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World-Changing Businesses Bloom at Unreasonable Institute

Experience provides an ‘unprecedented opportunity to accelerate’

The second annual Unreasonable Institute wrapped up July 27 but for the mentors, entrepreneurs and impact investors involved the excitement and hope continues to grow.

Donna Morton, CEO and co-founder of First Power and [Unreasonable Institute](#) fellow, says the institute has uniquely “built a container that remarkably invites people from around the world to help build each other” in the social entrepreneurship space.

The Unreasonable Institute is a mentor-accelerator for start-up high-impact entrepreneurs driven to tackle the world’s greatest social and environmental problems. Three hundred entrepreneurs from 60 countries applied, and 45 finalists were showcased on the online Unreasonable Finalist Marketplace where people voted through contributing funds towards the \$8,000 cost of the mentorship program.

This year’s 26 winners convened in Boulder, Colo. for six weeks, where they and 60 world-class mentors lived and worked together. Having people be highly accessible for one another fostered relationship-building, notes Morton.

“There’s something about the way they chose people, something about the intentionality in which they are asking us to build and support and honour each other as a cohort is an extremely powerful part of the program,” Morton tells *Axiom News*.

With the addition of “incredibly” talented and experienced mentors, Morton says it is a “life-changing opportunity.”

She notes when someone said they are willing to be your mentor it meant they were willing to jump in, roll up their sleeves and support you while building these “radical, world-changing businesses.”

“They ask questions that only people who have done it, built it, seen it lots of times before could ask you, and the Unreasonable Institute concentrated all those people for us in one place, that’s an amazing, rare, I would say unprecedented opportunity to accelerate,” says Morton.

Morton says the mentor-fellow match-up process “really felt like it worked.” Fellows were encouraged to pre-pursue mentors that they were excited about. At the Institute mentors presented about themselves and fellows then voted on the top people they thought would benefit from that mentorship (without voting for themselves).

“The mentors were highly available, extremely flexible and they were there intentionally,” says Morton, adding unlike other conferences “these people came for us.”

Unreasonable Institute mentor Rosa Lee Harden is co-founder and executive producer of [Social Capital Markets \(SOCAP\)](#), a multi-platform organization dedicated to expanding impact investing and the flow of capital towards social good.

When asked what she found most inspiring about the experience, Harden looks to Morton and the other entrepreneurs who shared their stories.

“It’s always great to spend time with the entrepreneurs who carry the vision, who have the ideas about how to save the world and are out there doing it,” she says.

Harden points to Unreasonable fellow [Saba Gul](#), whose enterprise in Pakistan is empowering young girls to attend school and learn artisan trades while being paid through creating women’s purses.

“It’s so empowering to me to know that that is happening, it makes me think about the world differently and it gives me hope,” says Harden.

Morton says her most powerful takeaway was the knowledge that experts in finance, investment and business executives expressed that her business is solid and provided good pointers.

Delta, B.C.-based [First Power](#) is a social business in green energy technology, and Morton says what she learned about building meaningful relationships has put her in a position to start building relationships with potential investors before needing the capital.

“My personal level of hope has never been higher because of the time I spent at the Unreasonable Institute,” says Morton. “I think I saw the world reinventing itself in that house.”

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