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**FOR THE EXCLUSIVE USE OF MICHELLE@MOMUP.COM**

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From the Boston Business Journal:

<https://www.bizjournals.com/boston/news/2022/12/06/michelle-keefe-mom-up-ceo-women-who-mean-business.html>

## Women Who Mean Business: Michelle Keefe gets 'excited every day to work with my team'

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*The Boston Business Journal is recognizing women in the Boston area who do outstanding work in their industries. In advance of a Wednesday luncheon to honor the Women Who Mean Business awardees, the Business Journal is posting profiles of the honorees.*

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### Michelle Keefe

**Title:** CEO

**Company:** MomUp

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GARY HIGGINS

Michelle Keefe, the founder and CEO of Needham-based MomUp, which helps companies build a better workplace, connecting organizations with untapped, high-level talent while bringing more fulfilling work to women.

*Michelle Keefe, 44, co-founder and CEO of MomUp, sold her first business before the age of 30. Several years ago, as a stay-at-home mom, she found herself surrounded by highly educated, unemployed women looking to do more yet struggling to get back*

*to the workforce. In 2019, her recruiting firm MomUp was born. Keefe, a Needham resident, recently spoke with the Business Journal's Lucia Maffei about the things she'd do differently in her career, the challenges she faced when launching MomUp (starting with the company's own name) and her advice to women entrepreneurs.*

" 'Mom' can be a word that's loaded with biases. Often, the perception with the word 'mom' is that somebody would take only certain types of jobs. We wanted to take control of the word and remove that stigma. A mom can be anything: a CEO, a mom who's at home raising her children, (a person) looking for part-time work or full-time work. Dads don't have that stigma. We don't even use the phrase 'working dad,' you only use that phrase, 'working mom.' It was a challenge: Companies would reach out to us looking for very specific types of people.

"One thing I'd do differently in my career? (I would) always recognize my value. It can be hard for female entrepreneurs. You have to silence that noise and know that what you are contributing is important, and what you are contributing has really extensive value.

"Covid-19 was a massive challenge for us because we were a brand-new recruitment company. Six months into our conception, Covid-19 happened and hiring was one of the largely affected areas ... Being a scrappy startup allowed us to pivot as needed. That's when we really started focusing on offering coaching services and resources and workshops to the women in our community, especially because at that point, so many women were reevaluating their own careers, what they wanted to do, whether they were transitioning into different jobs and roles ... There was a silver lining to Covid: It also brought up the conversation of how challenging it is for women and mothers in the workplace, and parents in general, and blew up this whole conversation, which was great.

"I get excited every day to work with my team ... Everybody legitimately wants the other person to succeed and is truly proud of working with that other person. You can get that feeling when the team is small, but (when) the team grows and you're still maintaining that awesome culture of collaboration and mutual

support, it's really amazing ... When you're a lean startup, you're doing everything. Then, you can suddenly bring in somebody who's an expert, and you're like, 'Oh, my gosh, I can do it, but there's somebody who does it really well.' That's a great feeling, when you start to bring in individuals that really understand their particular area, their particular field, and then put all these people around this virtual table together. We've seen so much growth in the last six months because of this team.

"When you're starting out is when you're the most susceptible to listening to any negative talk, because that's when you feel the most vulnerable. One (piece of advice I have for female entrepreneurs) is trusting your gut. (Another is) talking to the right people, because a lot of times you could talk to 100 people, and 98 could say something positive, and two could say something negative, and we tend to listen to the negative feedback the most.

"When you talk to people, talk to the ones that would really know the areas you're working in. Don't listen to just the masses. Listen to the ones who are in the trenches, who've done this before ... It goes back to recognizing your value. So it's like, trusting that you know where your company is going, which direction that you want to take it in. Recognize your value, and then increase that amount by 20% at least.

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***BBJ Seven Letter poll: What is the most important factor when considering whether or not to stay with your current employer? Answer our brief questionnaire here.***

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**Lucia Maffei**  
Technology Reporter  
*Boston Business Journal*



