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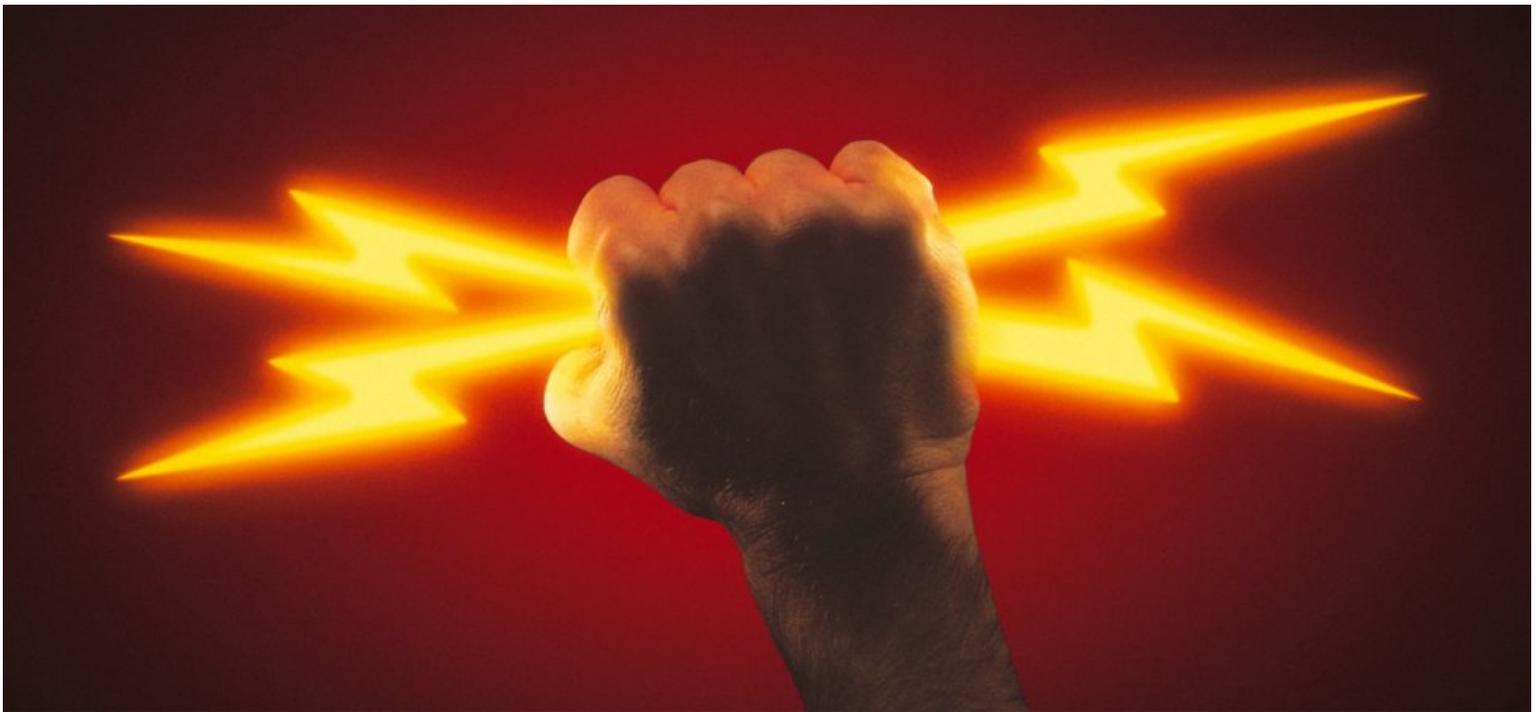
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Being assertive and knowing what you want is not the same as being hostile or belligerent. You just have to know what to say with confidence.



By **Lolly Daskal** *President and CEO, Lead From Within* [@LollyDaskal](#)



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Everyone wants to be more confident, but not everyone knows how to be assertive. Assertive falls right between passive and aggressive. If you're passive about voicing your opinion, you may come across as submissive. And if you are aggressive with your viewpoint, you may come across as a hostile or, even worse, a bully.

But if you learn to be assertive, you can express yourself without being passive or aggressive, and you will have a better chance of getting what you want.

Here are seven simple ways to help yourself become more assertive.

1. Understand assertiveness.

Assertiveness is an interpersonal skill in which you demonstrate the healthy confidence to stand up for yourself while still respecting the rights of others. When you are assertive, you are neither passive nor aggressive, but direct and honest. You don't expect other people to know what you want, so you speak up to ask for what you need calmly and with confidence.

2. Keep your communication style in line.

When it comes to being assertive, communication style is critical, and the key is to be respectful of those with whom you are trying to communicate. Pay attention to your body language as well as the words you say, and make sure you're congruent in your words, body language, and tone. Never expect people to read your mind; if you want something, say so, and if something bothers you, speak up. Look confident when making a request or stating a preference. Stand up straight, lean in a bit, smile or keep a neutral facial expression, and look the person in the eye.

3. Understand and accept differences.

Assertiveness doesn't mean being dismissive of other people's points of view. Just as you state your own opinion, you work to understand other points of view. Don't allow differences to upset you or make you angry; remember that differences don't necessarily mean you are right and the other person is wrong. Try to understand their point of view. Listen respectfully and don't interrupt when they are speaking.

4. Speak simply and directly.

When you're practicing assertiveness, it's important to speak in a way that doesn't imply accusations or make the other person feel guilty. Speaking your truth with candor shouldn't mean making others feel wrong. Be simple, direct, and concise, and state what you know to be true for you. When asserting yourself, remember, less is more. Keep your requests free of meandering or long-winded explanations.

5. Exercise the power of "I."

To be assertive without coming across as hostile, use "I" statements. Make it a habit to say things like "I think ..." or "I feel" Never use aggressive language or phrases like "You never..." or "You always...." These statements trigger other people, leaving them frustrated, and they shut down conversation. "I" statements allow you to be confident and assertive without alienating and eliminating other people.

6. Stay calm.

Being assertive might make you feel excited, but excitement can

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sometimes come across as aggression. Learn to stay cool and calm when expressing yourself; it will make you more confident and allow the other person to relax. Remember to breathe normally and be mindful of body language and eye contact. Be present with each other. Calm mind, calm speech, calm action—it not only gives you confidence, but allows the other person to remain composed as well.

7. Set boundaries.

Boundaries are the rules and limits you create for yourself that help you decide what you will and won't allow. You don't want people to walk all over you, but you don't want people to think you are a bully, either. Setting boundaries will empower you to know when you need to say yes and when you want to say no.

Assertiveness is like any other skill—it takes practice and time to get it right. Keep working through each of these techniques and soon you will feel more confident.

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INC. 5000

The 10 Hottest Startup Cities in America

San Francisco may still be the biggest startup haven, but other rivals are gaining ground.

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By **Emily Canal** *Staff writer, Inc.com* [@emilycanal](#)



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It should come as no surprise that San Francisco continues to nurture fast-growing startups, but other [metropolitan hubs are catching up](#). Thanks to strong talent pipelines, growing markets, and big exits, three Texas cities--Austin, Houston, and Dallas--are proving that you don't need a coastal location to launch a successful startup.

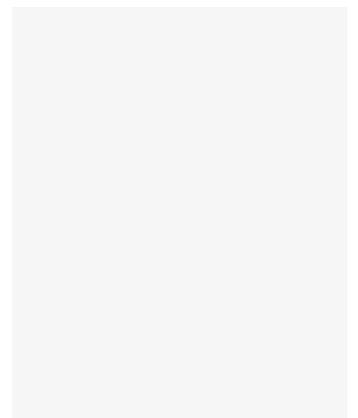
The following 10 U.S. cities have the highest collective three-year revenue growth rates among this year's Inc. 5000, a list of [the fastest-growing private companies in the U.S.](#)

Here they are, in ascending order of fast growth.

10. Dallas

3-year revenue growth **113%** | Inc. 5000 companies **74**

Entrepreneurs flock to city for its low regulations, [zero corporate income taxes](#), and the Dallas Entrepreneur Center, or DEC, which is a nonprofit organization serving as a hub for startup networking, funding, and mentorship. Among Dallas's Inc. 5000 companies are computer consulting firm [Allata](#) (No. 40) and online sporting-goods seller [OrderMyGear](#) (No. 1,443).





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9. Houston



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3-year revenue growth **117%** | Inc. 5000 companies **84**

After Hurricane Harvey hit in 2017, the Houston area's construction industry grew tremendously to help rebuild and repair the storm's damage. Last year, the region led the nation for construction job growth, according to the [Associated General Contractors of America](#). Houston-based Inc. 5000 companies include oil pipeline services company [JP Services](#) (No. 792) and contractor services firm [CC&D](#) (No. 1,973).

8. Chicago

3-year revenue growth **141%** | Inc. 5000 companies **110**

There's more to Chicago than harsh winters and deep-dish pizza: The



EROL AHMEN/UNSPLASH

city has a [diverse and healthy business culture](#), prompting tech behemoths like Stripe, Salesforce, Google, and Facebook to build satellite offices there. Among this year's fastest-growing Inc. 5000 businesses are e-commerce logistics company [ShipBob](#) (No. 99) and digital education startup [RedShelf](#) (No. 231).

7. Los Angeles



3-year revenue growth **160%** | Inc. 5000 companies **102**

Most associate this West Coast hub with Hollywood, but this city is also a hospitable ecosystem for startups. Prominent industries include financial services and advertising and marketing. Startups based there include customer acquisition firm [MuteSix](#) (No. 15) and data management provider [VideoAmp](#) (No. 387).

6. Denver



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3-year revenue growth **161%** | Inc. 5000 companies **48**

Denver has far more to offer than [high altitudes and pot dispensaries](#). In addition to software firms like [Apto](#) (No. 2,019), which specializes in real estate, and [OrthoFi](#) (No. 2,091), which offers back-office services like billing and appointment reminders, the city is becoming a hotbed for food and beverage businesses. That includes filtered water dispenser maker [FloWater](#) (No. 493) and dedicated contract brewery [Sleeping Giant Brewing Company](#) (No. 1,439).

5. Atlanta



RONNY SISON/UNSPLASH

3-year revenue growth **185%** | Inc. 5000 companies **101**

The city is rich in tech talent, thanks to [computer science and engineering programs](#) at Georgia Tech, Morehouse, Spelman, and

Clark Atlanta. That may explain why just over a quarter of the 101 Inc. 5000 Atlanta-based companies are in the software and IT services industries. Overall, 2019 honorees include [GreenPrint](#) (No. 71), which helps businesses reduce their environmental footprint, and coding boot camp [DigitalCrafts](#) (No. 117).

4. San Diego



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3-year revenue growth **188%** | Inc. 5000 companies **71**

With [24 incubators and accelerator programs](#), along with strong talent pipelines from the University of California, San Diego, and nearby military bases, the city is a sanctuary for startups. San Diego's 2019 Inc. 5000 honorees include non-pharmacological treatment startup [Amenity Health](#) (No. 96), plant-based protein drink maker [Koia](#) (No. 187), and [ecofriendly beach towel business Sand Cloud](#) (No. 308).

3. New York City

3-year revenue growth **197%** | Inc. 5000 companies **199**

Tech jobs are dominating the New York City startup scene; the city has [more tech workers](#) than the Bay Area, according to a 2018 report by the market research company Forrester. That's helped unicorns like [Warby Parker](#) and [WeWork](#), as well as the NYC-based Inc. 5000 companies. Among them are online investment company [YieldStreet](#) (No. 14), custom engagement ring site [With Clarity](#) (No. 18), and direct-to-consumer cookie dough enterprise [Sweet Loren's](#) (No. 114).

2. Austin

3-year revenue growth **259%** | Inc. 5000 companies **87**

Austin has become a haven for startups, thanks in part to its high



rate of entrepreneurship and job creation. The city earned the [top spot on Inc.'s 2018 Surge Cities list](#), which tracks the U.S. metro areas with the most economic momentum. In addition to tech giants like Facebook, Amazon, and Apple, which all have outposts in the area, the city boasts innovative food businesses like No. 3, [Cece's Veggie Co.](#), a veggie noodle maker, and No. 650, [Maggie Louise Confections](#), a handcrafted chocolatier.

1. San Francisco

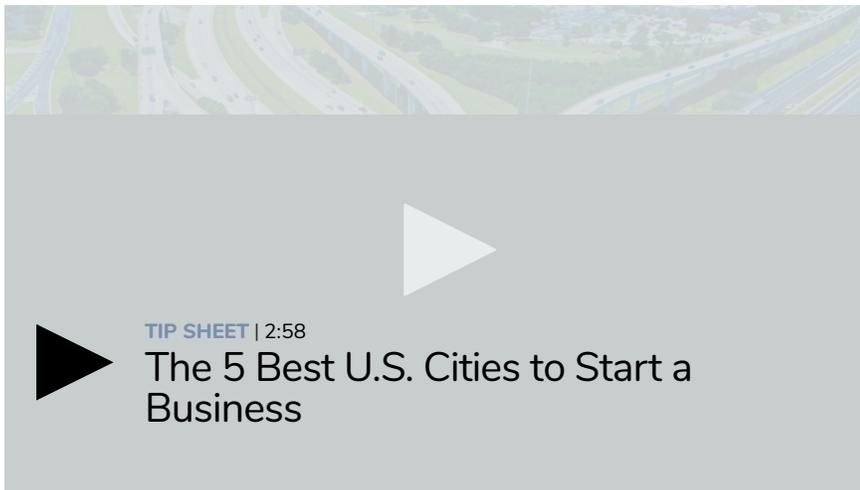
3-year revenue growth **413%** | Inc. 5000 companies **52**

San Francisco reclaims its spot at the top thanks to its renowned startup ecosystem. While the Bay Area has long been known for cultivating unicorns--Airbnb, [Stripe](#), and Uber were all founded there--it's also home to new, flourishing startups like the print-on-demand platform [Printify](#) (No. 24) and ecofriendly home-goods delivery service [Grove Collaborative](#) (No. 87). If you can afford the [expensive](#)



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[rent](#), San Francisco remains one of the best environments for burgeoning businesses.



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