



Rowan Tree

Rowan Tree is a co-working and co-growth space based in Herndon, VA, focused on women and open to all. Amy Dagliano and Kate Janich are two best friends who came upon the idea after a night in 2017 celebrating their shared birthday and discussing the need to have a place for women to connect and collaborate. The business concept became a reality in January 2019, when Rowan Tree opened its doors, providing not only a beautiful space to work, but programming with an emphasis on personal development, community, and well-being. The Rowan Tree name symbolic of the personality of their space, reflecting collaboration and connection.

The Challenge

As part of the exploration process, the ladies considered both Fairfax and Loudoun County locations to set up shop. They attended a Starting a Business in Fairfax Seminar and then began looking for other resources to help them build their business and discovered the Loudoun SBDC. The ladies reached out to Eric Byrd, Manager, Loudoun SBDC in the Fall of 2017 to explore their business concept and better understand the feasibility of moving forward. They wanted to understand the value of their business model and the local opportunity that existed for them.

Working with Loudoun SBDC

Initially, the duo would meet with the SBDC monthly or bimonthly. The team would work with Eric to shape and flesh out ideas new business ideas. "I've left every meeting bounding out of my seat, excited and invigorated. I really helped us validate and explore our thoughts," said Amy.

Eric helped the pair formulate market research strategies by leveraging the concept of Minimum Viable Product (MVP), a product development concept which stresses collecting the maximum amount of validated learning about customers with the least effort. For example, he suggested phone interviews. Then the team expanded into "Cheers and Chats", wine and cheese events where they could share their ideas and get feedback from local women.

Realizing the need for financing, Kate and Amy developed a crowdfunding campaign for friends, family, and future members to contribute. They raised \$38,000 to build the business. According to Kate, "There was a gap in the community of coworking; there were big office spaces then there were coffee shops. We realized the opportunity for something in between. We would not have captured that theme if it weren't for all that research.

Once open, the team met with Eric once every couple of months to keep him in the loop and discuss next steps. The Loudoun SBDC became a valuable resource to bounce off new ideas and help identify what the business should be prioritizing.

The Results

Rowan Tree officially opened its doors in January 2019. Their 25 founding members quickly grew to 75+ active members, as they developed an active and engaged community. They attribute much of their success to working with mentors like the Loudoun SBDC. "100% the reason we didn't go with a 10K square foot space was hugely attributed to discussions with Eric," says Amy. "By taking the time up front

to work with Eric to understand the market- group conversations, phone calls, market research, we realized the smart decision was to start in a small space. The women we were attracting were not interested in renting private offices. “

Once the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the team quickly pivoted from 100 percent in person space to 100 percent virtual space. Also adjusted rates and lease terms to accommodate clients, and even added a partner/ spouse add-on membership option to offer flexibility in unique times.

When asked what they would say to others considering contacting the SBDC and starting a business, they say, “Do it! Why wouldn’t you?”. Amy and Kate say that working with the Loudoun SBDC gives entrepreneurs support, resources, and a realistic, strategic approach to developing your business. “Everything is so overwhelming when starting a new business and the SBDC, can see the areas where clients need help and then plug in and strategize with them to increase chances of success.”