



Can Beer Save the World? Entrepreneurship drives growth and good

June 19, 2018
Global Urban Village

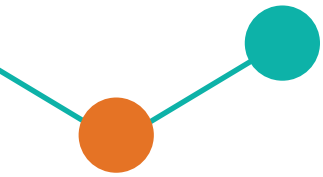
“[Through entrepreneurship] business is becoming more responsible, more transparent, more rewarding, more interesting and ultimately more fun.” Adam Levene in WIRED, Beyond Disruption: The Age of the Impact Entrepreneur.

“[At Global Entrepreneurship Network] we are focused on what is common among the actors within the global entrepreneurial ecosystem and we believe entrepreneurs across the world are poised for a new renaissance.” Jonathan Ortman, GEN, Impact Report 2017.

As I set out to New Orleans for Digital Nomad Test #1, entrepreneurship was on my mind. As a new entrepreneur I'd been exploring support systems and communities, observing the trend of impact entrepreneurship taking shape, and considering the role of entrepreneurship in broader economic growth and innovation. I knew that post-Katrina New Orleans had developed a reputation for being an entrepreneur friendly city (25 reasons why) including tax incentives, an ecosystem of support organizations, and that special New Orleans vibe.

Researching the movers and shakers involved, Idea Village showed up as a clear leader in the entrepreneurship ecosystem, so I reached out to talk with them. I arrived at Pulp & Grind a





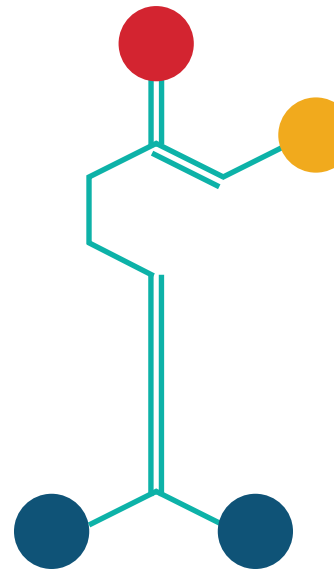
modern coffee shop on Magazine Street downtown New Orleans, think kombucha on tap served by creatively tattooed baristas with southern charm. I ordered a coffee and sat down to chat with Ali Carlisle and Molly Horton, who lead marketing for Idea Village. These passionate professionals had a contagious effect describing their work in the city and before I knew it the thought of a move to New Orleans was crossing my mind.

Idea Village is an Entrepreneurial Support Organization (ESO) that has been operating as a non-profit for almost 20 years. They began with a business plan pitch competition in 2000 and have become a national leader in promoting place-based entrepreneurship, providing support to over 8k entrepreneurs so far. Today they have spun off their business plan competition as well as other successful ESOs, contributing to the growth of a support ecosystem. This community adds resources to other key support factors: the lower cost of living compared with other entrepreneurial centers, the lower barrier to entry due to smaller population than the big three startup cities (SF, Boston, and NY), and the incredible culture and energy of N’awlins.

The Idea Village is not industry specific and doesn’t have an impact mission, but they have run many programs in support of impact entrepreneurship. They have a partnership with Propeller for social impact as well as environmentally focused partners. Their objective is to promote the wonderful city of New Orleans as an entrepreneurship center to improve the economic health and vibrance of the city, and they have made a difference with an economic impact of nearly \$200m for the region.

What does this have to do with beer you ask?

Following my curiosity about the entrepreneurship ecosystem, one of the best articles I’ve read is a piece in The Atlantic using craft breweries as a leading examples of entrepreneurship thriving in the U.S. The article cites that between 2008 and 2016 craft brewing businesses multiplied by 6x and brewery employees grew 120%. This growth occurred at the same time as major consolidation in nearly every sector. The momentum is supported by anti-trust regulation and changing brewing rules, but ultimately it’s driven by the people willing to go out on their own and try something different, stepping into the 30% of Americans that are self-employed or employees of small business. “The craft-beer boom shows that the burgeoning of small firms stimulates both product variety and employment,” according to @DerekThompson (author of the Atlantic article and exciting new book Hit Makers:



the science of popularity in an age of distraction).

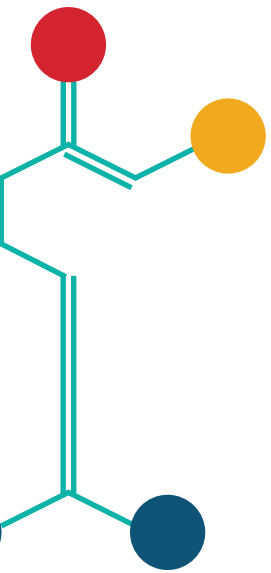
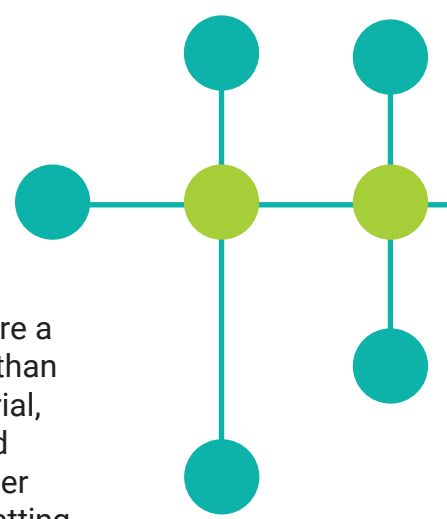
I've participated in this boom in my own neighborhood, where a hub of craft breweries has sprouted up to the tune of more than a dozen new businesses in a square mile in the light industrial, mixed-use zone at the edge of Ballard in Seattle. I've passed some great afternoons walking from one brewery to the other with my dog in tow, meeting friends for a beer at this one, chatting with other dog lovers at the next, laughing at a toddler trying to join in a parking lot game of corn hole. This is the stuff that builds community and makes the neighborhood. I see a clear contribution on the social side of impact in the way these spaces add to the fabric of community by providing a low cost, casual opportunity for people to gather and enjoy; equally open to neighbors who live nearby or visitors, to college kids and families at all ages, to a solo wanderer or a large group.

So, breweries are a positive example of entrepreneurship at work. They contribute to the economy and employment, and help build community as friendly, casual gathering places that are low cost and allow all ages (plus dogs!). But do they contribute in any other way to impact?

Stoup Co-founders

To find out I went to visit Lara Zahaba, co-founder of Stoup Brewing, one of my very favorite spots. The brewery was bustling with action at midday with everything from fork lifts to team members on laptops. Lara was sporting a Stoup hat with the Ballard bridge logo that I have encountered frequently in Seattle and even in Brooklyn. We made our way to a conference room where I learned that Lara started the brewery 5 years ago together with science-based brewers, her husband Brad Benson and a third co-founder and friend, Robyn Schumacher. Informing their tag line: the art and science of beer. I was so inspired to hear a great success story of another adventurous married couple.

Lara shared that from the time they lived in New York to moving back to Seattle, they dreamed of starting something that would make a contribution to their community. When Stoup arrived early in the Ballard brewery scene, it was a comfortable and charming oasis among the bare bones, concrete warehouse tasting rooms. With a garden like setting you always want to go back to, their attention to quality beer and a great experience set them apart. And it shows with multiple spaces packed with neighbors and visitors enjoying on any given day.



In addition to care for the customer and product, Stoup also partners with a non-profit organization every month to provide space for events to raise awareness, donate proceeds, and provide in-kind donation for offsite events. This year in partnership with Pink Boots Society, Robyn and Lara hosted a Pink Boots Collaboration Brew Day to create a special beer with several local brewers, championing women in the brewing industry. She also uses her voice as an entrepreneur to advocate for policy and process improvements as a part of Seattle Mayor, Jenny Durkan's, Small Business Council.

In terms of environmental impact, Stoup's brewers get creative with ideas for how they can reduce the carbon footprint and environmental effects of brewing at multiple stages in the brewing process. Including storing grain in a silo to require less frequent deliveries, donating spent grain to a local farmer for feeding livestock, and encouraging brewery visitors to compost. The bottom line, Lara and the Stoup team are conscientious, community minded, and doing their best to do good. And don't even get me started on how excellent their beer is... Stoup Citra is one of Ian's all-time favorites!

Idea Village and Stoup Brewing both demonstrate entrepreneurship in action, building community and contributing to economic growth. Clearly the Idea Village has been a driver of positive social and environmental impact by supporting many organizations that have an impact mission. And beer, well, in addition to being the "Happiest Economic Story in America" according to The Atlantic, it is evident that craft breweries in comparison to corporate conglomerates contribute to improved environmental impact and add value to the social fabric of the communities where they exist. Not to mention offering a delicious way to enjoy the moment where you live or where you visit. So yes, craft beer and the entrepreneurs that make it, along with the entrepreneurs putting themselves out on a limb whatever their endeavor, are making a positive contribution and every bit helps.

