

Work sample: Meredith Hunt
Client: Forté Foundation
Edie Hunt Award Winner Profile (July 2016)

2016 Edie Hunt Award winner is a natural-born leader for women in business

Rebecca Sholiton wears many hats: entrepreneur, recent MBA graduate, Forté Fellow, and co-founder of a not-for-profit organization. She recently added a new title to the list: 2016 [Edie Hunt Award](#) winner. The award – named for Forté’s first board chair and current board member, [Edie Hunt](#) – honors a recent MBA graduate for exceptional contributions to women in business.

Becoming a leader of women

As the youngest of four daughters and a third generation entrepreneur, Rebecca has always been passionate about helping women achieve their business goals. “Business always seemed like a natural career path to me, but I had not experienced gender differences until I entered the workforce,” she said. After graduating from the University of Texas with degrees in Finance and History, Rebecca worked in Strategy & Operations for Deloitte Consulting in Dallas for three years. While at Deloitte, she led pro-bono projects for local organizations and also participated in Deloitte’s sabbatical program to work in international development. These experiences led to an opportunity with the [Goldman Sachs Foundation’s 10,000 Women program](#) in Lima, Peru. Rebecca spent three years in Lima where she provided local female entrepreneurs with business and management education. As a result of her work there, she co-founded a non-profit consultancy and co-authored a project funded by [USAID’s Women’s Leadership in Small and Medium Enterprises](#).

Creating a forum for student conversations

A spark had been ignited and, after arriving at Northwestern University’s Kellogg School of Management in 2014, Rebecca continued to push gender equality in business. She worked with Dean Sally Blount and Professor Victoria Medvec at Kellogg to found a lecture series – the Women’s Leadership Seminar (WLS). The WLS is part of the Women’s Business Association (WBA) at Kellogg, and it prepares Kellogg women to achieve quick successes; take smart, strategic risks in the corporate world; and overcome challenges that can drive talented women from the workforce prematurely.

According to Amanda McCarthy, 2016 Kellogg graduate, “the response has been incredible – over 100 women are actively participating in the seminar, and many are bringing the topics offline, organizing reading groups, and having small dinners to engage in continued discussions on topics related to women in the workforce.” As Andrea Calderon, Kellogg’s associate director of admissions, stated, Rebecca is a “true natural leader to her peers,” and “this seminar will benefit women at Kellogg for years to come.” Initially a five-week seminar series for business school students, the WLS will expand to a partnership with Northwestern’s Pritzker School of Law.

Ready, set, launch

Rebecca received her MBA in June, but her focus on women and business is not ebbing. She founded a start-up company last year, [Pak’d](#), based in Chicago. Pak’d prepares and delivers fresh and healthy school lunches for children as well as adults. Fully operational since November 2015 in the North Shore community of Chicago, Pak’d is set to expand to other parts of the city with a formal back-to-school launch.

Rebecca sees the launch of Pak’d as a continuation of her commitment to helping women and working parents. Attending business school full-time while starting a business was no simple task, but Rebecca gives credit to Kellogg and the [Zell Fellows](#) program for their mentorship and support. “My partners and I started out preparing food and making the deliveries ourselves and, while it was not easy, I would not have done it differently,” she said. Pak’d is receiving additional support this summer as a participant in the highly selective [Techstars](#) accelerator program in Chicago.

Despite her success, Rebecca is candid about the challenges of being a woman in business. Raising money is often a hurdle for women-owned businesses. According to a [report](#) from the National Women’s Business Council, women start companies with 50 percent less capital than male counterparts so Rebecca is understandably proud that she and her partners have raised \$750,000 in investment seed money for Pak’d. Another challenge is finding the time to

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nurture relationships and prioritize long “to do” lists – essential for sharpening leadership skills. Rebecca has found that “building the right team and taking time to foster strong relationships are important because they ultimately help you get the work done.”

The value of Forté programs

Rebecca’s involvement with Forté has provided her with tools and support to face these challenges and succeed in business school and beyond. A Forté Fellow, Rebecca attended her first Forté MBA Conference in 2014. Afterwards, she helped build a strong community of Forté Fellows at Kellogg, holding monthly meetings that offered learning and networking events. Additionally, Rebecca worked with Arrion Rathsack, Associate Director of School Relations at Forté, to launch the first Women’s MBA Coalition Summit held in Chicago in 2016. The Summit gathered members of the WBA from top MBA schools to facilitate knowledge-sharing and leadership training. “Forté’s programming – like the MBA Summit – is valuable in connecting groups from different universities that are tackling similar challenges,” Rebecca said, and the Summit offered a collective way to address them.

Looking ahead, Rebecca hopes to see Pak’d become a national household brand. She also wants to mentor and invest in other entrepreneurs. According to Rebecca, “what I have done and what I am doing now are stepping stones” to whatever the future holds. Spoken like a true Edie Hunt Award winner.

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