

Danielle Applestone, PhD

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PROFILE

Fractional Chief People Officer with 4+ years scaling highly technical hardware and AI companies from Seed to post-Series B. PhD engineer and serial founder with 18 years of operating experience across manufacturing, robotics, and SaaS. Specializes in organizational strategy and people infrastructure for companies at inflection points, helping technical founders scale.

EDUCATION

PhD, Materials Science & Engineering — University of Texas at Austin, 2012

Dissertation: Synthesis and Characterization of Nanocomposite Alloy Anodes for Li-ion Batteries

S.B., Chemical Engineering — Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2002

Varsity Crew Captain 2001–2002, MVP 2002

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

- Fractional CPO to 30+ climate, biotech, and deep tech companies post-fundraise, scaling teams from seed through Series B
- Partnered with a CEO to re-found a Series A company, reshaping vision, mission, and business strategy, contributing directly to a \$300M acquisition two years later
- Led a successful cultural transformation at a 250-person company, including diagnosis, leadership alignment, and months of manager training
- Serial entrepreneur and co-founder across three industries; five years as a robotics manufacturing CEO raising \$6.5M and taking the company through acquisition

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

08/21 - Now	Applestone Consulting - Fractional Chief People Officer	Oakland, CA
	<p>Engaged at inflection points (post-fundraise, pre-scale, or organizational crisis) to assess gaps, build people strategy, and put the right talent and systems in place. Clients include: Form Energy, Boston Metal, Rondo, Noon Energy, Alloy Enterprises, Aralez Bio, Trilobio, Copper, Antora Energy, Product Genius.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Partnered with a Series A CEO to re-found the company: assessed organizational and strategic gaps, reshaped vision, mission, and business strategy, rebuilt the leadership team, and established the foundation that directly contributed to a \$300M acquisition two years later• Designed the organizational architecture and hiring strategy for a Series A biotech navigating rapid post-fundraise scaling, growing from 15 to 40 in 12 months while maintaining culture and quality bar• Assessed organizational gaps and expanded the leadership team for a Series A company, hiring 17 people in ~4 months including SVP Sales, VP Finance, and three Director-level roles• Diagnosed cultural breakdown at a 250-person company, aligned leadership on a transformation strategy, and executed months of manager training to drive behavioral change	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Led organizational strategy for a 150-person Series B company through two inflection points: a commercial team re-org with key talent acquisition, and a 20% RIF tied to a refined set of operating goals 	
2018 - 2021	Daughters of Rosie - <i>CEO, Co-founder</i>	Oakland, CA
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Built Daughters of Rosie from the ground up, signing twenty contracts with 50–1,000 person manufacturing companies to help them attract, hire, and retain diverse teams Raised \$2.5M in venture capital 	
2017 – 2018	Activate (Cyclotron Road) - <i>Entrepreneur in Residence</i>	Berkeley, CA
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Served as primary mentor for four climate-focused hard-tech startups Advised on product definition, beachhead market strategy, basic business operations, and fundraising preparation 	
2013 - 2017	Bantam Tools (Other Machine Co.) - <i>CEO, Co-founder</i>	Berkeley, CA
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Founded Bantam Tools with technology developed on a DARPA grant Led a \$6.5M financing round across a coalition of 38 investors Led development of three CNC hardware/software products Established a US-based manufacturing facility capable of producing 1,000 machines per year Achieved profitable operations through tight management of finances, supply chain, and venture debt Signed with Digi-Key, the largest US-based electronics distributor Sold the company to MakerBot CEO Bre Pettis 	
2012 - 2013	Otherlab - <i>Program Manager</i>	San Francisco, CA
	Managed an \$8M DARPA project to develop digital design software and manufacturing tools for 1,000 classrooms	
2006 - 2012	University of Texas at Austin, EFRC - <i>PhD Researcher</i>	Austin, TX
	Fundamental research on lithium-ion coupled charge transfer and nanoscale lithium storage materials; licensed the technology to DuPont	
2003 - 2016	SnipeSwipe - <i>CEO, Co-founder</i>	Austin, TX
	Profitable e-commerce company providing eBay assistance services; ran operations, finances, and a 10k+ customer community for 13 years	

HONORS AND SPECIAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Outstanding Young Mechanical Engineer — UT Austin Mechanical Engineering Academy of Distinguished Alumni, 2018
- Top 100 Women Entrepreneurs — Inc. Magazine, 2020
- Henry Crown Fellow, 2016
- First-generation college graduate from rural Arkansas