

# BUSINESS NEWS AUSTRALIA

## KOPLOVITZ GIVES SPRINGBOARD TO AGILE ENTREPRENEURS

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FOR Kay Koplovitz, the key to being a successful entrepreneur is an agile mind - one that is always learning and quick to take on board new insights.

It's what Koplovitz looks for in candidates for the female focused scale-up incubator she founded, Springboard Enterprises, which has mentored 642 entrepreneurs since the year 2000.

The American, who founded the USA Networks cable company in 1977 and grew it to become a \$4.5 billion company, is in Australia to mentor the [2017 Springboard cohort](#), and recently spoke at the Women in VC forum.

"I am really excited about the quality of entrepreneurs they are not only entrepreneurs of vision; they can execute, and they can attract top talent," says Koplovitz of this year's group.

"Importantly, they are agile thinkers and they learn and adapt quickly, they know what to do with the advice they get, and they move quickly in the marketplace to be competitive."

Koplovitz founded Springboard in Silicon Valley after being appointed by then President Bill Clinton to chair the bipartisan National Women's Business Council in 1998.

"I wanted to do something that made a difference," she tells Business News Australia.

"I didn't want to just report the advances of women-led businesses around the country to Congress, I wanted to create something with real results."

Springboard has certainly had results. Among its 642 alumni, including 36 from Australia (plus 10 entering the program this year), a total of US\$7.4 billion capital has been raised, including 14 IPOs.

In just three years, the Australian alumni have been responsible for two IPOs ([Flamingo](#) and Adalta), and have secured \$120 million in capital with 80 per cent of alumni ([such as Mentorloop](#)) securing funding post the program.

"They are not start-ups," says Koplovitz. "We are working with them to help them be scalable and get to the size where they are sustainable."

Looking back, Koplovitz says venture capital was "coming through a fire hose" in Silicon Valley in the 1990s, but the money was not going to women.

[In fact, women are still vastly underrepresented as startup founders. The Harvard Business Review reported last year that just 9 per cent of venture capital-financed, high-growth technology startups are run by women in the United States.](#)

Springboard is helping to change this, while also addressing another issue with the industry - the fact that most venture capitalists are male and the effect this has on female founders. In a study from July last year, Sahil Raina, from the University of Alberta, found that startups with female founders performed far better when funded by female VCs.

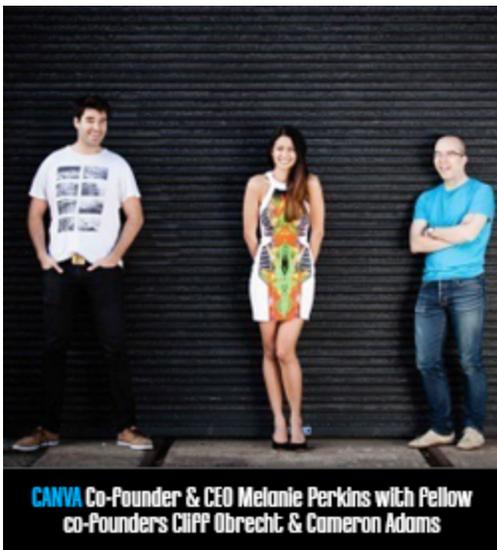
Koplovitz explains there is still a prevalent view in Silicon Valley that women don't build aggressive, scalable companies.

"But this is not proving to be true when you look at the success ratio of women led businesses," she says. "People are always expecting the next Facebook, but there is only one Mark Zuckerberg."

Management consultancy Korn Ferry worked with Springboard recently to assess the leadership profiles of 183 women entrepreneurs on three personal attributes known to foster leadership success: tolerance of ambiguity, intellectual curiosity, and emotional intelligence, and compared their scores to those of male and female 306 C-level executives.

The female entrepreneurs significantly outscored the executives on tolerance for ambiguity and intellectual curiosity.





"That is the high-water mark for those who have success - learn quickly, adapt, comprehend what you learn; it is constant learning and adapting the process of success," says Koplovitz.

Koplovitz uses the success of Sydney-based Springboard alumna [Canva](#), which has raised \$57 million and is valued at \$456 million, as an example of the growing number of female-led tech success stories.

"There are hundreds of successful stories behind these entrepreneurs. The more women and men share success of their companies the more people want to be investing in them and want to be a part of them. It is all a matter of

building the success."

"The more success we see the more people will gravitate towards investing in those types of companies."

Koplovitz points to the rising number of female angel investors in the United States, reportedly now at 30 per cent, and the existence of groups such as Scale, which supplies early stage venture capital for female founders.

"It is also about building the network ecosystem around companies. Entrepreneurs, investors, lawyers, accountants, partners it is an entire ecosystem of companies that need to be available to be able to compete today."

Since launching Springboard in Australia, Koplovitz has seen the marketplace for startup capital grow to be worth billions.

Australian Private Equity and Venture Capital funds raised \$2.74 billion in FY16 with VC fundraising at \$568 million a record level. PE and VC investment increased in dollar terms by 5 per cent to \$3.68 billion between FY15 and FY16.

Koplovitz says Australia now understands the risk and reward of investing in tech startups and that the innovation economy has arrived at an awareness that could unlock significant funds for innovation.

"There are huge assets under management here in Australia it is the fifth largest in the world for industrials and public stocks and bonds," says Koplovitz. "This is a country in tune with the industrial world, and that needs to happen with the innovative economy. That is what is happening globally and Australia needs to recognise the importance of that."

