



Zoom Recognizes the Rise of AI-Powered Businesses of One with Inaugural Solopreneur 50

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New recognition program and proprietary research highlight how solopreneurs are using AI to replace traditional team functions and build scalable, independent businesses

SAN JOSE, Calif., May 04, 2026 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- **Zoom (NASDAQ: ZM)** today announced the inaugural Zoom Solopreneur 50, a recognition and grant program honoring AI-powered businesses of one across the United States, and released new data from its "Rise of the Solopreneur" report. Together, the program and research highlight how independent professionals are using artificial intelligence to build and scale sustainable businesses without traditional teams, reflecting a broader shift in how work is structured and executed.

For decades, small business growth has been defined by increasing overhead and scaling operations through headcount. The emergence of AI-powered solopreneurs represents a different model: individuals using artificial intelligence and integrated platforms to replace functions historically handled by full teams. Instead of managing people and tools, these operators are assembling capabilities and automating communication, production, and workflows to run efficient, revenue-generating businesses independently.

This shift toward AI-powered businesses of one is enabled by a new class of platforms designed to reduce operational overhead and automate execution. Zoom's platform, built as a system of action for modern work, helps solopreneurs turn conversations into completed work by embedding artificial intelligence directly into communication, workflows, and customer interactions.

"Headcount used to be the measure of scale," said **Kimberly Storin, Chief Marketing Officer at Zoom**. "But AI is decoupling growth from hiring. We're seeing a new generation of solopreneurs operate with the capabilities of full teams without the overhead. The Zoom Solopreneur 50 is an early signal of where entrepreneurship is going: smaller, faster, and fundamentally more efficient."

About the Zoom Solopreneur 50

Selected from nearly 3,000 U.S.-based applicants, the Zoom Solopreneur 50 recognizes individuals who leverage AI and digital tools to turn creative ideas into outcomes. Unlike traditional entrepreneurship awards, the program evaluated applicants based on originality, performance, impact, authenticity, and influence, focusing on how businesses are built rather than just how big they get.

Key details:

- **50 honorees** selected from ~3,000 U.S. applicants
- **5 grant recipients** awarded \$30,000 each
- **12 industries represented**, including technology, wellness, education, and professional services

The following five honorees will each receive **\$30,000 grants** to support continued growth:

- [Cierra Gross, Worklution](#): Connects face-to-face with clients through video meetings, enabling strong relationship building, critical to her deeply engaged clientele.
- [Derek McCracken, The Owl's Nest](#): Uses AI note capturing tools to collaborate with Ambassador Teachers nationwide and gather real-time classroom feedback while staying fully present during conversations.
- [Angela Morrison, Cakes by Angela](#): Runs her business entirely from a home office through digital tools, enabling her to build a global supply chain and an international audience and customer base.
- [Michael Odokara-Okigbo, NKENNE](#): Collaborates with teams, partners, and customers across five countries through integrated technologies and AI tools, enabling global product development, sales, and training as a single connected, distributed organization.
- [Dana Snyder, Positive Equation](#): Hosts virtual meetings, workshops, and intensives using AI-first collaboration tools, enabling her to deliver high-touch education and scale impact globally without a large team.

Honorees were selected by a jury composed of leaders from business and academia:

- Patrick Hendren, VP of Legal & Policy at Upwork
- Lisa Scheiring, Global SMB Advisor at Zoom
- Kim Storin, Chief Marketing Officer at Zoom
- Selma Studer, COO of Capital Department
- Anita Woolley, Professor at Carnegie Mellon University's Tepper School of Business

The full list of honorees is available at: www.zoom.com/solo50

The Role of AI in Solopreneurship

There are more than **30 million small businesses in the U.S., and 82% operate without employees** ([US Chamber of Commerce](#)). A growing share is being built with AI at the core. These businesses are not smaller versions of traditional companies—they are fundamentally different in how they operate, scale, and deliver value. Instead of hiring teams, solopreneurs are assembling capabilities—using AI to handle operations, communication, and production.

This shift is driven by platforms that integrate communication and execution into a single workflow. Zoom's platform, including Zoom Workplace and Zoom AI Companion, is designed as a system of action that captures context from conversations and automatically generates next steps, follow-ups, and deliverables without requiring additional tools.

For solopreneurs, that means:

- Client conversations that automatically generate next steps and follow-ups through Zoom AI Companion
- Meetings that convert into deliverables and decisions within Zoom Workplace
- AI embedded directly into communication workflows, eliminating the need for separate tools

As more professionals seek tools to run a business solo with AI, integrated platforms that combine communication, automation, and execution are emerging as a primary requirement. Instead of managing multiple tools, one person can run an entire business from a single workflow.

New Report: The Rise of the Solopreneur

To highlight the growth and preferences of this influential group, Zoom released the inaugural “Rise of the Solopreneur” report, based on insights from the nearly 3,000 applicants, offering a comprehensive look at this emerging segment of the workforce.

Most Solopreneurs Are Already Running Revenue-Generating Businesses:

- 62% of applicants are operating active, revenue-generating businesses
- Median founding year is 2022, indicating rapid, recent growth
- Nearly half cite prior professional or industry experience

AI Is Replacing Core Business Functions

- Client communication and meetings: 82%
- Automation and operational efficiency: 78%
- Collaboration with partners and contractors: 71%
- Delivering services or products virtually: 46%
- Content creation and audience building: 46%

Adoption Spans Industries and Geographies

- California (13%) and New York (10%) lead by state, followed by Georgia (9%) and Texas (9%)
- Atlanta leads all cities (8%), followed by New York (7%)
- Representation spans 12 industries, led by Services & Consulting (20%), Health & Wellness (14%), and Social Impact (12%)

Together, the data indicate that solopreneurship is shifting from a side-hustle model to a primary, technology-enabled form of business creation.

Zoom's Solopreneur 50 and accompanying report position this emerging segment within a broader shift toward AI-powered, independent work, where platforms that can turn interaction into execution define the next generation of business infrastructure. To explore these trends in full, access the “**Rise of the Solopreneur**” report at <https://click.zoom.com/resources/rise-of-the-solopreneur>.

About Zoom

Zoom (NASDAQ: ZM) is a system of action for modern work, turning live collaboration into completed results. From entrepreneurs to global enterprises, customers choose Zoom to seamlessly collaborate, communicate, and drive outcomes across meetings, phone, contact center, and more — all with the built-in assistance of Zoom AI Companion. Founded in 2011, Zoom is headquartered in San Jose, CA. For more information, visit zoom.com.

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