

# 10,000 Small Businesses program offers support system for business owner

By [ETHAN SHOREY, Valley Breeze Managing Editor](#)



Kristine Merz, of Orange Square in downtown Pawtucket, says the 10,000 Small Businesses program has given her a support system she never had before. (Breeze photo by Ethan Shorey)

**PAWTUCKET** – A city business owner looking to take her company to the next level found exactly the resource she needed with the 10,000 Small Businesses program.

Kristine Merz, president of Orange Square in the Design Exchange on Exchange Street, took part in the program as she plans a major expansion of what the company offers.

“It was more than I expected it to be,” said Merz, who served as graduation

speaker for her class.

Goldman Sachs chose Rhode Island for its first statewide launch of the 10,000 Small Businesses program in 2016, and 57 business leaders graduated from the program last month. The program expands access to capital and provides practical business education for small business owners across the state.

Merz, whose marketing firm has been in business for about 15 years, 12 or so in Pawtucket, said owning a small business can be a lonely thing, but participating in the 10,000 Small Businesses program connected her with small business owners she's still meeting with on a regular basis since graduating.

"It gave me the chance to develop strong relationships that I've never had in the state," she said. "Once you have it, you don't want to lose it."

As she plans for her next 15 years in business, it is so helpful to have people to bounce complex ideas off of, said Merz.

The entrepreneur says she's planning a new service that will help large companies take advantage of growth opportunities. As companies grow, they create divisions and "silos," making it difficult to navigate those opportunities. Orange Square will help the company understand itself by taking people who aren't traditionally interacting with each other and giving them a better understanding of the whole company as it pertains to their role in a growth opportunity.

"We're really good at making complexity understood," said Merz.

Once that initial step of creating cohesiveness is achieved, Orange Square helps develop a clear and compelling business development and marketing plan, said Merz, making sure "everyone sings on the same page." The company helps find the match, or the value proposition for each stakeholder.

If everyone inside a company knows what to do, it creates a better starting point for marketing and sales, she said.

For more on Orange Square, visit [www.orangesquare.com](http://www.orangesquare.com) .