

## A Win for Women Entrepreneurs

**Seven months after naming three promising finalists, Yahoo! Small Business and fwm announce the grand prize winner of Seeds for Success.**

By: Jennifer Wang | 11/24/2008

Entrepreneurship is about investing in yourself, says *fwm: finding what matters* co-founder and former *The Apprentice* star Carolyn Kepcher. [Seeds for Success](#) grand prize winner Dana Rubinstein has certainly done that, and done it well.

Rubinstein, who was awarded the program's top prize Nov. 20, is co-founder of New York-based [Dapple Inc.](#), a company that sells natural and safe cleaning products designed specifically for parents with babies. So far, the line offers dish detergents and toy cleaners, and Rubinstein and business partner Tamar Rosenthal are aiming to make Dapple a household name.

In April, Rubinstein, 29, was selected from among thousands of applicants as one of three finalists to receive a \$20,000 cash grant, free [web](#) hosting for two years, \$5,000 in free technical support, mentoring from top business leaders, and promotional support from [Yahoo! Small Business](#) and *fwm*.

Rubinstein was chosen based on an [online](#) voting component, which drew almost 660,000 votes, and the assessment of a panel of expert judges who considered the finalists' achievements. As the grand prize winner, she will receive another \$10,000, additional mentoring services and media support, and a trip to meet top program executives in New York City.

With the extra boost, Rubinstein and Rosenthal grew their business and blogged about Dapple's progress. In just the past seven months, they developed an e-commerce site for their two initial offerings, launched new products and secured distribution in boutique stores and retailers around the nation. Dapple also won an iParenting Media Award.

"Winning the grand prize was fantastic, and we're just really grateful for the incredible opportunity the program has provided us," Rubinstein says. For her, Dapple's success was the result of good timing. "People are looking for this type of product now. We had great responses and were launching into retail just as the program was starting."

Having the Yahoo! Small Business backing was instrumental in securing shop space and boosting brand awareness, says Rubinstein, noting that Dapple was able to enter into a whole new phase of the business very quickly. "We were brand new ... but we will be in a national retail chain at the end of December. It feels like we're on the cusp of something great."

The mentoring portion of the Seeds for Success program made a big difference as well, and Rubinstein notes that persistence is the most important lesson she learned. "We had a tremendous opportunity to learn from some of the best minds in the business, and what all the mentors told us ... was to just stick with it and keep trying, because if you do have a good idea and a good product, eventually those doors will open," she says. "I might have saved a few sleepless nights if I had realized that a little sooner. With a little time and a little patience, things tend to fall into place."

Other lessons she learned? "Don't let your toddler get a hold of your cell phone and call your business contacts at 5 a.m.," Rubinstein says. "True story."

According to Kepcher, Rubinstein possesses many of the characteristics of top entrepreneurs. "Her passion for her company is not dependent on environment or circumstance; good economy or bad, she knows she will succeed and considers no other outcome," she says, adding that Rubinstein "brought it" every day. "Every single mentor meeting, phone call and e-mail was a chance to shine, and she made sure she did."

Scott Smigler, the [technology](#) mentor matched with Dapple, agrees wholeheartedly. "I felt that Dana and Tamar were fantastic individuals," he says, recalling how tens of thousands of people signed up for a free sample on Dapple's mailing list. "It was a very big cost, but we were talking through the options and they said, 'We're building a company that we can believe in, so even if it's going to cost us a lot of money, we're going to follow through and send the samples to our customers like we promised.'"

Smigler, founder and president of internet marketing company [Exclusive Concepts](#), also applauded Dapple's aggressive strategy in building channel relationships and using social networking to rally friends and family to the cause. One reason for Dapple's early success is that Rubinstein and Rosenthal really understood their audience, he says. "That meant figuring out where their potential customers were, and marketing to them where they hang out."

To hear interviews with the finalists, the mentors and Carolyn Kepcher, [click here](#).

For more information on the program, and to read the blogs from the grand prize winner and finalists, visit [Seeds for Success](#).

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