



Startup sister

By **Ann Hoevel**, CNN

Amid a sea of young students sporting identical uniforms and red leather backpacks, there was Ari Horie. She had a pink backpack, and it sparked a realization: Being different didn't have to be a bad thing.

"At that point I was just 7 years old, so I felt very isolated. ... I wanted to belong," Horie said.

She built up resilience during those years of standing out in her native Japan and experienced a new sense of belonging years later as an exchange student in the United States.

She thinks of those experiences now, after founding Women's Startup Lab in 2013. It's a technology industry accelerator designed to help female startup founders flourish in a field dominated by men.

At Women's Startup Lab, they're considering how women work differently, Horie says. "Having more diversity and having a woman be part of it in a unique way actually creates an opportunity," Horie said.

ROLE:

Founder and CEO,
Women's Startup Lab

AGE:

41

LOCATION:

Menlo Park, California

IDEA:

Explore and capitalize on what makes female tech company founders unique and successful

QUOTE:

"We can find another option for success instead of ... being a slave of the startup world. You can still be driven and successful while being collaborative and successful."

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VISIONARY WOMEN

The magic ingredient is a collaborative process based on hito, the Japanese pictograph letter that means “human.” She says the character looks like a man and a woman, leaning on each other; If one falls, they both fall.

With more questions asked and more opinions offered, female entrepreneurs find more success, she says. The “hito rule” that Women’s Startup Lab swears by is based on collaboration: “Women tend to do really well in that environment,” Horie said. “Instead of saying ‘I know the answer,’ they say, ‘What do you think?’ ”

Women’s Startup Lab helps female tech company founders grow their companies, expand their technological goals and focus on the traits that will best serve them in business.

“Nobody really talks about it, but the amount of pressure and stress that founders are under, it’s enormous,” Horie said.

The 18 women who joined Horie’s accelerator program in 2013 weren’t fresh startup hopefuls but Silicon Valley serial entrepreneurs, she says -- not what Horie was expecting. “They say, ‘We want to connect and be able to talk about some of the challenges.’ ... That’s very different than the male serial entrepreneur.”

Horie’s goal for 2014 is to reach more female startup founders around the United States or internationally. Creating a hub for them will mean “women can have access to our connections and be able to succeed,” she said.

Horie doesn’t want women to feel limited by the culture they were born into or the place where they live, she says. She believes that their opportunities should be endless.