

BUSINESS

Torontonians who are shaking up the tech sector

Daniela Kelloway co-founded of BooknBrunch, a web-based book club for foodies

BY TORONTO LIFE | PHOTOGRAPHY BY ERIN LEYDON | JULY 16, 2019



Company HQ: Dundas and Keele

Founded: 2018

Employees: 3

How it works: “BooknBrunch is an online marketplace for bookworms. People can attend or host events at nearby restaurants based on what they’re reading. Each event has a set menu and the food is covered up front, so you can show up, discuss and not fuss over the bill at the end.”

Eureka moment: “A few years ago, my sister ended a horrible relationship and fell into depression. She was living in my basement and rarely left the house, so she organized a monthly brunch book club. It started with five members and within a year, there were more than 1,000. That simple ritual of reading, eating and meeting turned her life around.”

How much you spent initially: “We bootstrapped the entire project ourselves for \$40,000. That got us all our design, branding, trademarks and a functioning platform.”

Your turning point: “My sister started using Eventbrite to organize the meet-ups, and at one point, there were more than 400 people on a waiting list. That’s when we realized we could blow it

up. Now we have members in 35 cities across North America and Europe.”

Tech Jargon you use too much: “Acronyms. Business is a world where speed is prioritized. I use terms like ROI and CPA a lot, but I still think they’re annoying.”

Tech jargon you hate: “‘User’ has always been my pet peeve. It feels too dehumanizing.”

The best advice you’ve received: “Don’t take advice from someone who’s never built anything themselves.”

The worst advice you’ve received: “A family member told me, ‘Don’t be an entrepreneur—it’s too hard.’ I thought that was funny, since I’m already an entrepreneur.”

Your tech role model: “Michele Romanow. She does a lot to support other women. I met her at an event and she invited me to spend a day on the set of *Dragon’s Den*.”

Your go-to office attire: “I wear whatever I want. I once showed up to the office in a onesie.”

Coollest thing in your office: “We have a massive gong and every time there’s good news, we hit it with a mallet.”

App you can’t live without: “Slack. I’m on it all the time.”

Past life: “I also own and run a PR agency.”

If you weren’t running a start-up: “I’d be a movie star.”