

Restaurant Staffing Platform Serve Reserves Aims At Solving Staffing Crisis For Overlooked Small Businesses

Founder and CEO Jen Selvaggia says small restaurant industry businesses are still overlooked and underserved.



Tacoma, Washington May 19, 2023 ([Issuewire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - Restaurants, bars and cafes across the country, especially independent and owner-operated businesses, are shutting down in record numbers despite more than two years of resumed operations following the pandemic.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 11% of the job openings nationwide are food and beverage industry roles. Signing bonuses, increased hourly wages and other unconventional offerings still aren't enough to fill the gaps in coverage for businesses. This, coupled with minimum wage hikes across the nation are more than small businesses can carry in many situations, and the results have been drastic operational shifts, from reduced hours of business to complete closures.

Serve Reserves Technologies, a Tacoma-based startup, says their platform's focus is to redistribute the power of today's technology platforms to the small-to-medium restaurant industry businesses in Washington State and, eventually, nationwide.

"I've been on all sides of the business for most of my life—from barista and bartending roles to managing to co-owner/operator. I know these struggles first-hand, and from all perspectives," said Jen Selvaggia, Founder and CEO of Serve Reserves.

"Unfortunately, small to medium sized food industry businesses are here in an amazing time for technology and resources--yet they're underserved and overlooked so often," added Selvaggia.

Selvaggia says her vision for Serve Reserves began pre-pandemic in 2015 while contracting for Uber during its Tacoma launch. She attempted to get the concept off the ground, but cost of building an app was far more than she anticipated.

Four years later, she reignited the idea, bringing on a Co-Founder, Haden Gienger, in hopes of revitalizing the energy and sharing resources to make the dream a reality.

"Our vision is far beyond building an app to harvest profits off a nationwide gig working platform. We want to bring something unprecedented to the smaller industry businesses," said Gienger.

As many as nine out of ten restaurants are small businesses, with seven out of ten being single-unit operations. While there are platforms for hiring and temporary shift coverage, the cost of these platforms for a business already safeguarding their bottom line is unattractive at best.

Serve Reserves connects bars, restaurants and cafes with 1099 gig workers, and has modeled their pricing and platform to provide resources at an end cost comparable to the costs of labor when payroll tax and other employee overhead is factored in.

"We're dialed in. It's more than just the cost of on-demand staffing," said Founder Jen Selvaggia. "Small businesses don't just want anyone. They want the right fit: personality, talent and the skills to properly represent the business they built."

Selvaggia's declaration of understanding encompasses the nuances of these businesses.

"The skillset of a dive bar bartender versus a fine dining mixologist matters. The breakfast of a greasy spoon breakfast cook is its own art, compared to the chefs of fine dining. There's millions of algorithmic considerations in between--and we're addressing them," declared Selvaggia.

Serve Reserves applies an algorithmic approach to the profiles of the gig workers, which they call "Reservers" along with the businesses booking workers ("Client Partners"). They establish ranges of experience, ratings and other factors when presenting matches.

"We completed a Pilot launch in the Fall of 2022 and learned endless ways we could really fine tune this

and provide a truly valuable service to both Client Partners and Reservers," said Co-Founder Haden Gienger. "Our vision expanded to addressing the more comprehensive needs of both industry workers and businesses. As we launch, we'll be expanding programs to support growth and vitality for the businesses as well as opportunities for workers. Our long term vision includes incubators, grants and scholarships to businesses and workers."

These targets, according to the two founders, include financial management tools, networking and other unique opportunities that are excluded from business models of the top staffing platforms, such as UpWork, GigSmart, Poached and SnapShyft.

According to Selvaggia, these apps "are great in many predictable ways--they have a platform to book staff, job boards and have some heavy-hitter accounts for corporations and big chains. Our focus is on the small restaurants, cafes and bars that want a unique personality or a very specific skillset for their demographic. Those businesses are still underserved."

When it comes to industry workers, Serve Reserves proudly declares they "maintained the heart of the industry."

"For the workers? It's the same gig-work revolving system with other platforms. We directly addressed the shift from being an employee to being a self-employed 1099 gig worker," said Selvaggia. "The tax implications, as well as the benefits, are often new to industry workers. These are incredibly sharp and savvy people. The service industry sharpens you. We want to help them harness this as a tool for growth--both financially and in career terms. We're putting the tools in place."

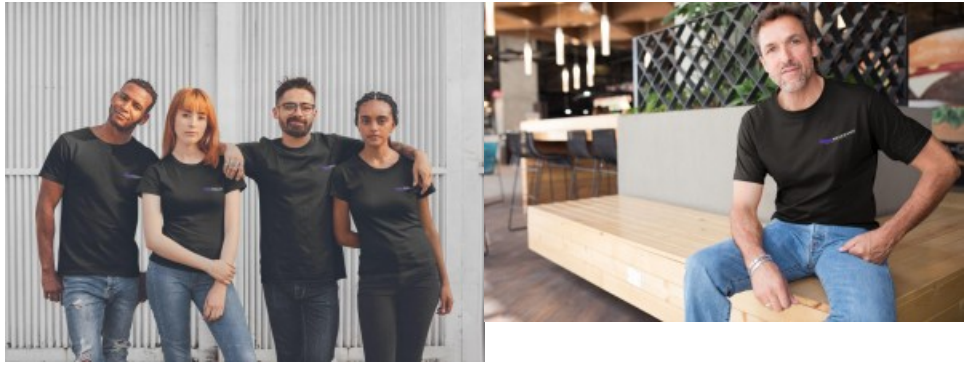
The platform provides hourly compensation rates earned by Reservers includes a calculation to include a 15.3% self-employment tax buffer above a standard wage for a role.

Serve Reserves is in final stages of platform development and has been participating in business incubators, cohorts such as the WTIA Cohort 9 and accelerators such as Pioneer since 2022. They're currently expanding their Washington State Pilot Program and have opened signups to both industry workers and businesses.

The founders have self-funded their platform to-date, and are early in the stages of considering pre-seed funding.

"We're hungry, we're focused, and we are not losing sight of our vision for the industry--specifically the smaller businesses. This resource is long overdue," says Selvaggia, with a smile.

Industry workers and businesses can submit for the pilot program at www.ServeReserves.com. Washington State's pilot program is relaunching now, and expanded programs will launch based on demand into 2024.



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