yourself ready to do that as you take on your challenges, it’ll definitely lead to good business in the long run.” Women’s Startup Lab will continue to shape the future through its training of female entrepreneurs and using its “Hitology” to help them thrive.



Women from the United States, Japan, China, Indonesia, Canada, and other countries who aspire to take their startup businesses to a new level come to Women’s Startup Lab. As of April 2017, 90 entrepreneurs have completed the training out of which three companies have had successful exits.



Horie with entrepreneurs who are taking part in Women’s Startup Lab.



The residential facility of Women’s Startup Lab in Silicon Valley. Between five and fifteen women participate in each program and live here together for two weeks.