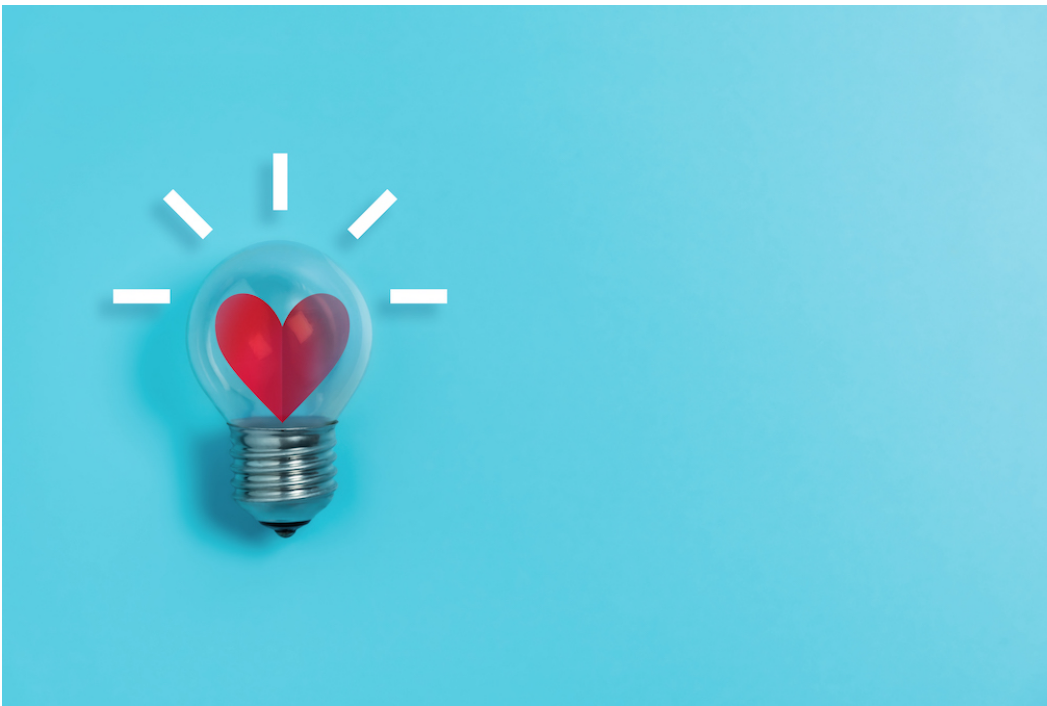


Disruptors Who Are Changing Their Industries

October 14, 2022



Every company and entrepreneur starts in that place of uncertainty where knowledge ends and discovery begins. The latest generation of change-makers, those business leaders and influencers who have an idea and refuse to give up on it, begin with uncertainty as they labor to take their industries beyond what we know and expand the limits of what we can achieve.

Below, you'll read about the Vanguards of 2022: an elite group of tireless creators, charting new territory by using cryptocurrency and blockchain to make finance accessible to the unbanked; preparing power grids around the world for a sustainable future; innovating platforms that help medical representatives obtain pre-approvals for the first time; drastically reducing carbon emissions in logistics by designing the world's first interlocking plastic bottle; and so much more.

As these creators show the way ahead for their industries and for society, the unknown will always lie ahead of them. Let their stories inspire you to explore your unknown.

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NAME: Dr. Jonathan Dapra

LOCATION: New Hampshire

SECTOR: Leadership



WEBSITE: www.jonathandapra.com
www.alaricpartners.com

Jonathan Dapra: Building Big Blueprints for Small Business Success

Lately, Dr. Jonathan M. Dapra has been getting quite a bit of attention as the man who kicked the proverbial hornets' nest of leadership knowledge by arguing that much of it is not valuable for small businesses. Dapra has dedicated the last ten years of his research and practice to differentiating the success factors of small to mid-sized company leaders. "The fact is," Dapra says, "leadership is contextual. My research indicates most seminal works and the practice-based research into leadership are not exceptionally relevant to small business leaders."

Dapra points out that most leadership knowledge is predisposed to explain leadership and support executives in large companies because the theories and frameworks are based on data from publicly-traded and

enterprise organizations. He is on a mission to help small business leaders strengthen their business capabilities and increase their organizational impact.

The first small business person in Dapra's life was his grandfather: "He was an entrepreneur and grocer in Pittsburgh, PA," Dapra shared. "I was always fascinated by the work he did. My interest in small business was piqued at an early age."

His professional life has reflected that fascination. Dapra has spent his career working in, leading, investing in, and consulting with small and mid-sized companies. He has started companies in the tech and gaming industry and helped to build the Photoshop special effects plugins company AutoFX. Dapra was part of the leadership team at Dynamic Graphics (now part of Getty Images, Inc.), a creative solutions company. As the Vice President of New Product Development & Publishing at Dynamic Graphics, Dapra helped the business produce royalty-free photos, provide illustrations to most national newspapers, offer professional training, sell graphic design software, and publish three nationally-known computer graphics magazines.

"People used to ask me what it was like working at such a big company," Dapra recalls. "I never knew how to answer. I was hung up on people thinking DG was a large company. It didn't feel big; we had about two hundred employees and a leadership team consisting of the president and five officers. Were we a small business? A mid-sized firm? This question and the implications for myself and others working in similar companies sparked my passion for learning everything about small business leadership."

Dapra's doctoral research resulted in a comprehensive small business leader competency model. He identified Small Business Leader Success Factors[©] and Derailers[©], the first of their kind to be published. As part of his initial research, Dapra made a compelling case that the extant knowledge in management and leadership did not effectively represent or apply to small businesses. "This research could be considered a seminal finding in the field," said Dr. Thomas Kemp, Professor of Leadership at the University of Charleston, of Dapra's research.

Dapra argues that many do not understand the range of businesses outside the extremes of small and large companies. The Small Business Administration (SBA) has used the rule of 500 to define any company with fewer than 500 employees as small—that is almost 98% of businesses across the US. Those firms represent over 35 million companies contributing to the domestic economy! Before Dapra's framework for segmenting the range of small companies, most researchers and practitioners tended to mistakenly believe the nature of business and leadership was relatively the same, regardless of a company's size and structure.

Dapra, however, says: "Company size absolutely matters. Professionals must understand the difference between small, mid-sized, and large companies because they are different beasts. These organizations require different approaches to everything from operations, planning, and strategy to developing leadership effectiveness."

Without a doubt, leaders of these companies face distinct challenges as their companies grow and become more formalized. Current leadership knowledge is based on large or enterprise company data, leading Dapra to stress an alarming problem: "98% of leadership books are only relevant to about 2% of the world's business leaders."

To address that problem, Dapra has joined with Dr. Richard Dapra, a highly-regarded talent development expert, and Jonas Akerman, former president of BTS USA, a world-leading strategy implementation firm. Together, they have written *From 50 to 500: Mastering the Unique Leadership Challenges of Growing Small Companies*, one of the first leadership books explicitly addressing the needs of small business leaders. The feedback from preview readers is encouraging. James Mongeau, Leader of Space Age Electronics, says of the book, "I was immediately engaged because I'd never seen a leadership book written specifically for small business. Before this, there was no reasonable standard for categorizing the different types of small companies. The Potential for Rapid Growth model presented in the book made a lot of sense and was very helpful in explaining how my small company differed from the local retail storefront."

From 50 to 500 is intended as a rallying call for small business leaders; Dapra says: "I want to begin a long-overdue conversation about the distinct challenges and business capabilities leaders need to produce results within their organizations." Dapra and his associates wrote this book because they saw a significant hole in the leadership consulting market. But the book itself is just the first step. Small business leaders need a true partner who can provide a range of assessment and development services that, currently, are simply not accessible (or particularly meaningful) to these leaders.

Thus, Dapra and Akerman have founded Alaric Inc., a worldwide leadership development and strategy enhancement firm for small business leaders. The Alaric team believes that being a small company does not mean being limited from achieving big leadership and big results. Alaric partners with clients to provide expert insight and services, including:

- Assessing leadership capabilities and creating development plans for leaders and their teams
- Connecting leaders with similarly enterprising executives in peer-development networks
- Improving business and people judgment through simulation-based online programs and live workshops
- Helping to transform successful business plans into viable long-term strategies

Alaric's team has big plans for the small business community. Their experiences and small company-specific research makes Alaric uniquely qualified to partner with small company leaders worldwide. As Chief Innovation Officer, Dapra says, "My commitment is to continually provide new insights, support, and ongoing advocacy to the small business community. Small business leaders are the innovators, the people who take risks, overcome obstacles, and achieve significant, sustainable results. These are my people - our team has got your back."

www.jonathandapra.com
www.Linkedin.com/in/jdapra
www.Linkedin.com/in/alaricpartners

Jonathan Dapra is a leadership and strategy practitioner who researches, writes, teaches, and consults about small business. Dr. Dapra has over 20 years of diverse experience as an executive, entrepreneur, trainer, instructor, and leadership coach. He began his career at Dun & Bradstreet, started firms in the tech and gaming industry, and built the special effects company AutoFX. He was part of the leadership team at Dynamic Graphics, president of Pandromeda3D, and CEO of the middleware company Meta4 Interactive. He later joined The Early Start Fund. Jonathan has worked with EDMC, The Art Institute, and currently, is the Rosenblum Endowed Professor of Business at Plymouth State University. Jonathan has a Doctorate of Business Administration and an MBA in strategy.



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