



Business as an Airplane: The Rapid Rise of U.S. Entrepreneurship, the Power of Small Businesses, and the Essential Need for Early Mentorship (2019–2024)

Nataliia Noble^{1*}, Oleg Aframchuk²

¹Business Research Consulting, MSc in Finance and International Entrepreneurship, NaN Consulting LLC, Miramar, FL, USA.

²Aviation Expert with 15 years experience, Mentor in Aviation and Small Business, Founder of SkyZen Methodology, Oakland Park, Florida, USA.

Abstract

Over the last five years (2019–2024), the United States has experienced a significant surge in new business formation, paralleling an airplane's swift takeoff. This article adopts an airplane metaphor—pre-flight, takeoff, cruising altitude, turbulence, and landing—to illustrate each phase of a startup's evolution. Official data reveal that U.S. small business applications climbed from 3.5 million in 2019 to 5.5 million in 2023, an unprecedented rise fueled by abundant capital, technological innovations, supportive government measures, and shifting cultural attitudes. Small businesses—which comprise 99.9% of all U.S. firms and generate two-thirds of net new jobs—are at the forefront of this entrepreneurial boom, contributing an estimated 44% of national economic output. However, this rapid expansion underscores the vital role of structured mentorship during the earliest stages of venture development. Research shows that mentored startups not only achieve higher survival rates but also exhibit stronger revenue growth, underscoring mentorship's importance as a stabilizing “co-pilot” in a fast-moving environment. This article integrates fresh data, visual models, policy considerations, and strategic insights for founders, investors, educators, and policymakers who aim to sustain and harness America's dynamic entrepreneurial spirit.

Keywords: Mentorship; Small Business; Startup Acceleration; Technological Innovation; Venture Capital.

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. entrepreneurial ecosystem has undergone remarkable changes in the last five years (2019–2024). A helpful analogy to visualize this evolution is the metaphor of an airplane in flight. Much like a pilot conducts instrument checks and reviews weather conditions before leaving the runway, entrepreneurs assemble teams, secure capital, and research their target markets before launching. Takeoff parallels the official debut of a new business, where early traction, brand positioning, and seed funding become paramount. Cruising altitude corresponds to scaling operations, establishing robust processes, and navigating new market segments. Challenges, or “turbulence,” inevitably emerge, compelling teams to adapt quickly. Finally, the “landing” phase refers to achieving stable profitability, exploring an IPO or acquisition, or solidifying a long-term operation.

Historically, fear of failure deterred many aspiring founders (GEM, 2022). Indeed, around 20% of new businesses fail

in their first year, and roughly 50% fail within five years (Investopedia, 2023). Yet, between 2019 and 2024, U.S. business formation soared to levels unseen in recent decades (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023a). This surge reflects not only the availability of capital and technological opportunities but also a cultural shift that embraces entrepreneurial risk-taking. Against this backdrop, **mentorship** emerges as a critical, stabilizing force. Early guidance, particularly during the vulnerable launch stages, can help founders navigate challenges more adeptly and maximize survival odds.

Despite the robust growth environment, many ventures still fail. More granular data suggests that while capital might be abundant, a nuanced combination of business acumen, leadership skills, and market understanding is required to thrive. This article explores how mentorship—formal or informal—fills these gaps, acting as an essential co-pilot that offers sector experience, networking opportunities, and psychological support.

Citation: Nataliia Noble, Oleg Aframchuk, “Business as an Airplane: The Rapid Rise of U.S. Entrepreneurship, the Power of Small Businesses, and the Essential Need for Early Mentorship (2019–2024)”, Universal Library of Business and Economics, 2025; 2(1): 32-36. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.70315/uloap.ulbec.2025.0201006>.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Data Collection

Business Formation Statistics (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015–2023): We tracked the number of new business applications annually, identifying major spikes and correlating them with economic or policy changes (e.g., the COVID-19 pandemic relief programs).

Venture Capital and Alternative Funding (PitchBook-NVCA, Reuters, SBA Reports): We examined VC investments, crowdfunding trends, and revenue-based financing data to gauge how different funding avenues contributed to the entrepreneurial surge.

Small Business Impact Metrics (SBA Office of Advocacy): Analyzed job creation rates, GDP contributions, and net new job distribution among SMEs, cross-referenced with mentorship access data where available.

Evaluation Criteria

Year-over-Year Change in Business Applications: Analyzed from 2015 to 2023 to capture pre- and post-pandemic trends.

Mentored vs. Non-Mentored Performance: Assessed survival rates, revenue growth, and founder satisfaction or “entrepreneurial well-being.”

Industry and Sector Differences: Explored how mentorship varies in technology, retail, manufacturing, and service-based startups.

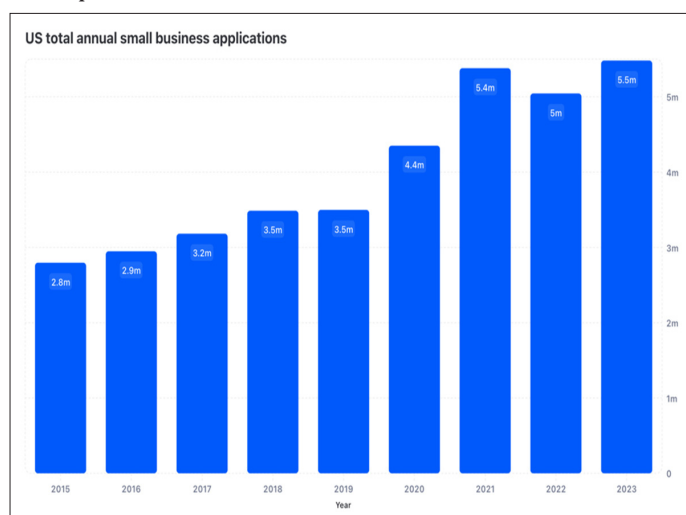


Figure 1. Bar Chart – Annual small business applications (2015–2023)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Accelerated Business Formation

Official data confirm a significant rise in new business applications, from 2.8 million in 2015 to 3.5 million in 2019, then soaring to 5.5 million by 2023 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023a). This pattern underscores a particularly strong leap between 2020 and 2021, coinciding with COVID-19 relief programs (e.g., PPP, EIDL) and heightened interest in digital-

based businesses. As physical storefronts experienced challenges, entrepreneurs pivoted to e-commerce, remote services, and cloud-based solutions, lowering overhead costs and expanding market reach.

Regional Variation

Interestingly, certain regions—such as the U.S. Sunbelt—saw higher-than-average growth. Florida, Texas, and Arizona, for instance, attracted remote-capable entrepreneurs seeking favorable tax climates and expanding consumer bases. Meanwhile, urban hubs like San Francisco and New York continued to lead in technology-focused ventures despite high living costs, thanks to a dense network of accelerators, VC firms, and skilled professionals.

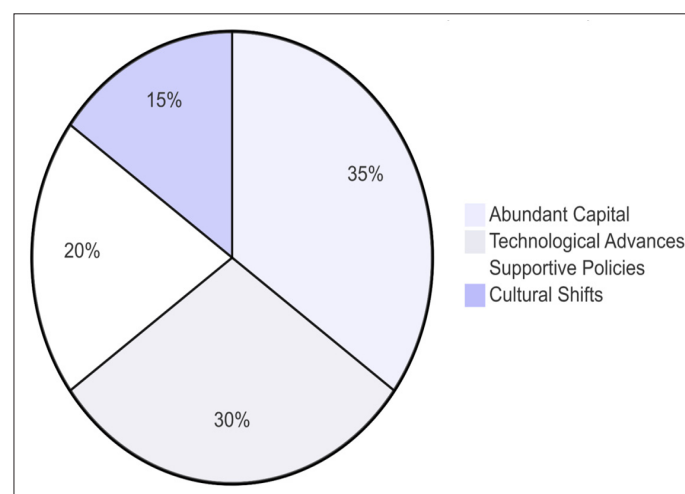


Figure 2. Pie Chart – Drivers of accelerated business formation

Key Drivers of Growth

Abundant Capital (35%)

Record Venture Capital: Venture capital inflows reached an all-time high, peaking at \$344.7 billion in 2021. This “capital glut” provided more room for experimentation.

Alternative Funding: Crowdfunding and revenue-based financing platforms further democratized access to capital, allowing founders to bypass traditional gatekeepers such as banks or angel investor networks.

Technological Advances (30%)

Cloud Computing & Low-Code Tools: Platforms like AWS, Microsoft Azure, and various low-code solutions lowered the technical barrier to entry, slashing early-stage expenses.

Digital Marketing & Social Media: Cost-effective channels via TikTok, Instagram, and other platforms let founders target niche audiences quickly.

Supportive Policies (20%)

SBA Loans & PPP: Government-backed loans and programs, particularly during COVID-19, served as a springboard for existing SMEs to pivot or for new ventures to launch with minimized risk.

Tax Incentives & Grants: Certain states provided R&D tax credits or local funding for startups in biotech, cleantech, and other innovation-driven sectors.

Cultural Shifts (15%)

Entrepreneurship Normalized: Mainstream media glorification of successful founders (e.g., “unicorn” companies) influenced a new generation to embrace startup culture.

Emphasis on Work-Life Autonomy: Flexible, remote-based setups empowered people to pursue passion projects, scaling them into legitimate businesses.

The Airplane Metaphor for Startups

The “airplane metaphor” effectively models the startup journey:

1. Pre-flight (Preparation)

Market Validation & Planning: Founders conduct thorough market research, form initial teams, and secure capital.

Role of Mentorship: Early mentors help refine product concepts, advise on legal structures, and introduce essential networking opportunities.

2. Takeoff (Launch)

Initial Traction & Branding: A critical phase where businesses establish customer bases, generate revenue, and secure additional funding (seed or Series A).

Mentorship Involvement: Mentors guide pitch preparation, shape brand strategy, and often provide direct introductions to influential stakeholders.

3. Cruising Altitude (Scaling)

Operational Optimization & Expansion: Companies refine internal processes, expand to new regions or product lines, and recruit specialized talent.

Mentors as Growth Catalysts: Advisors offer leadership coaching, help negotiate partnerships, and assist with strategic pivots when scaling challenges emerge.

4. Turbulence (Challenges)

Crisis Management: Whether due to economic swings, unforeseen competition, or internal misalignment, this stage demands resilience.

Mentorship Under Pressure: Seasoned mentors share crisis-management tactics drawn from personal experience. They can recommend pivot strategies or restructured business models, preventing “pilot panic.”

5. Landing (Exit/Maturity)

Long-Term Sustainability: Businesses settle into stable profitability, contemplate IPOs or acquisitions, or plan sustained growth within a mature market.

Final Mentorship Boost: Mentors aid in valuation strategies, negotiation of acquisition deals, or establishing post-exit roles for key founders.

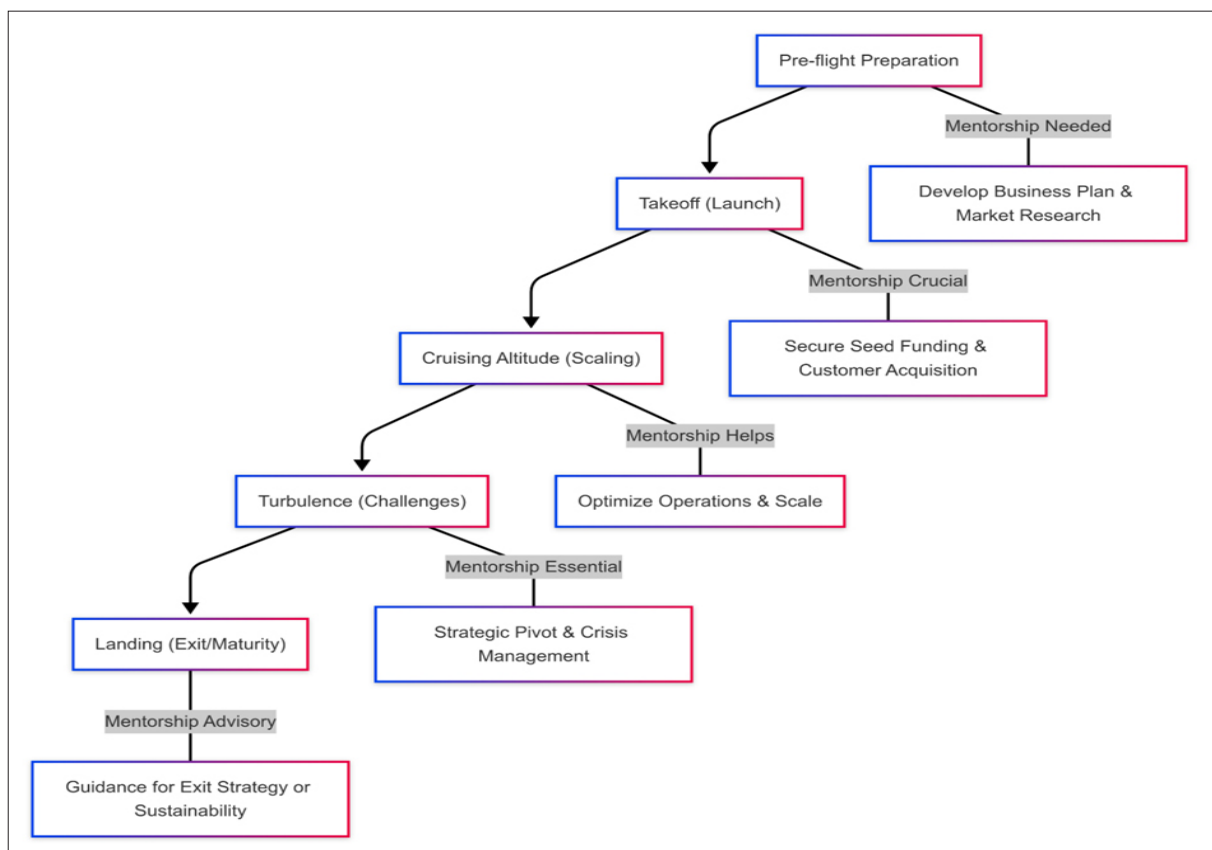


Figure 3. Flowchart – Startup flight path

Case Illustration: A Tech Startup's Journey

Consider a hypothetical software-as-a-service (SaaS) startup specializing in remote project management. In 2019, a pair of co-founders validated their idea (Pre-flight), working with an industry mentor who guided them on necessary compliance and set them up for a successful seed round (Takeoff). The business saw rapid user adoption by 2021, prompting expansions into European and Asian markets (Cruising Altitude). When a global economic downturn in 2022 shook investor confidence (Turbulence), the founders leaned heavily on their mentor's crisis experience to pivot the product pricing model. Eventually, in 2024, the startup reached consistent profitability and negotiated a partial acquisition deal, facilitated and negotiated by that same mentor (Landing). This microcosm encapsulates how mentorship, integrated at every stage, reduces the likelihood of catastrophic failure and enables continuous adaptation.

Mentorship's Impact on Startup Survival

Statistical Evidence

Studies from Harvard Business School suggest mentored startups have a **70%** five-year survival rate versus **30%** for those without mentorship (Harvard Business School, 2015; Komisar, 2015).

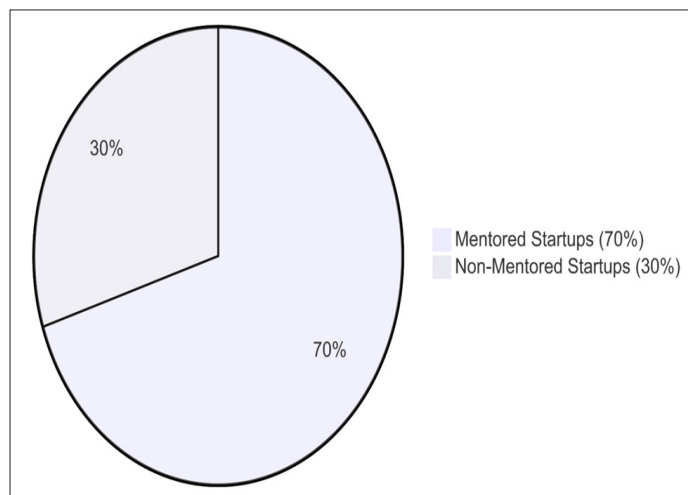


Figure 4. Pie Chart – Survival Rates: Mentored vs. Non-Mentored Startups

Other research, including surveys from the SBA, corroborates the finding that continuous mentorship fosters:

Higher Revenue Growth: Mentored founders make more strategic decisions regarding resource allocation.

Stronger Adaptation Skills: Mentors provide guidance during market shifts or sudden disruptions.

Enhanced Psychological Resilience: Experienced advisors help founders navigate burnout, stress, and self-doubt common in high-pressure environments.

Mentorship Approaches

Formal Accelerator Programs: Structured cohorts (e.g., Y

Combinator, Techstars) offer short but intensive mentorship, culminating in demo days where startups pitch to potential investors.

Corporate Mentorship: Established corporations adopt internal incubators or sponsor mentorship programs, leveraging their resources and market presence to foster innovation.

Peer-to-Peer Mentorship: Founders at similar stages share experiences, offering reciprocal advice and emotional support.

One-on-One Expert Mentorship: Seasoned entrepreneurs or retired executives partner with emerging founders, providing personalized guidance over an extended timeline.

Significance for Small Businesses

Small businesses are traditionally known as the backbone of the U.S. economy, constituting 99.9% of all firms and generating nearly half of the private sector workforce (SBA, 2022). As they create two-thirds of net new jobs and contribute approximately 44% of GDP, their long-term stability is crucial. Structuring accessible mentorship initiatives is a comparatively low-cost strategy with disproportionately positive outcomes, ensuring these businesses neither “stall” nor “crash” prematurely.

Addressing Mentorship Gaps

Despite its benefits, mentorship is not uniformly available. In many underserved regions and minority communities, local ecosystems lack robust incubators or accelerator programs. Moreover, female founders and minority-led ventures still face gaps in representation among both investors and mentors. **Policy Interventions** that incentivize mentorship in rural or disadvantaged areas, combined with private-sector solutions such as virtual mentorship platforms, can mitigate these gaps. Furthermore, philanthropic foundations can play a role by sponsoring community-based mentorship networks, creating a pipeline of guidance from seasoned entrepreneurs to aspiring ones.

Case Example: Mentorship-Focused Policy

A noteworthy initiative emerged in 2022 when a coalition of local governments partnered with corporate stakeholders to launch “Mentors on Main Street.” This program connected experienced retirees and executives with small retailers and service providers in economically stagnant towns. Early data indicated a 25% boost in one-year survival rates across participating businesses, underlining how targeted mentorship fosters resilience even in low-income regions.

Extended Discussion: Cultural and Technological Factors in Mentorship

Digital Tools & Virtual Mentorship

The evolution of remote work has expanded mentorship beyond physical boundaries. Platforms like Slack, Zoom,

and specialized mentorship apps enable founders in remote or rural areas to access guidance once confined to major startup hubs. This has democratized knowledge exchange, allowing “digital-first” entrepreneurs to consult with domain experts who might be thousands of miles away. While face-to-face interactions offer benefits like hands-on training or networking events, virtual setups can be highly effective for structured feedback sessions, pitch reviews, and problem-solving consultations.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in Mentorship

A diverse mentor pool benefits the entire entrepreneurial ecosystem. Representation matters: Women founders, minority founders, and first-generation immigrants are more likely to thrive if they see mentors who share similar experiences. DEI-centered mentorship programs not only help bridge historical funding and resource gaps but also bring broader perspectives and solutions. Diversity in mentorship translates into diversity in product design, market approach, and corporate culture, fueling broader innovation across industries.

Long-Term Ecosystem Benefits

When successful founders later become mentors themselves, a virtuous cycle takes shape. This perpetuates knowledge transfer across generations of startups. Regions with a high density of successful tech founders (e.g., Silicon Valley) have thrived partly due to the tradition of founders reinvesting time and capital into early-stage ventures. By fostering local mentor-mentee relationships, an ecosystem builds cumulative momentum, with each startup “flight” benefiting from the prior wave’s insights.

CONCLUSION

Between 2019 and 2024, the United States has witnessed an unprecedented rise in entrepreneurial activity, driven by abundant capital, rapid technological advancements, supportive government policies, and cultural acceptance of risk. Small businesses—which form the backbone of the U.S. economy—lead this surge, contributing significantly to GDP and job creation. Yet, like an airplane navigating

unpredictable skies, every successful startup journey needs a co-pilot. **Mentorship** is that co-pilot, effectively guiding founders through formative decisions, crisis management, and growth strategies.

Research consistently underscores that startups with structured mentorship exhibit higher survival rates, healthier revenue trajectories, and better adaptability. As the entrepreneurial wave progresses, it is incumbent upon policymakers, universities, corporate partners, and philanthropic organizations to collaborate. By systematically embedding mentorship into local, regional, and national business ecosystems, the U.S. can convert this surge in business formation into sustainable economic and social gains. The “Business as an Airplane” analogy concludes on a hopeful note: With the right resources and mentors in place, the landing can be as triumphant as the takeoff.

REFERENCES

1. Camoin Associates. (2021). *COVID-19 Impact on Startup Formation*.
2. Global Entrepreneurship Monitor. (2022). *Global Report: Entrepreneurship in the U.S.*
3. Harvard Business School. (2015). *Serial Entrepreneurship and Learning from Failure*. HBS Working Paper Series.
4. Hoffman, R. (2010). *Reid Hoffman’s Startup Advice*.
5. Investopedia. (2023). *How Many Businesses Fail in the First 5 Years?*
6. Komisar, R. (2015). *The Monk and the Riddle*. Harvard Business Press.
7. PitchBook-NVCA. (2022). *Venture Monitor Annual Report*.
8. Ries, E. (2011). *The Lean Startup*. Crown Business.
9. SBA. (2022). *Office of Advocacy: Small Business Economic Profiles*.
10. U.S. Census Bureau. (2023a). *Business Formation Statistics, 2019–2023*.