



Springboard

STARTUP MANUAL

Guide to start and launch your startup business in
Tallinn, Riga and Turku

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1. Introduction

Dear startup founder,

Launching a startup company is a challenging and bumpy road with its successes and failures, with many uncertainties and a lot of testing. We know that, and this is the reason why the partners from Finland, Estonia and Latvia initiated the Central Baltic Springboard project, aiming to accelerate the early stage startup companies, providing cross-border matchmaking opportunities and business support.

The project partners of Springboard include the best universities and business development organisations like University of Turku, Turku Science Park Ltd, Tallinn Science Park Tehnopol, Tallinn University of Technology, Latvia Technology Park and Riga Technical University. Together we have years' worth of know-how working with students, entrepreneurs and startup companies, trying to make the difference and penetrate the global market.

There are obviously some challenges included to the process. The regions of the Baltics and Scandinavia are relatively small and the lack of business support, investments and talent strikes out every now and then. This is the main trigger for the Springboard project.

During the project, we tackled challenges like cross-border cooperation between startups and made the progress for students from the universities to business supporting programs like incubators and accelerators as smooth as possible. We helped tens of companies to establish business links within the region and encouraged tens of student teams to take on the road of becoming an entrepreneur.

Based on the things we learned by doing all this, this manual is combined, giving you the recommendations and insights of how to launch and run a successful company and find valuable partners in the region. We hope you find it useful and helpful during your journey to success!



Johanna Puhtila

Senior Advisor of Startup Companies and Manager of CB Springboard



2. Startups at glance

2.1. What is a startup company?

Before getting started, it is important to understand why are some companies considered to be high-growth potential startups and others not. A startup company is an entrepreneurial venture which is typically a newly emerged, fast-growing business that aims to meet a marketplace need by developing a viable business model around innovative product, service, process or a platform. A startup is usually a company such as a small business, a partnership or an organization designed to effectively develop and validate a scalable business model. Startup companies are normally operating with very limited resources to find repeatable and scalable business model to go global.

Startup companies can come in all forms and sizes. Mainly, some of the critical tasks are to build a co-founder team to secure key skills, know-how, financial resources, and other elements to conduct research on the target market. Typically, a startup will begin by building a first minimum viable product (MVP), a prototype, to validate, assess and develop the new ideas or business concepts. In addition, startups founders do research to deepen their understanding of the ideas, technologies or business concepts and their commercial potential. Startup founding team must be a group of innovators, always in search of new markets, product or service features and clients, to test and implement their ideas as quickly and cost-efficient as possible.

2.2. Main characteristics of a startup company

There are many growth and performance related indicators that help to distinguish if your business idea and the execution plan can be considered as founding the startup company. The most common characteristics of a startup company are the following:

- High growth potential – Your business idea is based on shaky hypothesis, but you have clearly indicated the need on the market and if the execution works out as intended, the product or service has impact on many potential customers. High growth is also potential is also related to quick implementation, meaning that the product or service can be launched quickly and brings massive traction at once.
- Scalability – Your business model is build up so that the product or service can be offered in many different markets at once. There might be some customizations in the customer accusation model (e.g. customer support, language, logistics, marketing activities), but in general the global market can be tackled at the same time with the same core product or service.



- High risk of failing – Your startup idea is unique or different/better than the competitive solutions on the market. This makes the implementation (making the customer to prefer your product or service instead of the competitive ones) uncertain and naturally quite risky. There are startup companies that are following the success stories of other companies (using the same business model, entering the same markets, having similar product or service features). In this case the traction takes longer but some risks connected with sales and marketing can be reduced as well.
- Lack of resources – Startup companies are always lacking the resources (mostly time and money) because their target market is large and the product development requires a lot of testing and re-deployment. The key is to find a correct balance between the development and implementation. Your ultimate goal is to reach the revenue phase as quickly and cost-efficient as possible.
- Lot of uncertainties in the business model – Many startups are providing unique services or product to the customers. That is the main reason why the business model (way of providing the solution and earning money) is not clearly defined in the beginning. You need to test your clients with various sets of business models to find out the one that fits the best. After finding the suitable model, scaling up is relatively easy.
- Learning by doing mentality – There is no complete guide that helps to build up a successful startup company (there are lot of good advice available though). Building the startup company is in constant change dictated by market conditions, investments, habits, development of technology etc. The most certain way of getting accurate feedback on your activities is to run real-life test with real-life customers and real products or services (or the prototype, MVP of the product or service).
- Client oriented approach – Client is the king because they help to validate your hypothesis, give you the valuable feedback, and eventually, pay you money for the product or service. Reaching your target customers can be a harsh process but it needs to be done as soon as possible. If you want to spare some time and money, face your clients even before your core team is happy with the MVP or prototype that has been built. Customers are willing to be part of the product development process and are really eager to give you valuable feedback.
- Different growth funding schemes – Reaching profitability with your startup business can be a road with very many sidetracks. To support the quick growth and fierce product development in a startup company, there is an option to use external money. This could be in the form of a loan, an investment, a grant, a crowdfunding solution etc. Main thing is to keep an eye on the financial resources and performance ratio and to find out as quickly as possible if additional resources will be needed. Raising capital can be a long process and starting at the right time can make all the differences.



- Importance of team/founders – The core team of a startup company is the biggest asset the company has. There are two things that are crucial to well-performing startup teams: mix of different professional skills that are needed to build the product or launch the service and the similarities in the expectations and working models of the team-members. As long as a startup company has not launched the product or service and has not reached the revenue phase, the value of the company can be only estimated by the performance of the team. This is the number one thing for external investors as well.

Main differences between a startup and SME

Setting up and developing a startup venture can be often very different than running a traditional small or medium sized enterprise (SME). The main differences can be indicated as follows:

- Growth and scalability.
Startups are different from traditional businesses primarily because they are designed to grow fast. By design, this means that they have something they can sell to a very large market. For most businesses, this is not the case. This is also one of the reasons, most startups are tech startups. Online businesses can more easily reach a large market because people can buy from you or use your product regardless of whether you're awake or not and whether you're in London or New York. The distinctive feature of most startups is that they are not constrained by these factors. According to investor and angel entrepreneur Paul Graham, "that's the difference between Google and a barbershop. A barbershop doesn't scale." To grow rapidly, you need to make something you can sell to a very big market. Generally speaking, to operate a business, you don't need a big market. You just need a market and you need to be able to reach and serve all of those within your market.
- The relationship with funding.
Apart from having different ways of thinking about growth, startups seek financial investment differently than most small businesses. Startups tend to rely on capital that comes via angel investors or venture capital firms, while small business operations may rely on loans and grants, solely on their own revenue stream. The interesting thing about venture capital is that those providing it, tend to have a more active role in whatever company they are backing. While a small business awarded a grant or loan may occasionally need to report back to their bank, a startup with angel backing will probably be getting a bit more help. They'll be receiving advice from the investor (after all, the investor is the one taking the biggest risk) and, if you're young and inexperienced, there's probably nothing better than a helping



hand. This is especially true for those teams or individuals that become a part of an accelerator or incubator program.

- Planning for the “end,” or the exit strategy.

Another thing you’ll want to keep in mind is your vision for your business. If you’re pitching for investment without an exit strategy, you’re unlikely to get it. Investors usually need an exit strategy as they need to maximize their return of the investment. If you’d still like to be running the company in 10 years’ time, you’re probably going to want to ensure that exit plan comes in the form of a steady revenue stream that allows you to pay off investors. “Exit strategy” development is a problem you won’t have with your own business, at least not until you’ve made it big or until you change your mind about owning the business. The point is, in a traditional business (not a startup), you don’t need an exit strategy at the start. You’ll be entirely responsible for the future of your company and it will be down to you whether or not you run it for the rest of your life or decide to sell, merge or launch it on the stock market.

2.3. Am I likely to become a startup entrepreneur?

Taking into account the rise of startup incubators and accelerators, the availability of startup investments for early-stage companies, and the fact that big companies everywhere are buying startups instead of focusing on in-house innovation, you may want to consider launching a startup instead of a traditional business. Here are some signs a startup may be the right type of business for you:

- You like working hard, but also to move on.
A lot of startup founders are called serial entrepreneurs – entrepreneurs who have founded many startup ventures. If you know you’ll get bored or want to see many of your ideas to become live, a startup may be a better approach. Naturally, this means you need staying power and the ability to work your butt off! For all you know, your startup is going to have a five-year lifespan, and it’s going to be down to you to make it work and to make it work fast. If that’s a problem for you, you might want to think twice about starting any type of business.
- Your product or service (or idea) has a huge market potential.
In order to grow rapidly you’re going to need to “think big” or, as angel investor Paul Graham says, “to make something you can sell to a big market.” A really big market, ideally in the realm of millions. This is part of the reason tech startups are the most popular type of startup—it’s easy to reach millions on the internet, regardless of where they live or when they do business. A local cafe does not have this luxury.
- You like input and guidance from business experts.
Incubators and accelerators are great for those that have never started a business



before, or perhaps who have never started a startup. If you're unsure about what to focus on or how to think about rapid growth, this might be a good place to get started. The same goes to mentors. There are plenty of people around who have done something slightly similar to you and who are willing to provide you their insights and experiences. If you are willing to use support like that, and you react according to the advice, it is likely you reach the success and avoid the mistakes that a lot of entrepreneurs have made before you. Working with advisors and mentors can be hard, but it pays off as long as you keep an open mind.

- You are an innovator.
In the world of startup companies, the idea is everything, as is rapid innovation. Many companies today have stopped innovating internally and instead spend millions, sometimes billions acquiring startups that do it for them instead. This is why many startup founders launch with exit strategies that focus on a buy-out. If you like innovation and you are eager to test-drive many of your innovative ideas every now or then, you are likely to be a startup entrepreneur.
- You have a special skill.
Successful startups are launched by teams, but it is important that each team-member (especially in the beginning) has a strong skill that helps to accomplish the goals of the company. Special skill also means that you have deep understanding on one or two subjects and you are ready to turn your knowledge into success of the startup. It doesn't really matter if you happen to be a geeky engineer or passionate CEO. As long as you convert this passion to the benefit of the company, it is likely to be a success.
- You love a certain amount of uncertainty.
Building a startup company is often related to flexible working hours, unpredictable obstacles, emerging challenges and appearance of incredible obstacles. What founding a startup company definitely is not, is 8-hour workdays, fixed salary, solid bonus system, perks and good night sleep. So, you need to be prepared for that. If you like fixed route of the carrier and you have daily responsibilities that keep you from committing full time to the startup, it is definitely an obstacle. According to startup entrepreneur and investor, Ben Horowitz: "As a startup founder I slept like a baby. I woke up every two hours and cried."



3. Launching a startup company

3.1. Recommendations for startup founders

A lot of startup companies are failing. The ratio of successful startups can be estimated something around 15-20% of all the ventures established. So, it is very likely that the first startups launched, might end up nowhere. What is still important is the experience the startup founders gain. Learning by doing and working together with business advisors and mentors give the founders a set of skills and know-how that makes it easier to succeed with the next startup company to be launched.

To increase the likeliness of your startup to become a successful one, it is important to follow the steps of other entrepreneurs. It helps you to prevent the mistakes that the others have made and gives you the opportunity to follow the same route that proved to be successful for others. The majority of successful startup founders highlight the following aspects as important ones, if you consider launching your own startup company.

Building a strong and committed team

There is no startup company who has succeeded without a strong team. It is the number one thing you need to consider before moving on. The founding team of a startup should have the skill-set and motivation to work together and to achieve the common goals. It is always recommended to combine team out of the people who are different. The people who have different experiences, different knowledge and different cultural background. The ideal teams of startup companies definitely combine the roles of business developer, engineering or technology professional, marketing and sales specialist and product or service development specialist. The roles, of course, can be a bit different, depending on the core of your product or service.

The formation of startup teams should be done not according to friendships, but according to the skills needed to build up a successful company. In some cases, it is more convenient to do business with people you know well, but if you want to find best from the best, one should look further than that. As a startup founder, it is important to describe the skill-set that is required to execute the idea and then seek for the right persons matching the profile. In most of the cases it means that team members should be looked from other countries and even from other continents, but it all pays off, as it grants you the cultural and experience mix required to be successful.

Team commitment is always an issue if some members of the team have other daily obligations and roles to be filled. Launching a startup company often requires 100% commitment from the key-founders. If the commitment level is under that, the progress takes longer and the startup is likely



to run out of resources. It is recommended that the startup company should operate in sprints, where all the team-members commit their time fully to develop the company, but the time periods are shorter (e.g. one week, one month, three months). Working in sprints also helps to keep the progress, product or service development on track.

Knowing and understanding the trends

If you are launching a technology related startup, it is important to foresee and understand the going trends in the sector. There are plenty of research papers, reports, intellectual property material and other documents available to see if the idea or concept fits in the habits or trends of customer behavior. The most popular publishers of technology and market trends are for example: technology and hype data company [Gartner](#), startup trends facilitator [Startup Genome](#), customer and markets insight provider [Nielsen](#) or market research company [NPD Group](#). There are also intellectual property registers available for browsing and plenty of national studies on different countries. In order to test your idea quickly and find whether it suits to the ecosystem and fits the global trends, it is crucial to do the basic research and follow the studies already published.

Competition is also something that gives you the indication about market trends. It is easy to track the progress of your closest competition and see if they are performing good in specific markets and what are the challenges that they are encountering. It is possible to find out the regions and markets most suitable for your product or service (because potential customers are used to similar services), estimate the potential market impact of your solution, or find out the markets where similar solutions are not yet there and can be easily conquered by you.

Making constant changes

Startup companies don't have fixed products or services, fixed business models or fixed target groups. Everything is likely to change over time, over the experiences gained from the market. Startup companies still draw their business plans and action plans, but the founders are always ready to review and change the plans, even with weekly intervals. That is the main reason why startup companies work in sprints and use [lean development models](#). Usually this means that startups have hypothesis on product development or business process defined, and the team works for a fixed period of time to build an MVP and test that out in real market conditions. If the development proved to be successful (customers and market reacted on that and positive traction could be measured) then the final model will be developed and launched.

Fixing the product, service or business model too soon (before it is confirmed in real market conditions) can lead to enormous risks of running out the resources. If the startup team fully refines the end product or service and launches it around 6-month later than they would have launched



the MVP or prototype, and the market reject the solution, it means a 6-month worth of working hours and money is wasted. Small achievements and quick tests prevent that from happening.

Working with mentors and advisors

Startup community is closely tied together regionally and globally. There are plenty of field-specific experts, serial entrepreneurs, universities, business incubators, accelerators available that are willing to help you. These professionals have seen many projects like yours, they have worked with the market you like to enter, they have failed doing what you want to do and they are keen to share their expertise.

Startup founders should find the team of mentors and advisors based on the development plans and challenges that they are facing. For example, if you are developing a software solution for Finnish construction sector, it would be wise to connect with a person or mentorship program experienced in construction sector (how to sell and define the value proposition, open the doors of first clients) and Finnish market (understanding the market conditions, competition). Depending on the development goals of a startup company the criteria of the advisor could be different and connected to the knowledge needed the most.

If the startup company is raising additional capital from the investors, it is also important to bring the knowledge in together with the money. Investors, like mentors and advisors, have field specific characteristics and startup entrepreneur should take in the money that helps them the most. For example, there are investors used to work in specific sector (ICT, health-tech, electronics, financial services etc.), investors working with specific markets (USA, India, China etc.), even the acceleration programs and incubators have their focus set. So, if you are looking for funding or applying to the growth program, select the one that falls in line with your business development plans.

Measuring the progress

When you are working with different challenges simultaneously it is hard to keep an eye on the progress you are making (or if you are even making any progress). This is why startup companies are using **metrics** – tools and systems to measure their performance. Tracking the performance helps founders to keep a pulse on the viability of the startup and signal when a course correction is needed. Normally startup companies don't conduct the developments or activities that cannot be measured, that means, if you cannot measure it, it is probably useless and doesn't have any impact on your performance.



First and foremost, metrics help startups to set goals. In early growth stages goals are just dreams with deadlines and without metrics, it would be next to impossible to set goals and measure the progress towards them. Metrics also help entrepreneurs make smart, informed decisions about their startups. They can identify trends and patterns, problem areas and successes, and potential next steps. Before making major decisions (e.g. product iterations and raising capital), startups can consult their metrics. Without metrics, it is hard to tell how far the company has progressed. It is also hard to tell when the company is in trouble until it's too late.

There are different metrics established and companies measure different performance indicators (KPIs). Most common ones are: customer acquisition cost, retention, activation, referral, life-time value of the customer, revenue stream, etc.

3.2. Matchmaking and partnerships

Startups cannot make purely on their own and well-performing networks and cooperation links should be established. The aim of building sustainable networks and match with partners can be different. There are opportunities to find gateways to market, start common product development procedures, find team-members and business professional, connect to R&D facilities and research institutions, etc.

Business matchmaking

Entrepreneurs do the business matchmaking daily to connect with wide range of business professionals that can be beneficial for the success of their startup company. The main reason to be well connected in the early stages of a startup company is connected to the opportunity to find team-members or co-founders for the startup. To build a strong team for the startup company it is needed to find the people with different professional background that can be useful to proceed. The perfect place to start is definitely universities with many students, well-qualified, and ready to take on the business challenges you have. In this stage, it is crucial to crystalize the idea that you are working on and present the complex overview of the plans to potential cofounders. In perfect case of scenario, the startup entrepreneur ends up with a mix of professionals (even cross-country professionals) willing to work with the startup project.

Finding employees for the startup requires strong matchmaking abilities as well. Startup companies run on limited resources and that makes hiring the professionals difficult. The core of strong collaboration of the first employees is the common belief in the business idea and willingness to work for an option or equity of the established startup company.



There are plenty of matchmaking systems and solutions available to promote the call for cooperation. The most common ones are social networks like [LinkedIn](#), [AngelList](#), [Facebook](#), [CoFoundersLab](#) and [Founder2be](#). Publishing your call for expertise through these networks is easy and free, and the traction could be huge. If the matchmaking channel in the social media is once opened it has to be maintained and sustainable information should be provided constantly. Another option of doing the cross-country matchmaking is setting up the communication channels with universities, business incubators and accelerators. These organizations have their own channels that can be used to promote the call of action, and the channels are reaching the right target audience.

Building sustainable partnerships

Strong partnership links with industry, R&D units and corporations are vital to a startup company. These links require establishment, maintenance and execution. Very often the startup team assigns a full-time person to handle the partnerships that help the company to meet its business goals.

Establishing the partnerships links with different organizations require the strategic view of the goals. The partnerships should be beneficial to both parties and if they aren't, the partnerships just don't work. If you start establishing the links, it is smart to categorize the needed benefits. For example, if the company needs R&D support that can be found in the universities, it is smart to pick the universities close to you or the ones that have the track record of executing something similar to your product, service. If you need connections to the distant markets it would be useful to establish links with the set of regional resellers or organizations that provide similar services in needed market.

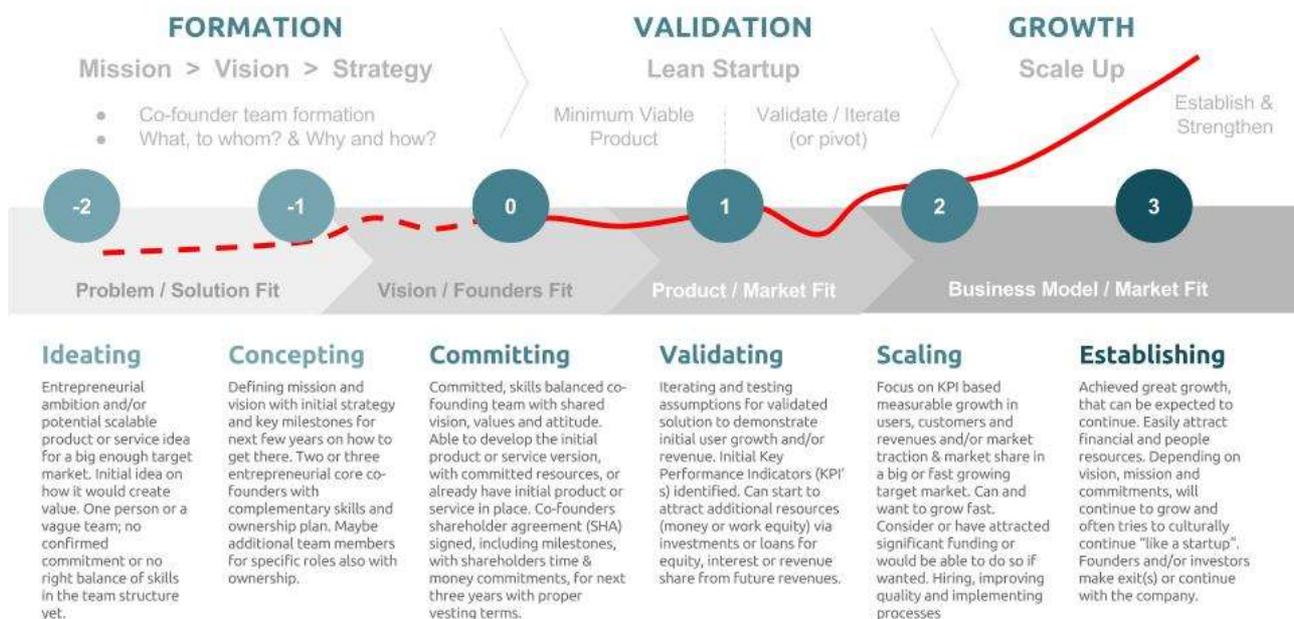
Maintaining a set of good-quality partnerships is hard work as well. The win-win collaboration should be sustainable and a system of value exchange should be established. One of the key aspects in establishing this situation is openness. Startup entrepreneurs are not usually keen to disclose their intentions and details of their product and services. By establishing and maintaining a B2B cooperation this setup should be reviewed. If you want to get something from the partnership (access to market, client relationship, R&D support etc.) the details play significant role. It is good to present the partners the details of your business plan and make your intentions understandable for them. Even if they are not able to help you in some of the cases, they can still represent you and recommend you other links of partnerships. To protect your idea and your business strategy it is good to develop a partnership agreement to ensure that both sides are protected and share the same vision of how the partnership will work.



3.3. Universities, incubators and accelerators

The most relevant supporting organizations for early-stage startup companies are universities (entrepreneurship and innovation centers in the universities), business incubators and business accelerators. These organizations may come in different forms, starting from providing a set of business support services (mentorship, consulting services) ending with offices, R&D centers and makers laboratories for the startup entrepreneurs. Before making the decision, which program is suitable for your company, it is important to understand the core of each opportunity. What is also important, is to indicate the growth phase of your startup company to find the best match of services according to that.

The following graph indicates the main growth phases of a startup company.



Startup Development Phases - From idea to business and team to organization.

Version 3.0 - www.startupcommons.org



Taking into consideration the growth stage of the startup company and finding the corresponding supporting organization (programs of the universities, business incubators and business accelerators), the outcome would be the following:

- startup companies in the ideating and concept phase match best with the services provided by the university entrepreneurship and innovation units;
- startup companies in the committing and validating phase match best with the services provided by the business incubators. And;



- startup companies in the scaling phase match best with the services provided by business accelerators.

Innovation and entrepreneurship centers of the university

A number of colleges and universities around the world are leading the way as they introduce learning facilities labeled as innovation + incubator + maker centers. These centers focus on multi-disciplinary inquiry that can foster partnerships with industry and fully leverage available grants and funding for research. Advancing these new models can help universities recruit fresh talent, establish new partnerships for success and promote an environment where emerging leaders can explore the complex social challenges of our time.

Business programs provided at the universities are best for people who would like to take the first steps towards becoming an entrepreneur or startup founders who would like to test out their ideas and find potential team-members, co-founders. Usually, the universities hold business development and entrepreneurship programs outside curriculum as well, meaning that all the interested people can attend. It is very popular to start these programs with hackathons – the intensive ideation and prototyping sprints; followed by courses, seminars, workshops that help to refine the business model.

Universities can combine their business development programs with the R&D or testing facilities available. This means, that the startup companies can build the prototype or test the functionality of the product in the university lab, and develop the business plan in the university growth program. The services provided by the universities are often free, or with minimum commitment fee for connected to the lab facility usage.

Business incubators

Business incubation is a unique and highly flexible combination of business development services (mentorship, trainings, matchmaking etc.), infrastructure (office facilities, open office, meeting rooms, makers labs etc.) and people designed to boost the growth of a startup company by helping them to survive and grow through the difficult and vulnerable early stages of development.

Business incubators are usually designed for the startup companies or full-scale teams who have validated their business model, built the MVP or prototype, and are ready to launch the product or service on the market. Incubation programs run normally for half a year till two or three years. During that time period the startup validates and fixes the business model, reaches the initial revenue by effective sales and marketing, finishes the initial product development and raises the first, seed-stage capital for growth.



Business incubators are suitable for the startups that are not yet ready to launch their product on the market and need to figure out the exact strategy to get the sales and revenue going. Incubators also fit the startups that have already launched, but need to pivot (change) their business model or product to reach the market fit.

Business incubators are normally not investing money to the startup companies, but some programs tend to have a system of grants or other financial support available. The services of the business incubator are usually not for free and the entrepreneurs need to pay some fee (that is relatively low compared with the service fees in real market conditions).

Business accelerators

Startup accelerators are fixed-term, cohort-based programs, that include mentorship and educational components and culminate in a public pitch event or demo day. While traditional business incubators are often government-funded, generally take no equity, accelerators can be either privately or publicly funded and focus on a wide range of industries. The application process for startup accelerators is open to anyone, but highly competitive. There are specific types of startup accelerators, such as corporate accelerator, which are often subsidiaries or programs of larger corporations that act like startup accelerators.

The main differences between business incubators and accelerators are:

- The application process is open to anyone, but highly competitive. The strongest acceleration programs like [YCombinator](#) and [TechStars](#) have application acceptance rates between 1% and 3%.
- A seed investment in the startups is usually made, in exchange for equity. Typically, the investment is between €10,000 and €30,000 and the equity taken, around 7% and 15%.
- The focus is on small teams, not on individual founders. Accelerators consider that one person is insufficient to handle all the work associated with a startup.
- The acceleration program typically runs for a very specific time, usually 3 months. During this time, the participants receive intensive mentoring and training, and they are expected to iterate rapidly.
- All accelerators end their programs with a "Demo Day", where the startups present to investors.

Startups are accepted and supported in batches or classes (the accelerator isn't an on-demand resource). The peer support and feedback that the classes provide is an important advantage. If the accelerator doesn't offer a common workspace, the teams will meet periodically.



The primary value to the entrepreneur is derived from the mentoring, connections, and the recognition of being chosen to be a part of the accelerator. The business model is based on generating venture style returns, not rent, or fees for services; so they are normally provided for free. Accelerators do not necessarily need to include a physical space, but many do. The process that startups go through in the accelerator can be separated into five distinct phases: awareness, application, program, demo day, and post demo day.

3.4. Funding the startup company

Funding a startup company, especially in the early growth stages, is a painful topic for most of the founders. Almost 90% of startup companies need external funding in order to survive. This is due to the reason that the revenue phase is hard to achieve and if it is achieved, the high-growth across multiple markets need capital base large enough the company could survive and handle the growing demand for its products and services. The main sources for capital for a early-stage startup company are the following:

- Funding the startup by yourself and co-founders
These days, the costs to start a business are at an all-time low, and over 90 percent of startups are self-funded (also called bootstrapping). It may take a bit longer to save some money before you start and grow organically, but the advantage is that you don't have to give up any equity or control. Your business is yours alone.
- Friends, fools and family (FFF)
As a general rule, professional investors will expect that you have already some commitments from this source to show your credibility. If your friends and family don't believe in you, don't expect outsiders to jump in. This is the primary source of non-personal funds for very early-stage startups.
- Grants, public small-business support
These are public funds allocated to support new technologies and entrepreneurship in certain regions. It is always a good place to start and find out what kind of financial and non-financial support is available in your country for startup entrepreneurs. Applying for the grant (and bureaucracy) can be a long and tough process, but it doesn't cost you any equity.
- Crowdfunding
Crowdfunding is a method to raise capital by raising money from a large number of people who each contribute a relatively small amount, typically online. You can crowdfund the money by running a pre-sales campaign (selling the concept of your service or product based on the MVP or prototype) for your products or services, or selling the equity of the startup (people can buy the fixed amount of equity with fixed price) in crowdfunding platform. The most popular platforms for crowdfunding are [Kickstarter](#), [Indiegogo](#) and [Funderbeam](#).



- **Angel investment**
Business angels are high-net-worth individuals interested in supporting startups, and willing to syndicate amounts up to a million euros for qualified startups. Business angels invest their own personal money and seek for the return of the investment in 3-5 years' time. There is often a regional business angels network or associations that the startups can approach, but you can always use platforms like [Gust](#) to find them. Keep in mind that the angel investors should fit into your business model with their know-how and contacts.
- **Venture capital investors (VC-s)**
These are professional investors, who invest institutional money in qualified startups, usually with a proven business model, ready to scale in many markets. VC-s typically look for big opportunities, needing a couple of million euros or more, with a proven team. VC-s are ready to stick with the company for longer time periods and expect the returns in 10-15 years' time.
- **Startup incubators and accelerators**
Some business incubators and almost all the business accelerators have some funding on top of the services they are providing. Business accelerators take a fixed amount of the equity from your company for a fixed amount of money (these terms are often very hard to change and often non-negotiable). Still, the funding granted by the accelerators helps the startup teams to survive for some time and focus 100% of the time of the team to develop the company.
- **Bank loan or credit**
In general, having a bank loan is not an option for early-stage startup companies as they tend to have no credit history or existing assets that can be used for collateral. Even though, in some countries there are governmental guarantees that help to get the loan with lower risk and collateral than in normal conditions.

All of these options require work and commitment on your part, so there is no magic or free money. Every funding decision is a complex tradeoff between near-term and longer-term costs and paybacks, as well as overall ownership and control. With the many options available, there is no excuse for not living your dream, rather than dreaming about living.



4. Starting up in Finland

4.1. Business environment in Finland

International companies are warmly welcomed and enjoy high return on investment in Finland. They can access same benefits as Finnish companies. Setting up a business in Finland is quick and easy. Opening a legal entity takes only a couple of weeks.

In Finland, foreign companies most commonly conduct business through private or public limited liability companies, or through a Finnish branch office. Business can also be conducted through general or limited partnerships or co-operatives. A foreign organization or foundation can also establish a branch in Finland.

A limited company can be established by one or more natural or legal persons (founders). At least one of the founders shall be a permanently resident or, if the founder is a legal person, have their domicile in the European Economic Area – unless the National Board of Patents and Registration grants an exemption from this rule. The nationality of the founder is thus irrelevant. A legal person shall have their domicile in the European Economic Area when it has been established in accordance with the laws of a State which belongs to the European Economic Area and when its registered office, central administration, or head office is in a State belonging to the European Economic Area. A person who is legally incompetent or declared bankrupt may not act as founder.

If a permit is required, the application is to be submitted to the National Board of Patents and Registrations either in Finnish or in Swedish. An application fee (€120) is paid for each permit decision.

A private limited company shall have a minimum share capital of €2,500 and a public limited company requires €80,000. The share capital must be paid to the company's account in full before the company can be entered in the Trade Register which is maintained by the National Board of Patents and Registration.

New businesses submit the basic declaration to the Trade Register using the startup notification form. This form can also be used for registration with the Tax Administration, registration of a VAT liable business, registration as an employer, and registration in the tax prepayment register.

If you are looking for a reseller or a business partner for your product or service, please contact [industry associations](#) and the [chambers of commerce](#) for further information.



The Enterprise Europe Network was established in 2008 by the European Commission. It provides free-of-charge internationalization services to SMEs and operates in over 50 countries.

4.2. Startup support in Turku

Turku has everything! It is just the right size, cozy, and close to the sea – with good connections to almost everywhere in the world. Trade and education related international interaction has made the city open to new trends. The multicultural nature of the city is apparent in the broad spectrum of nationalities, languages: roughly 100 languages are spoken in the city, and about 130 different nationalities are represented here.

Turku’s economic structure is very diverse. It is supported by an extensive education and training provision. Top expertise in several different business sectors, as well as unique innovations, are the strengths of today’s Turku: the maritime and metal industries in the region have an exceptionally broad subcontractor network, and half of Finland’s pharmaceutical industry is based in the Turku region. The main startup supporting organizations in Turku are the following:

Name of the organization	Services provided	Contacts
Turku Science Park Ltd	Turku Region’s Business Service Center Potkuri provides, together with the whole region’s business service network, assistance for companies at every stage of their life cycle, including access to capital. http://www.turkusciencepark.com/en/services/brief/	http://www.turkusciencepark.com/en/contact-information/personnel/



SparkUp	<p>Business development environment provided by Turku Science Park Ltd, providing full scale services from the ideation till international growth support. Startup co-working hub.</p> <p>Read more: http://www.turkusciencepark.com/en/services/services-start-companies/startup-community/</p>	<p>www.sparkup.fi sonja.hyrynsalmi@turkusciencepark.com Community facilitator: +358 (0) 44 291 6966</p> <p>Erik Lehtonen, Director Services for startup companies +358 (0) 40 546 0563 erik.lehtonen@turkusciencepark.com</p> <p>Startup Accelerator program BusinessUp: johanna.puhtila@turkusciencepark.com +358 (0) 40 024 7023</p>
CreVe Incubator	<p>Business incubation program for startup businesses in creative industry, providing long-term business support and internationalization opportunities.</p>	<p>www.creve.fi leena.janhila@humak.fi +358 (0) 20 7621 397</p>
Boost Turku	<p>Boost is a student based entrepreneur society that encourages young students and entrepreneurs to make their dreams come true, connecting students, young entrepreneurs and experienced professionals.</p>	<p>www.boostturku.com anssi@boostturku.com +358 (0) 45 279 6001</p>
University of Turku	<p>The University of Turku offers a wide range of possibilities for cooperation and versatile services for different kinds of companies and organizations.</p>	<p>www.utu.fi contact@utu.fi +358 (0) 41 437 2044</p>
Turku School of Economics	<p>Turku School of Economics is harnessing expertise in the field of economics and business administration, in order to serve the needs of global business life.</p>	<p>www.utu.fi/en/units/tse aki.koponen@utu.fi +358 (0) 50 524 6239</p>
Turku University of Applied Sciences (Humak)	<p>Turku RDI-center has Humak-wide responsibility to develop research and innovation within cultural management.</p>	<p>www.humak.fi</p>



<p>Machine Technology Centre Turku</p>	<p>Machine Technology Center Turku is a modern learning, training and development center for enterprises, educational institutes and researchers, providing dynamic and comprehensive environment for applied research and professional specialization.</p>	<p>www.koneteknologiakeskus.fi +358 (0) 40 5529 692</p>
<p>Turku Region's Business Service Center Potkuri</p>	<p>The Turku region's Business Service Center Potkuri offers advice and help with starting business operations.</p> <p>Potkuri's services for new entrepreneurs include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • personal advice for new entrepreneurs • Finnish Trade Register consultation <p>guidance in the Employment and Economic Development Office's (TE-Office) services</p>	<p>http://www.turkusciencepark.com/en/services/services-start-companies/business-service-centre-potkuri/</p>

5. Starting up in Estonia

5.1. Business environment in Estonia

Estonia can offer a progressive business environment with an efficient and compatible infrastructure. Estonian economy is known for the e-services, mobile communications and internet applications that are among the most progressive in the world. Estonians are adaptable towards new technologies, and use them willingly.

The attractiveness of Estonia is demonstrated by the large number of foreign investors doing business here and the dominance of world-renowned foreign companies in several of Estonia's economic sectors. Foreign impact is also evident from the fact that exports represents more than 100% of Estonian GDP.

Estonia might just be one of the smallest, leanest, and most exciting startup ecosystems one could hope to encounter. The enthusiasm and forward-thinking earned Estonian startup community the nickname "Estonian Mafia". There are something between 300-900 tech startups, thanks to a remarkably tech-savvy government, a global-first mindset, and the ability to incorporate a company online in less time than it takes to drink a cup of coffee.



Estonian unique e-residency program allows international founders to set up online businesses under Estonia's law - welcoming in digital nomads who want a slice of Europe's wide market, without ever needing to set foot in the country. For non-EU nationals who do want to live in the country, Estonia recently rolled out their Startup Visa program - one of about ten in the world created to attract the best international talent available. Further supporting its startups, last year Estonia launched the EstFund,¹ with an allotted \$64.5 million ready to disburse.

Estonia's mix of smart infrastructure, boundary-busting visa programs, startup solidarity (and even their mafia-related humor) assures the world that they'll bring us more game-changing technology like they did with Skype and are now currently doing with Transferwise, who offers an inexpensive way to transfer money abroad.

According to the Commercial Code of Estonia there are five forms of business entities, which are created by entry into the Commercial Register: private limited company, public limited company, general partnership, limited partnership, or commercial association. The most popular type of legal entity being set up by foreigners in Estonia is private limited company.

A private limited company is a company that has its share capital divided into private limited company shares.

A shareholder is not personally liable for the obligations of the company. A private limited company is liable for the performance of its obligations with all of its assets.

The share capital must be a minimum of €2,500. The minimum nominal value of a share is €1. If the founders are private persons and the share capital is less than €25,000 then the founders can decide that the contribution must not be paid upon the establishing of the company. Until the whole sum has been paid, the founders are personally liable for the obligations of the company within the amount of the missing contribution.

A private limited company must have a management board. The management board is a directing body of the private limited company that represents and directs the private limited company. The management board may have one member (director) or several members. A member of the management board does not have to be a shareholder. A member of the management board must be a natural person with active legal capacity. If more than half of board members are not residing in Estonia then the company must give the Commercial Register a contact in Estonia where necessary documents can be sent. The foreign owner must give the Commercial Register his/her address and e-mail address.

A private limited company can have a supervisor board if prescribed by the Articles of Association. But it is not mandatory by the law. A private limited company must have an auditor if prescribed by



law or the Articles of Association. An auditor is also mandatory when the company surpasses certain threshold values in terms of turnover, number of employees and asset value.

5.2. Startup support in Tallinn

Tallinn is the financial and business capital of Estonia. The city has a highly diversified economy with particular strengths in information technology, tourism and logistics. Currently, over half of the Estonian GDP is created in Tallinn. In 2008, the GDP per capita of Tallinn stood at 172% of the Estonian average. Tallinn occupies an area of 159.2 km² and has a population of 426,538. The main startup supporting organizations in Tallinn are the following:

Name of the organization	Services provided	Contacts
Tallinn Science Park Tehnopol and Startup Incubator	Business development services for startup and high-growth technology companies, including coaching, trainings, business matchmaking and physical infrastructure.	www.tehnopol.ee martin.gorosko@tehnopol.ee +372 568 00228
Tallinn University of Technology and MEKTORY Innovation Center	The largest technological university in the region provides numerous cooperation opportunities for enterprises. Innovation center MEKTORY holds the startup growth program and business idea competitions.	www.ttu.ee anu.oks@ttu.ee +372 620 3497
Tallinn Business Incubators	Tallinn Business Incubators provide incubation program, including mentorship, trainings, physical infrastructure for creative industry and digital startup companies.	http://inkubaator.tallinn.ee info@inkubaator.ee +372 604 0610
Garage48 and Lift99	Garage48 is the series of international hackathons taking place 4-8 times annually on different topics. Lift99 is the physical co-working hub located in Tallinn for ICT startups.	http://garage48.org http://www.lift99.co info@garage48.org



PROTOTRON startup fund	PROTOTRON is the first financial fund for startup companies for financing the building of prototypes. The fund is running 4 funding rounds annually.	www.prototron.ee jana@prototron.ee
Startup Wise Guys business accelerator	Startup Wise Guys is the leading B2B acceleration program in Europe. SuWG provides 3-month intensive acceleration with top mentors and trainings, accompanying by seed stage investment up to €20,000.	http://startupwiseguys.com maris@startupwiseguys.com
VUNK accelerator	VUNK is Telia Estonia startup lab, an entry point for innovative B2B and B2C startups in the region seeking to partner with Telia to improve their offering and get access to the market.	www.vunk.eu vunk@vunk.eu
Estonian Business Angels Network (EstBAN)	EstBAN is the Estonian network of business angels ready to invest in technology startups and providing help and support to crystallize the business model.	www.estban.ee info@estban.ee +372 5624 9959

6. Starting up in Latvia

6.1. Business environment in Latvia

Latvia offers a wide variety of competitive advantages for entrepreneurs and investors, which make Latvia a perfect place for doing business. These include cost effectiveness, a highly skilled workforce, well-developed infrastructure, and macroeconomic stability. Companies and investors also enjoy easy accessibility to other markets in the region, as well as access to European Union Structural Funds.

As a small country in today's globalized world, Latvia recognizes the importance of attracting foreign investment in order to sustain economic development. As a thriving democracy, Latvia has consistently pursued liberal economic policies and welcomes investments that foster principles and benefits associated with free markets.



Indeed, World Bank's report Doing Business 2017 ranks Latvia as 14th out of 189 countries for ease of doing business. Latvia has climbed to 14th position from the 22nd place last year. The change has come thanks to an improved accessibility to credit information and reforms that have made paying taxes easier.

The Latvian government and local authorities have worked diligently to streamline procedures for doing business in Latvia. For example, procedures for incorporating a company can be completed in a single day. The government has developed and implemented the POLARIS Process, a national strategy enabling communication, cooperation and execution of tasks among stakeholders - in industry, government and academics - involved in making investments successful.

As a member of the EU, Latvia operates under common, pan-European legislation. To further stimulate investment, the Latvian government is channeling EU Structural Funds to implement a number of state-support programs to foster business development.

After 3 years of researching world economic trends, eight target sectors were identified where Latvia has most potential and expertise based on Latvia's competitive advantages: woodworking, metalworking and mechanical engineering, transport and storage, information technology (including global business services), green technology, health care, life sciences, and food processing.

Prior to establishing an enterprise in Latvia, it is essential to assess and choose the most appropriate type of an undertaking in terms of law and economics. This choice will affect not only the amount of necessary equity capital, but also the legal status of the enterprise and other business-related issues. Foreign entrepreneurs usually register the following types of undertakings: limited liability company (SIA), joint stock company (AS), branch, representative office of foreign merchant. You can read more on each of the types in [Legal structures and Company types in Latvia page](#).

At the very beginning it is necessary to adopt a Decision on foundation. The decision on foundation might be equitable to Memorandum of Association in Western Europe countries. Secondly, Articles of Association should be drafted. According to Latvian Commercial Law, Articles of Association is most important document for company's internal organization perspective which should be in line with the Decision on foundation and following records in the Commercial Register.

It is necessary to pay the equity capital. The minimum of equity capital is €2,850 and it is not required to pay the entire equity capital at the moment of registration; the remaining sum might be paid within one year. Usually the founders open a temporary bank account in order to pay the equity capital.



The process of company formation and registration is not considered complex. The registration takes only four business days from the moment all incorporation documents are drafted and submitted with Commercial Registry of Republic of Latvia. The registration time might be reduced up to two business days upon such a request. The registration with other institutions may take from few days up to one month.

6.2. Startup support in Riga

Riga is the capital and the largest city of Latvia. With 639,630 inhabitants Riga is the largest city in the Baltic states and home to one third of Latvia's population. Riga is one of the key economic and financial centers of the Baltic States. Roughly half of all the jobs in Latvia are in Riga and the city generates more than 50% of Latvia's GDP as well as around half of Latvia's exports. The biggest exporters are in wood products, IT, food and beverage manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, transport and metallurgy. The main startup supporting organizations in Riga are the following:

Name of the organization	Services provided	Contacts
Riga Technical University	Riga Technical university offers laboratory research, design and prototyping, startup support, qualification advancement courses, premise lease and equipment lease.	www.rtu.lv info@rtu.lv +371 6708 9333
Latvian Technology Park	The main task of LTP is to promote commercialization of science through modern technologies, to support the startup and develop technological and innovative businesses, by supporting small and medium-size production companies. LTP supports entrepreneurs and researchers in management and consulting of projects for business and product development, marketing and partner search.	www.ltp.lv ltp@rtu.lv +371 6708 9180



eegloo incubator	eegloo incubation program is focused on development, design and management of software and hardware companies, including investment opportunities for revenue seeking startups.	http://eegloo.co jean@eegloo.co
TechHub Riga	TechHub Riga is a community of new technology startups who can meet, work, learn and collaborate. It is a home for 20+ startups and a host for various events, such as Monthly Meetups and annual startup community get together TechChill.	https://riga.techhub.com hello@techhub.com +371 2632 6104
Hackspace Riga	Hackspace Riga is a place for creative projects and innovators., with the focus on development of innovative products and solutions taking into consideration consumers' needs and behavior.	http://hackspace.club info@hackspace.club +371 2061 6605
Aurora Workspace	Aurora Workspace is created to provide dynamic, adaptable, motivating and inspiring environment, methods and tools where togetherness and interaction is used to design and create new perspectives for business growth.	http://growthpartners.eu aleks@auroraimpact.com
Demola Riga (RTU Design Factory)	Demola is an international organization that facilitates co-creation projects between university students and companies, either locally or internationally, with the aim to find innovative solutions to the needs of companies, institutions and organizations that are seeking for the spark of creativity, design thinking and new products.	https://latvia.demola.net liene.rubina@demola.net +371 2678 4050
Mill Riga	Mill Riga is a designer and developer co-working and meetup space in the heart of Riga.	www.millriga.com



Green Industry Innovation Center

Green Industry Innovation Center, is focused on supporting and encouraging businesses involved in green industry innovation. The GIIC supports development of products, services, and processes that harness renewable materials, energy sources and efficiency, reduce the use of natural resources, and cut or eliminate emissions and wastes.

www.giic.lv

+371 67089642



7. Useful links

7.1. About the CB Springboard project

- CB Springboard project website: www.cbspringboard.eu
- University of Turku website: www.utu.fi
- Turku Science Park website: www.turkusciencepark.com
- Tallinn Science Park Tehnopol website: www.tehnopol.ee
- Tallinn University of Technology website: www.ttu.ee
- Latvian Technology Park website: www.ltp.lv
- Riga Technical University website: www.rtu.lv
- Central Baltic Interreg program website: <http://centralbaltic.eu>

7.2. Starting up in Turku

- Invest in Finland: www.investinfinland.fi
- TEKES Finnish Funding Agency for Innovation: www.tekes.fi
- Expat Finland: www.expats-finland.com
- Business in Turku: www.businesssturku.fi
- Municipality of Turku: www.turku.fi

7.3. Starting up in Tallinn

- Invest in Estonia: www.investinestonia.com
- Startup Estonia: www.startupestonia.ee
- Enterprise Estonia: www.eas.ee

7.4. Starting up in Riga

- Investment and Development Agency of Latvia: www.liaa.gov.lv
- Labs of Latvia – Latvian Startup Community Platform: www.labsflatvia.com
- Latvian Startup Association: <http://startin.lv>



8. About the project

Springboard - business acceleration programs and B2B matchmaking. Central Baltic Startup Springboard supports the development of new startups in Turku, Tallinn and Riga and their cross-border collaboration. Springboard provides a supported path towards entrepreneurship by implementing three joint 10-week business acceleration programs and coaching for the most potential teams. Targeted B2B matchmaking activities will also be organized in order to support already established early-stage companies.

By combining expertise across borders, it is easier to find potential business ideas and to establish globally competitive joint teams with versatile know-how and experience. The main result of the Springboard project is an increased capacity to produce international startups in the Central Baltic region. The Springboard will achieve 15 new joint or co-operating knowledge intensive Central Baltic companies aiming for rapid growth.

Central Baltic Startup Springboard is running from 1.12.2015 to 31.1.2018. It is financed by the European Regional Development Fund ([Central Baltic Interreg Programme 2014-2020](#)).

