

# 52 tools to help any company innovate like a startup

board of innovation



**"STARTUPS ARE NOT  
SMALLER VERSIONS  
OF BIG COMPANIES"**

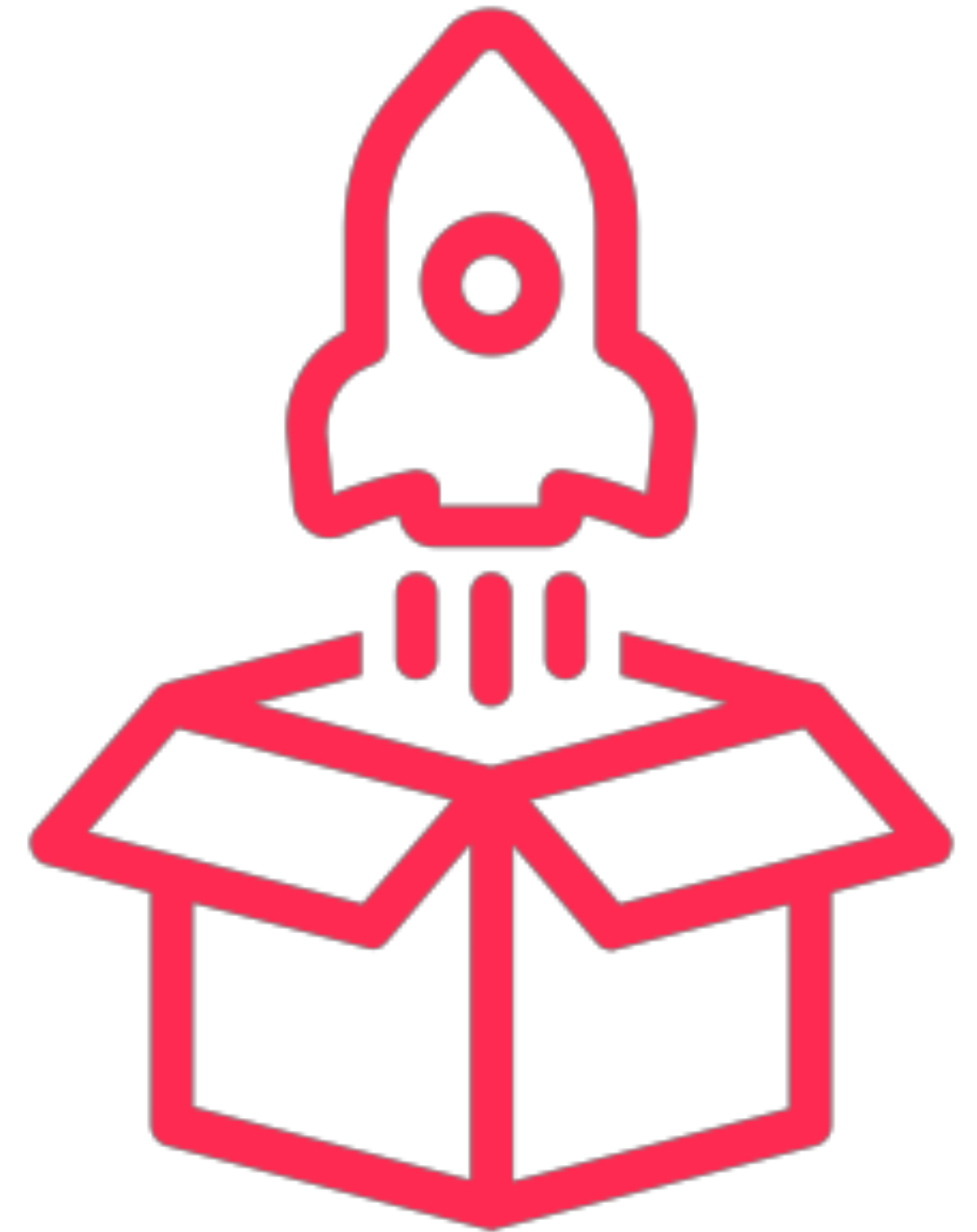
- Steven Blank, author The Startup Owner's Manual

## **By design, startups are better at innovation.**

This deck features 52 ideas to:

- › Help instill an entrepreneurial mindset at large companies.
- › Set up a more creative environment.
- › Cut through the red-tape and go **harder, better, faster, stronger!**

**52 ideas = 52 weeks to innovate!**

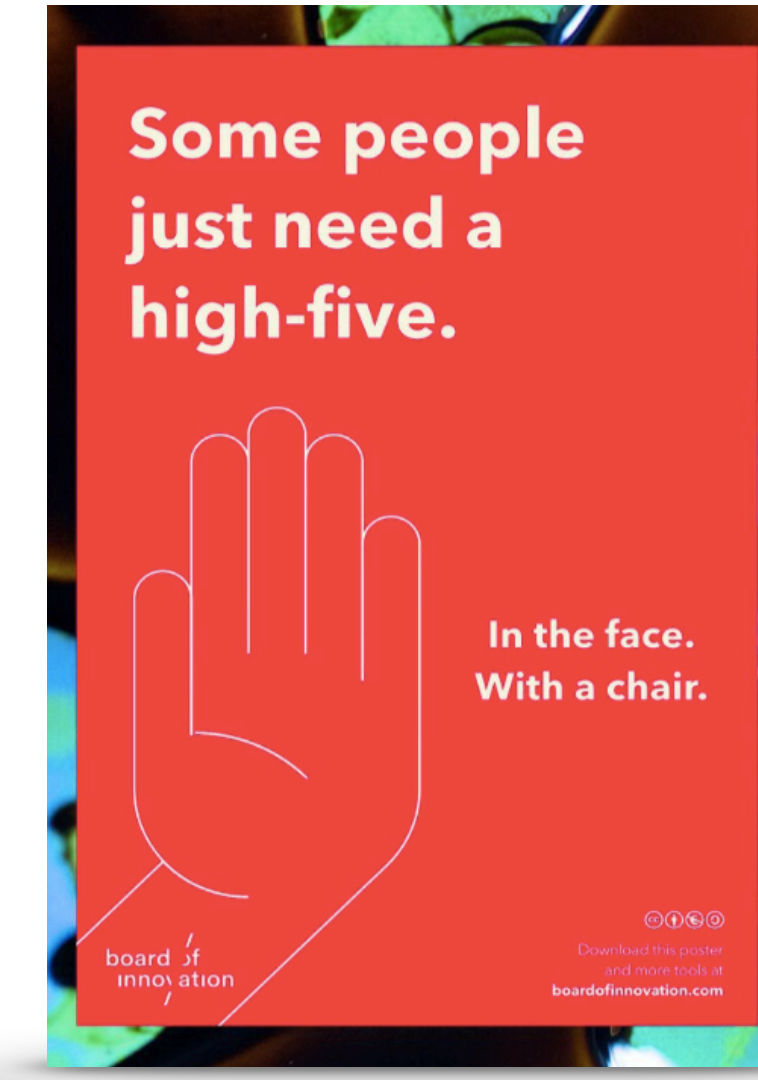


# Install a propaganda center

In the basement of Facebook, people print entrepreneurial posters that are shared around the organization - and published online!

[Browse their examples](#)

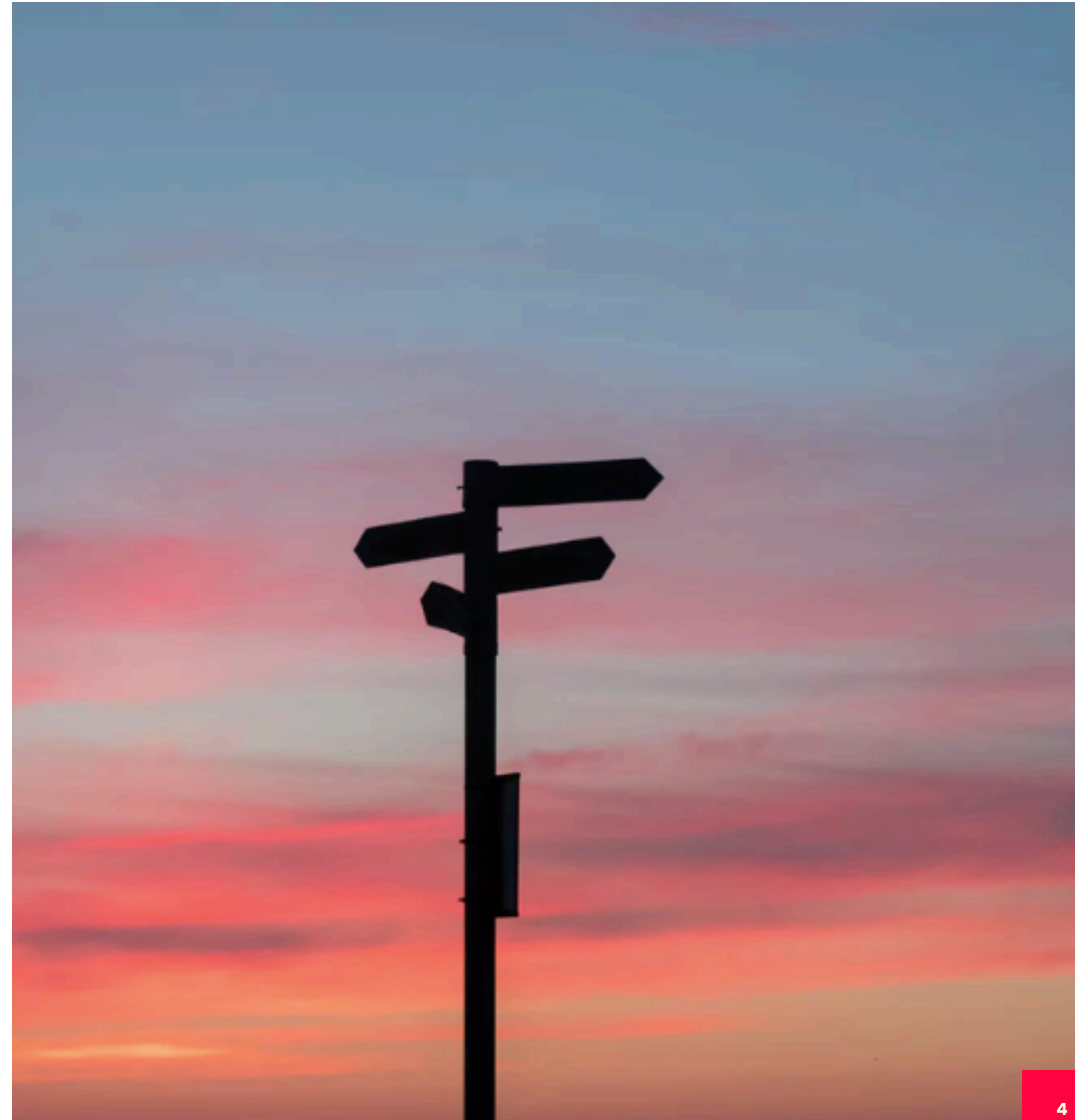
[Download and print our posters](#)



# Swap jobs with startup founders

Don't just talk about startup life - actually live it. Find a startup team and see if people in your company can swap jobs with them for a week.

[Check out the CEO Swap](#)



# Go to tech startup events

Direct interaction with real entrepreneurs is the best way to get infected. Listen to their stories and pitches and build a new network outside the corporate world.

[Browse Meetup events](#)

[Get inspired at Tech Open Air](#)



# Give a prize for failure

Tata group has an annual award for the best failed-idea. The “Dare to Try” award recognizes teams who didn’t achieve the desired results initially, but are raring to keep going and give new solutions a try. “Failure is a gold mine for a great company,” says Ratan Tata.

[Read more about it](#)



Tata created the Dare to Try awards, which is essentially awarded to ideas that have failed. So, its a great way of signaling to everyone in the organization that we are ok with with failure.

*Amantha Imber*



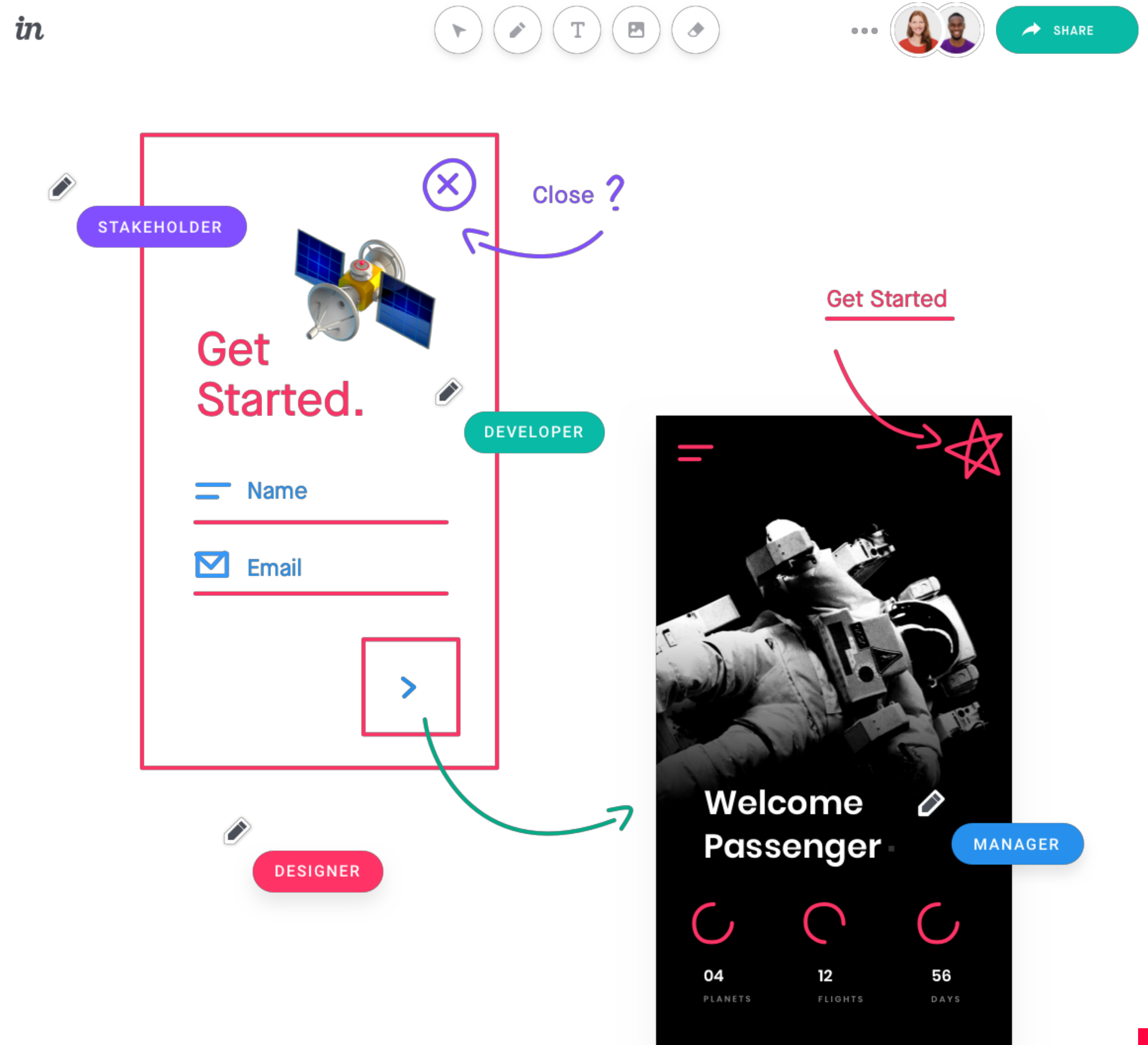
# Drop Excel for paper prototypes

Avoid Microsoft Excel for as long as possible when developing a new idea or business case. Instead, create 'dirty' mock-ups and prototypes to get feedback. Paper is often all startups have, and people will be more honest with their feedback if they can see your work's in its early stages.

[Download our templates](#)

[See some examples](#)

[Mix Digital and Analog with InVision](#)



# Organize innovation boot camps

Put different teams with different backgrounds together for 2-3 days and let them work as a startup on 1 new radical idea. Important: Work outside the company walls!

[Check out our boot camps!](#)

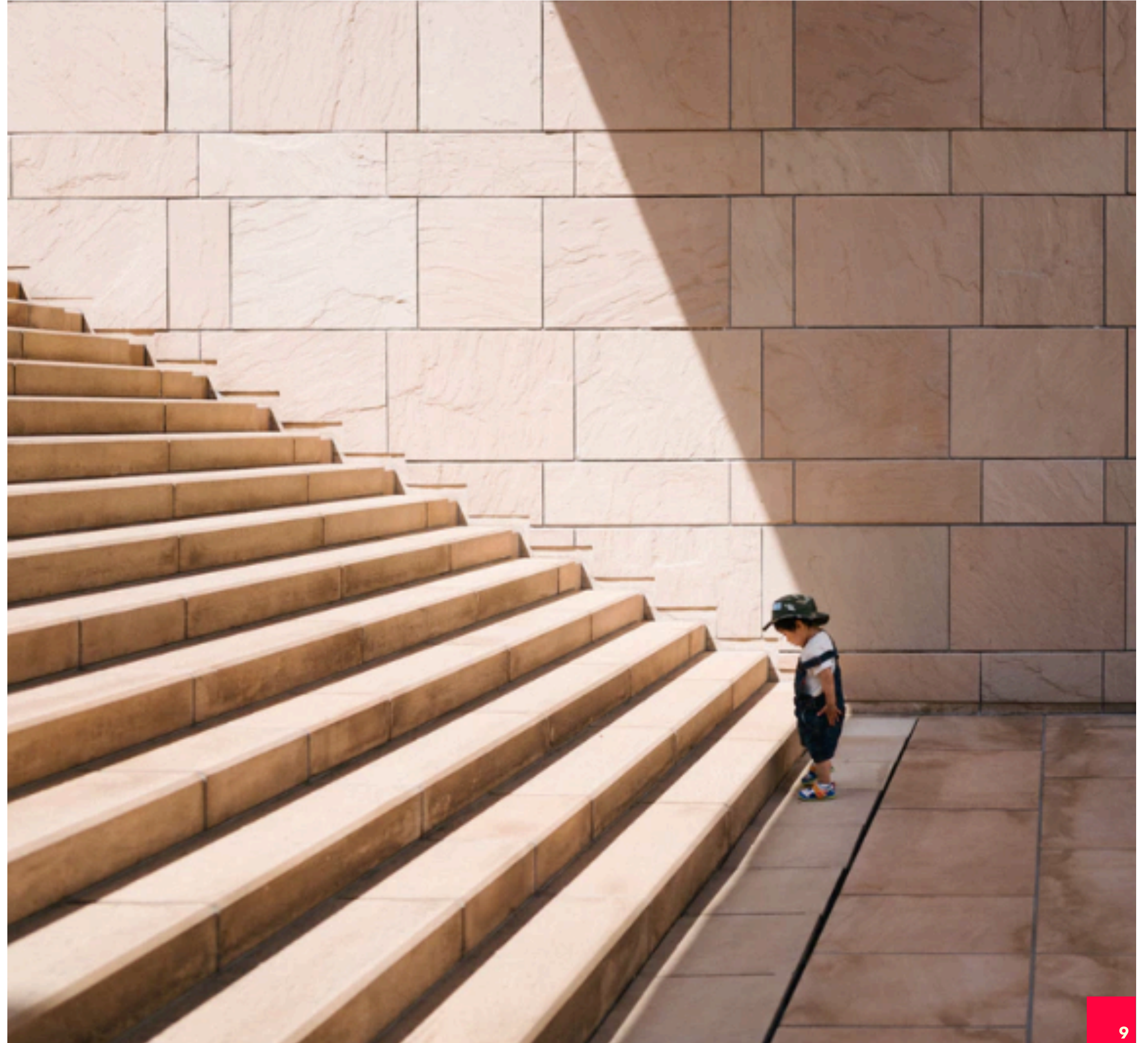




# Try to make \$1000 in 24 hours

New entrepreneurs don't have marketing, finance, and research departments. An entrepreneur has to do and learn everything at once. Take 24H, invent and make a new product, then try to sell it. Would you be up to the task?

[Participate in the 24h startup challenge](#)



# Lending club with startup books

Give 20 startup books to your team of 20 people. Ask them to make notes in the books & swap them after reading. This can be a powerful mindset booster and a great conversation starter at the coffee machine.

[Start with the Lean Startup](#)



# An embassy at a startup hub

If you can't move your HQ to a startup region (e.g., Berlin, Istanbul, Silicon Valley), consider a smaller local office. Place a team abroad and encourage them to immerse themselves in the ecosystem.

[Europe's 100 hottest startups](#)

[The best startup cities](#)



# Kill the “employee of the month”

How do you expect to create a context where entrepreneurial behavior can flourish if you hand out awards to people that are best in following the red tape and corporate policies? “Thanks for sticking to the rules.” #not

10 intrapreneurship commandments



# Read the latest startup news

Subscribe to newsfeeds and platforms that highlight remarkable startups. Follow experts on Twitter or other channels that curate the news for you.

[Our own list of resources](#)

[New startups every day](#)

[New startups every hour](#)

[New startups every minute](#)



# Ask VCs in a business case pitch

Don't limit the evaluation of a strategic business case to the CEO & CFO. Ask external VCs and startup investors to join the jury. They often look at innovative business plans differently - learn why.

Angel investors



# Connect with startups online

Many tech startups are very open to sharing their insights. Platforms like Quora and niche LinkedIn-groups are perfect places to get in touch with those people and discuss challenges in your market.

[Connect on LinkedIn](#)

[Quora: Social media on steroids](#)



# Learn like a startup

Most startups don't have HR departments that can spend thousands of dollars. Many turn to (free) online courses in order to acquire new skills.

[Get a startup MBA](#)





# Put employees on the StartupBus

Depending on the format, people jump on the StartupBus (which is a boot camp, competition, and road trip in one) to build a fresh new startup while visiting numerous startups within a specific region. It's a great experience!

[Do you have what it takes?](#)

[Video: See the experience](#)



# Startup founders advisory board

Invite young entrepreneurs to join your corporate advisory board. People with fewer grey hairs will have a completely different view on how you run your business.

**Book: Startup Boards**



# Encourage playtime: 20% time

Google was the biggest ambassador for the '20% time' philosophy. It involves allowing people to use 'paid' time to work on projects they're passionate about. This empowers employees, creating the right context for them to become intrapreneurs.

[Read more about it here!](#)



# Give your team a next-gen budget

In order to be aware of how your market might change in the future, make your team use the products and services of tomorrow. At Board of Innovation, each team member gets an extra budget of €50/m to try new things.

Keep an eye on [Kickstarter](#)



# Give teams a share of the profit

Entrepreneurs have the benefit of ownership over their ideas. When successful, they will see a monetary return. Give a percentage of future profits to your people. When launched as a spin-out venture, consider giving them real shares.

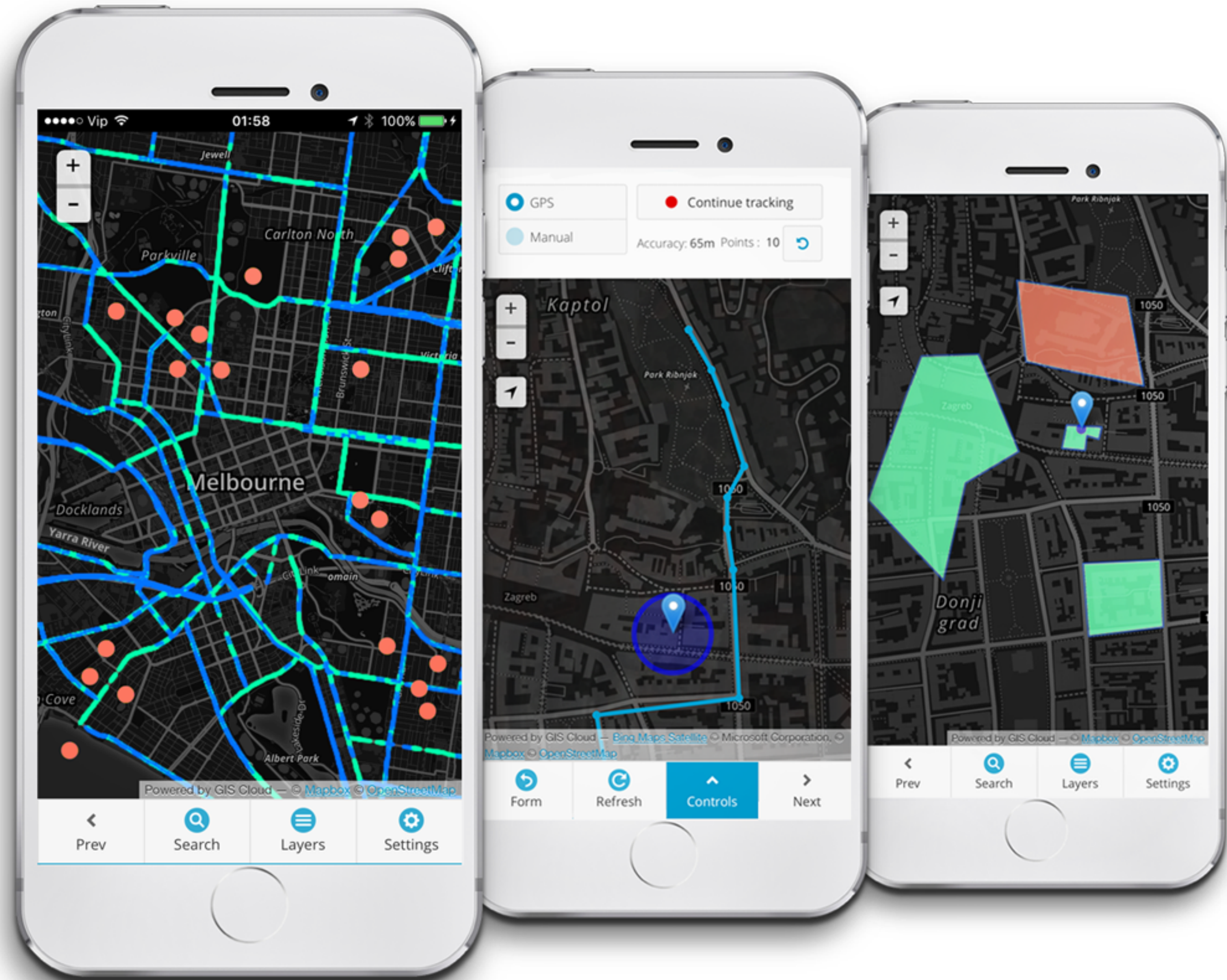
Why is it important?



# Connect with a startup nearby

Browse on maps or scout startup events to find inspiring teams to interact with. Invite other entrepreneurs for lunch or a breakfast session.

Dutch tech-startup map



# Training in entrepreneurship

While some people seem to be born with an entrepreneurial genome, others need a small push. A series of workshops to unlock the entrepreneurial potential of team members is often a good start.

[See some of our modules](#)



# Organize Hackathons

Invite external developers and designers to work with your internal teams to create radical new products with your resources. (e.g., open client data, new APIs). An inspiring context abroad for a weekend works best.

[Check out the benefits](#)





# Invest in a startup

You could start to use a B2B crowdfunding platform to buy a stake in an external venture. Spread the message within your organization so people will look at the startup scene and look beyond your normal competitors.

**Example: Fundable**



# Set up an incubator/accelerator

There are a lot of options to explore. Many corporates set up programs where teams get (financial) resources and hands-on guidance by experts to grow their business. Rule of thumb: 3 people, €30K, 3 months.

Top accelerators in Europe

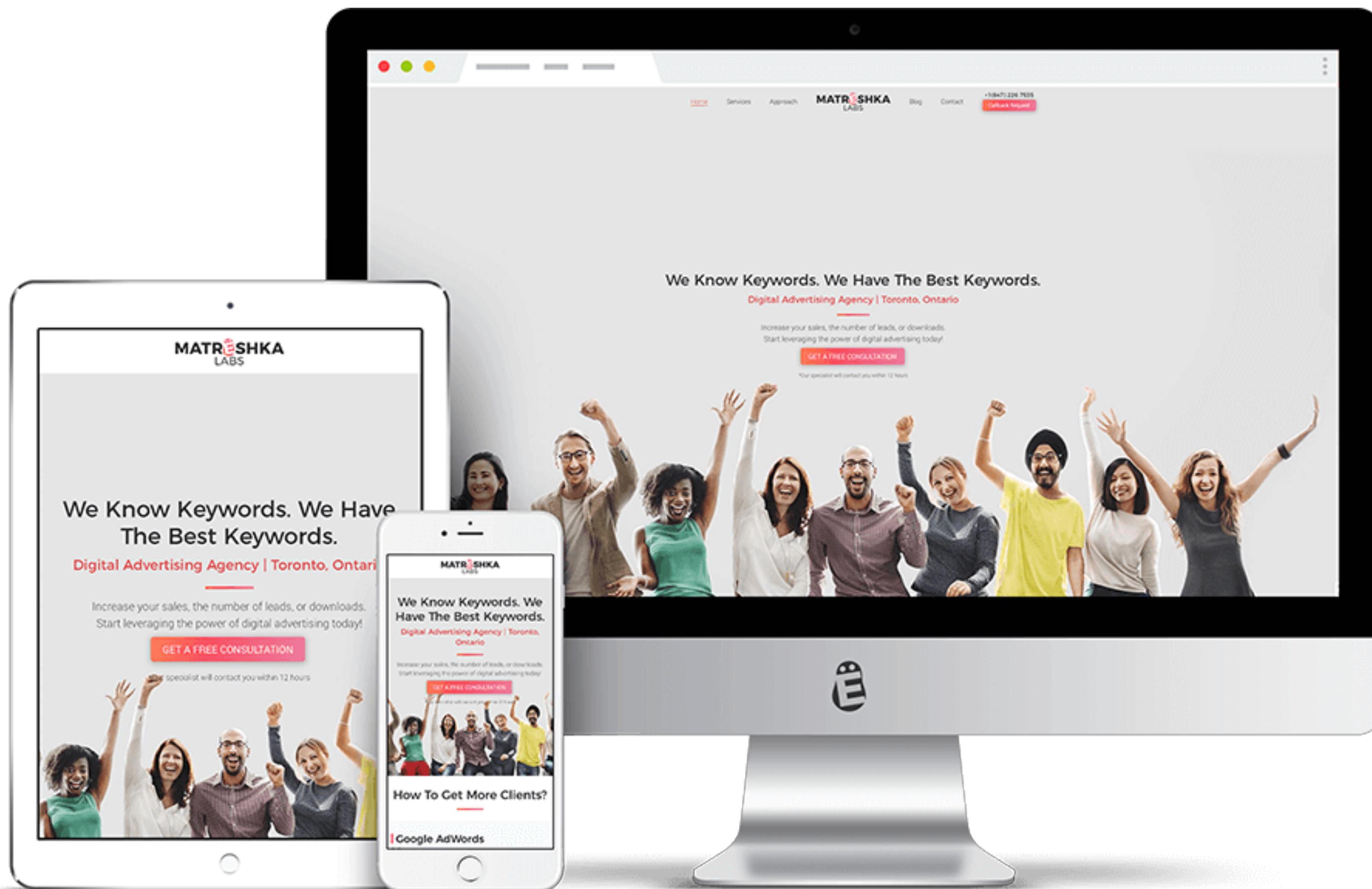


# Learn to create launch pages

With simple tools, everyone can make a micro-website to showcase a new invention. Even before the service and business case is developed, you can get market feedback while building a list of interested clients.

Try Startup Framework

Play with Strikingly



# Broadcast startup events

Many tech and innovation events have a (paid) option enabling live streaming. Put up a screen, get beer and pizza, sit back, and enjoy the show. Consider inviting external people to join in and turn your gathering into an informal networking event.

[Lean Startup livestream](#)



# Try social ideation software

There are dozens of software suites that give recognition and collaboration tools to intrapreneurs looking to develop their ideas. See what works best for your organization (Spoiler: Sharepoint won't do the trick).

Keep an eye out on Yambla



# Get an entrepreneur-hotline

Open your own hotline to share your entrepreneurial knowledge with others. Seek out other points of view and broaden your mindset by participating in other hotlines as well! You can learn a lot by communicating with people from different industries.

[Ask for advice!](#)



# Internal crowdfunding platform

Do like IBM and give your staff funds to invest in projects initiated by their fellow employees. People will need to sell an idea and find support within the organization.

[See how IBM does it](#)



# Pull teams out of their comfort zones

There are plenty of ways to do this, but a great way to start is by running a pitch night where staff present to children or people with no understanding of business. Instantly, your employees will need to drop their usual buzzword lingo and pitch the business case in a creative way.

[Maybe your pitch stinks?](#)

[Check out one of our guides!](#)





# Share risk & investment

When an employee (intrapreneur) wants to develop a new idea, ask them to invest free time or sacrifice part of their wage in exchange for a return on the profits and the ability to lead the new business unit, etc. This empowers them while ensuring they're fully committed.

[Read more about it](#)



# Survive on the street

Take away the luxury and benefits of the corporate context. The StreetWize project is a great example. Managers are forced to live on the street and find solutions for food & shelter without money (inspired by kids in slums).

How street smart are you?



# Full financial transparency

See if you can share financial, sales, and wage details with your team. An extreme example is the startup Buffer. Along with being open about salaries, they go one step further by making their emails and many of their metrics public.

[See all the salaries at Buffer](#)



# Make everyone responsible for client support

Make everyone in the company answer client support questions related to their role. Direct contact with real customers will push people to come up with better solutions and new initiatives.

Try it out with [intercom.com](https://www.intercom.com)



# In-house hackers for hire

To prevent people from wasting 1.5 years on research, give them the resources they need to validate new business ideas within a couple of days. At IBM, there's a team of "digital makers" that will create a prototype to get market feedback from real users.

[Talk to who runs this team](#)



# Organize #AmazeMe sessions

Ask people to share ideas, remarkable insights, or positive experiences in brief mini-presentations (max 15 mins). As the name suggests, the goal is to amaze the audience. We hold AmazeMe sessions at Board of Innovation every 2 weeks.

Look for PechaKucha events



# Ignore corporate identity

Allow entrepreneurial teams to drop the corporate logo and branding and go live with their own logo, tone-of-voice, and team name. This creates a sense of ownership, which can be far more valuable than some noise in the corporation's voice.

Try 99 designs

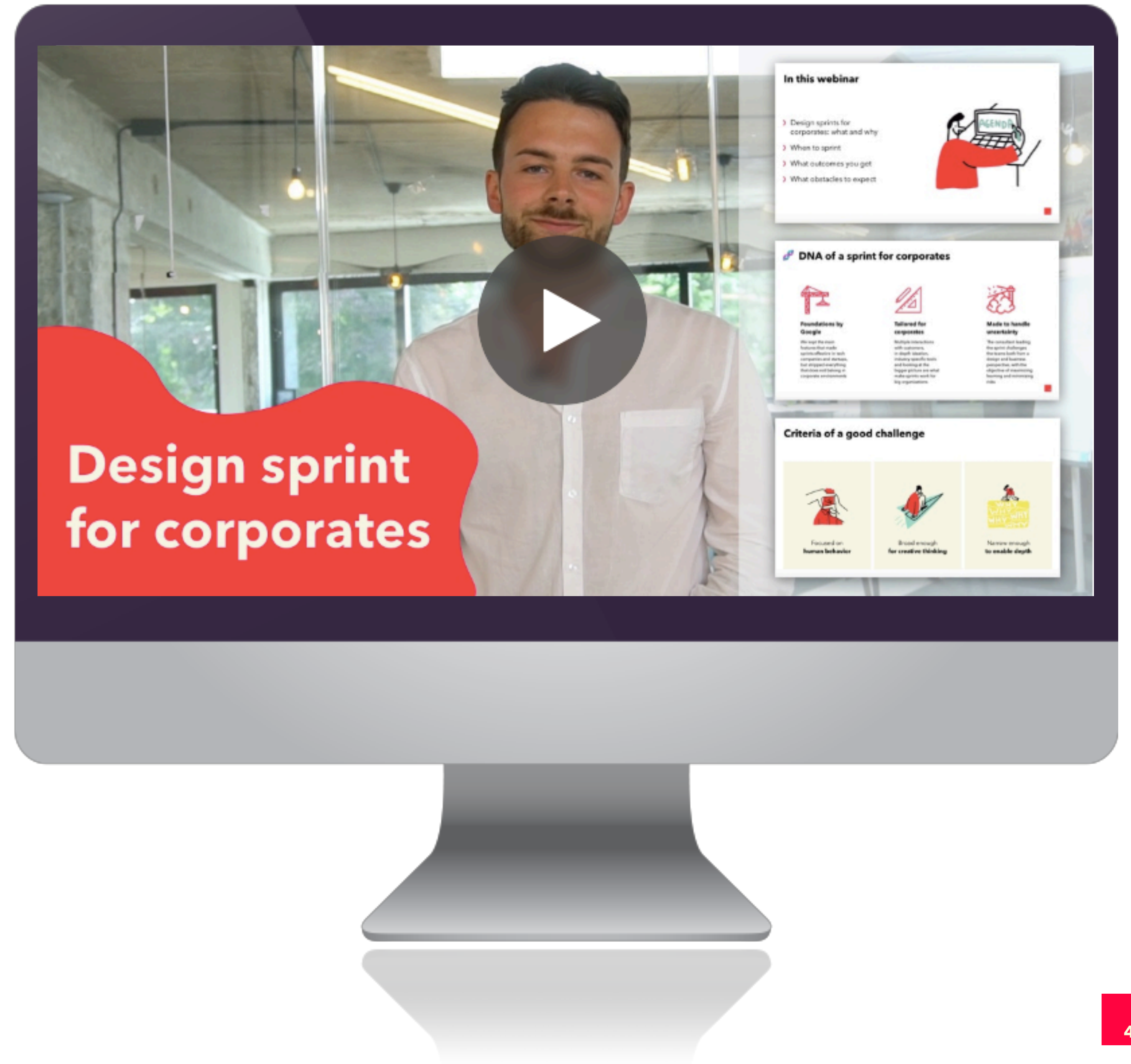


# Start an in-company roadshow

Take a selection of your most inspiring intrapreneurs on a roadshow to different departments of your company. Let them explain their entrepreneurial journey so far.

Try a webinar!

Check out ours!





# Offer a spin-off program

Intrapreneurs that create a new venture not aligned with the corporate strategy are often blocked and ignored. Some leave due to this frustration. Instead, offer a way to encourage their ventures and maintain the relationship - even if they decide to go.

**Nokia funds people they lay-off**



# Make intrapreneurs feel special.

Put the spotlight on people that are working on a corporate venture or entrepreneurial project. Even small things like giving them an exclusive business card can help highlight that these people have a special status within the organization.

Forbes elaborates



# Freedom: to organize their desk

Don't let red-tape, policies, and stuffy cubicles push entrepreneurs out of your organization. Allocate a budget to enable teams to set up their ideal working environment, complete with comfy chairs and innovation tools.

[Get some inspo here](#)



# Install your own in-house Fab Lab

Set up a workshop with all the tools your team needs to create hardware prototypes and mockups, such as a 3D printer, Arduino boards, and CNC tooling. You could also add a user-test setup (with a camera, one-way mirror, and whatever else you need).

[The future of Fab Labs](#)

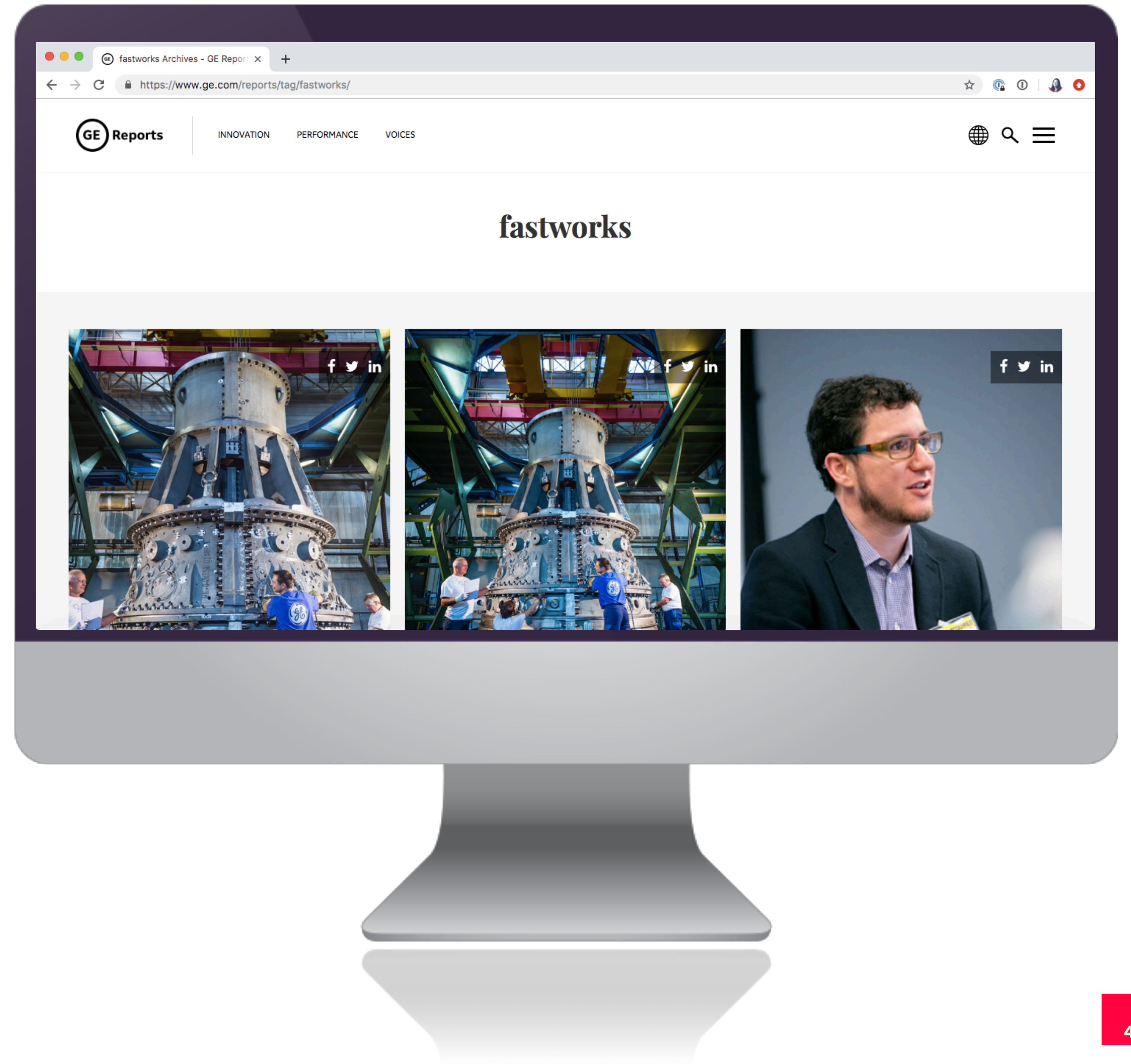
[Visit the Fab Lab social network](#)



# Train a platoon of lean coaches

GE launched an initiative called Fastworks to apply principles of the Lean Startup to manufacturing projects. So far, 80 coaches help to spread this message by working on in-house innovation projects.

Read about it on [GE.com](https://www.ge.com)



# Drop your Gantt charts

The eighties called, they want their Gantt charts back. A more agile way to tackle projects is a new model called The Validation Board. Get out of the building to test assumption instead of crafting lengthy project sheets.

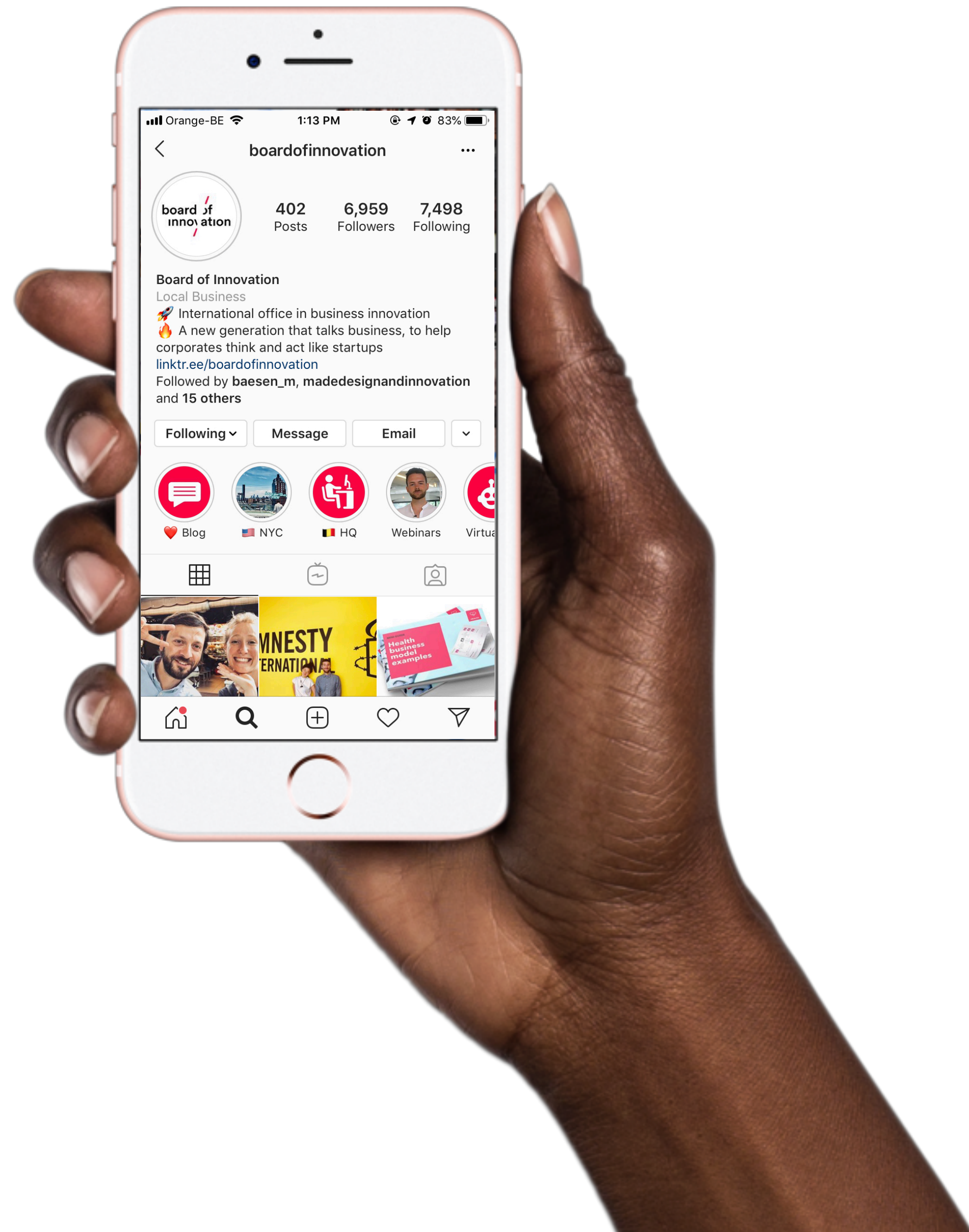
[See it here](#)



# Hire an in-house video reporter

In order to attract entrepreneurs to your company, people need to know about the innovative projects you run. Some (crazy) startups have their own video reporter to document and share what they're doing. You could start small by posting about the work you're doing on Instagram.

[Check out our Instagram!](#)



# Use your employees as a test group

Identify early adopters within your company (from more than one department) and ask them to test your new venture and product ideas. Not only will this enable you to get valuable feedback, but it will make these employees feel valued.

[Need more reasons?](#)



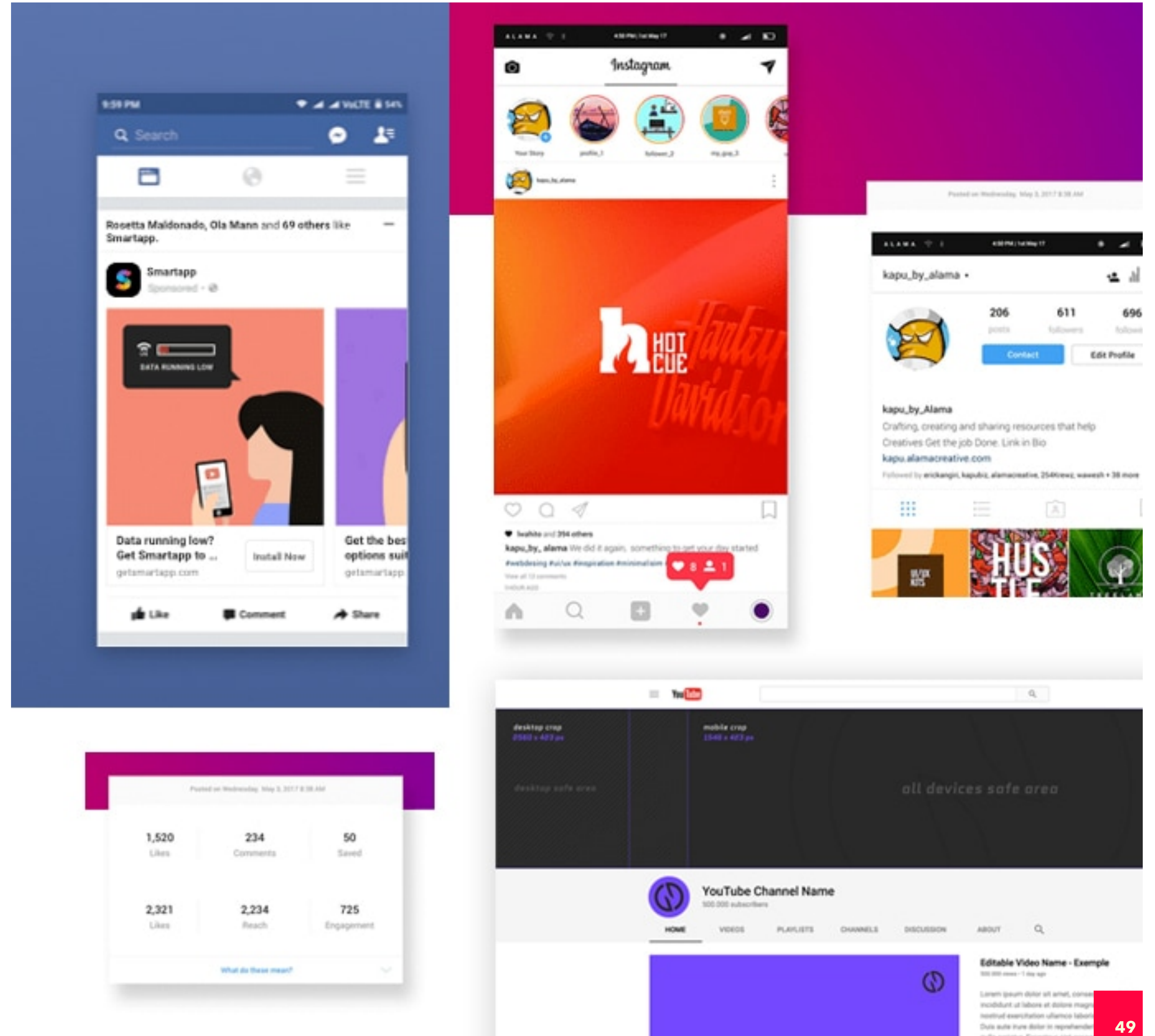


# Switch to startup software tools

Ignore Sharepoint and bloated corporate SAP solutions. Give your team access to the same online tools that many startups use to grow their business.

Explore tools in this database

Make your startup smarter



# Ditch timesheets

Stop tracking how and when people work (time spent, meetings attended, etc.). Instead, make teams feel more engaged by focusing only on results-based metrics. But if you do, keep in mind that even failed initiatives can teach us valuable lessons!

[How timesheets tax creativity](#)



# Sponsor startup events

Get involved with conferences to show your employees that you support entrepreneurs. For sponsoring the event, you'll often receive VIP tickets. Award these to your employees when they come up with great ideas.

[Browse 600+ events](#)



# Acqui-hire a startup team

Many large corporates buy startups. Why? Not (only) for the technology or products, but to have a team of ambitious entrepreneurs within the organization.

[Find out more](#)



# Coworking space for startups

Many large corporates are starting to offer affordable (or free) office spaces to ambitious startups to enable their staff to interact with entrepreneurs. Make sure to have an informal space to do so, such as shared catered lunch or breakfast sessions.

[See some great coworking spaces](#)



# This guide was brought to you by:



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We help large enterprises innovate like startups. Check us out at [boardofinnovation.com](http://boardofinnovation.com)

[Contact us!](#)

**"A SHIP IN A HARBOUR IS SAFE,  
BUT THIS IS NOT WHAT A SHIP IS  
BUILT FOR."**

John A. Shedd