Research Report

Tech Startup Founders' Outlook in Cambodia 2025

Prepared by:

Enterprises Go Digital Department,
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FOREWORD

Tech Startup
Founders' Outlook
in Cambodia 2025

H.E. Dr. Taing Nguonly, Executive Director of Techo Startup Center

In recent years, fueled by the support of the Royal Government of Cambodia and relevant stakeholders, particularly the ambitions and dreams of startup founders, Cambodia is developing and strengthening her startup ecosystem to make it robust and highly competitive. This report explores the viewpoints and pain points of those founders, consolidating findings that will inform the future of the support program, more closely aligning it with their unique needs.

Having worked with many founders over many years, we have seen their passion for technology and their strong commitment to building an ecosystem that fosters collaboration, creativity, and growth. When we dig into their outlook for the future, it is evident that targeted support mechanisms in the form of hackathons, incubators, and accelerators are required to nurture these tech startup founders. While some may be skeptical about the quality, these programs can offer the mentorship, resources, and networks needed to turn ideas into businesses.

Understanding the challenges that tech startup founders face before, during, and after participation in those support programs is essential for improving their effectiveness, relevance, and impact. In an evolving global landscape, the resources we allocate and the programs we implement today will significantly influence the scope of tomorrow's entrepreneurship in a fast-moving world.

In this regard, it is important that stakeholders across various sectors, including government, private sector, development partners, and academia come together to improve and scale existing support programs and other initiatives.

Doing so will create an enabling ecosystem for tech startup founders to fill gaps and innovate for the greater good not only of founders but the overall Cambodian economy.

I hope this report serves as a catalyst to spark dialogue and prompt actions that lead to significant change, fostering strong support that aligns with the goals of our tech startup founders.

Phnom Penh, 27th June 2025
Executive Director
Techo Startup Center

Dr. Taing Nguonly

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The research team would like to extend our sincere gratitude to **Dr. Vong Rylida**, Deputy Executive Director of Techo Startup Center, for her unwavering support and invaluable guidance, which have been instrumental in shaping this report into its final form. The gratitude is also given to team members at the Startup Development Department of Techo Startup Center, who provided the list of tech startups and participated in selecting target tech startups to participate in the research. Moreover, the research team would like to thank the founders of six different tech startups, namely:

1. Raksa Delivery,
2. NID,
3. Polymer Invoice,
4. Srong,
5. MUCH Mobile Healthcare, and
6. Khmer24

for providing support during the two rounds of the pilot-testing stage. It was crucial for improving the interview guide used in the data collection stage. The research team also highly appreciates the enthusiastic participation of all target tech startup founders involved in the research and spent their precious time contributing to it. Their valuable participation enabled the team to complete the research and produce this report.

The research team deeply appreciates the invaluable contributions and support mentioned above. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all those who made this report possible. It is our hope that "**Tech Startup Founders' Outlook in Cambodia 2025**" will serve as a meaningful resource to enhance support programs for tech startups in Cambodia. By doing so, we aim to foster their growth and contribute to the vibrancy and sustainability of the country's entrepreneurial ecosystem in the years to come.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The Royal Government of Cambodia aims to achieve upper-middle-income status by 2030 and high-income status by 2050, with the digital economy identified as a key driver to enhance productivity and growth across all sectors. Cambodia Digital Economy and Society Policy Framework 2021-2035 and Pentagonal Strategy-Phase 1 have been developed to support the expansion of this economy, emphasizing the role of digital businesses, particularly tech startups. These startups leverage innovation and technology to quickly adapt to market changes, providing a competitive edge over larger corporations.

Innovation is crucial for the digital economy's growth, and supporting startups and their founders is essential for fostering this ecosystem.

According to Phong et al. (2022), over 95% of the tech startup founders received support from at least one entrepreneurial support organization, which included incubators, accelerators, events, training, mentorship, network building, and funding.

However, many founders faced challenges in accessing this support.

Bunthan et al. (2024) noted that common support programs in Cambodia, such as Hackathons, Incubators, and Accelerators, are crucial yet difficult to navigate for many founders. Despite existing studies, there is a lack of in-depth research on the specific challenges tech startup founders in Cambodia face when engaging with these programs. Therefore, research on the "Tech Startup Founders' Outlook in Cambodia 2025" is essential to explore their experiences and perspectives on support programs.

The research aims to generate valuable insights from the tech startup founders' perspectives and experiences that will enhance Cambodia's three common support programs, including hackathons, incubators, and accelerators. The research has two main objectives:

1. To examine the perspectives and experiences of the tech startup founders regarding the challenges they face in support programs and
2. To identify necessary improvements in the support programs suggested by the tech startup founders.

The target participants are the tech startup founders who have participated in hackathons, incubators, or accelerators in the last three years. The research aims to include founders from various sectors, business models, and growth stages for comprehensive insights. A qualitative approach was used for sampling, data collection, and data analysis. The purposive and snowball sampling methods were employed due to the specific inclusion criteria for the target participants, who had experience participating in at least one support program for hackathons, incubators, or accelerators. Data collection involved in-depth interviews (IDIs) guided by a question guide, which was transcribed and analyzed using NVivo software version 12. The analysis employed inductive coding and thematic analysis techniques.

The research consisted of in-depth interviews with 42 tech startup founders, averaging 31 years in age, with ages ranging from 19 to 46.

Of the participants, 28 were female, and most held Bachelor's degrees—16 in computer science and 11 in business and economics. The analysis included 42 tech startups across various sectors, with prominent sectors were from Development Services *(8 startups)*, followed by FinTech *(6 startups)*, Agriculture

Technology *(6 startups)*, Education Technology *(6 startups)*, and E-Commerce and Logistics *(4 startups)*. In terms of business models, 28 were Business to Business, and 22 were Business to Consumer. Most tech startups were either in the early operational phase or already operational, with a combined total of 25 in these categories. On average, those tech startups had been established for three years and typically were founded by two co-founders, though some had as many as five. Their primary customer base consisted of enterprises and general users.

HACKATHONS

The first support program, hackathons, showed that only 14 of 42 tech startup founders participated in the last three years. To enhance future events in the pre-participating stage, those founders suggests clear and informative announcements about eligibility, themes based on tech sectors and be open for former participants to return, events expansion to more provinces in Cambodia, and diverse channels for announcements beyond social media. Challenges during the participating stage included:

1. Attendance Requirements,
2. Language Barriers,
3. Mentor Quality,
4. A Fast-paced Program, and
5. Alterations to Original Ideas.

Proposed improvements include traning mechanism and enhancement of quality mentorship. The tech startup founders recommended available evening sessions for better accessibility and higher-quality mentorship. They also received ongoing communication and networking opportunities after hackathons.

INCUBATORS

The research found that 28 out of 42 tech startup founders participated in incubators over the last three years. Key suggestions from the tech startup founders for improvement in the pre-participating stage include better announcement circulation and confirmation mechanisms. Challenges identified during participation were:

1. Irrelevant curriculum with general and non-tailored courses,
2. Too much intensive program with heavy in-person training,
3. Unclear criteria, particularly judging criteria,
4. Insufficient mentor interaction, and
5. Low-quality guidance.

Proposed improvements include offering online training, clearer selection criteria for mentors, and ensuring experienced mentors provide quality, one-on-one support. Post-participation benefits for tech startup founders included access to funding, ongoing mentorship, brand promotion, and free office space. In another aspect, tech startup founders who did not receive post-program support sought to get network connections and continuous support.

ACCELERATORS

The research found that 32 of 42 tech startup founders participated in accelerators in the last three years. In the pre-participating stage, the tech startup founders suggested improvements in four areas: announcement circulation, content, eligibility, and schedule. During the participating stage, the tech startup founders faced challenges:

1. Balancing in-person attendance with operational duties,
2. Schedule conflicts and rapid changes
3. Diverse competency levels among participants;
4. Insufficiently experienced mentors,

sessions, and
6. Concerns about Judges' Expertise.

They recommended better mentorship, specific bilingual curricula, aligned selection criteria, and the option to pitch in Khmer or English. The tech startup founders who received support after attending accelerators highlighted key receiving support, including network connection, growth opportunity, branding promotion, and technical support. These were similar to the tech startup founders who did not receive but wished to get it.

It can be concluded that the tech startup founders engaged more with accelerators than incubators and hackathons in the past three years.

They highlighted the importance of clear and well-distributed program announcements as a key factor in their participation decision. Many founders raised concerns about the shortage of quality mentors and identified the significant time and effort required as a major challenge. Additionally, some expressed a desire for consistent post-program support, similar to what other participants have received, to help sustain their growth and development. The recommendations were outlined as follows:

- **For Tech Startup Founders:**
  They should actively pursue opportunities to enhance their knowledge and skills, as these are critical for personal growth and resilience—key traits for entrepreneurial success. When exploring support programs, they should ensure alignment with their business objectives and verify eligibility criteria. Additionally, founders must be prepared to allocate the necessary time and resources to benefit from these programs fully. Rather than focusing solely on potential rewards, they should prioritize the learning opportunities these programs offer. Maintaining open communication with program organizers by sharing business progress and challenges is also essential for maximizing the value of their participation.

- **For Organizers:**
  They should clearly communicate the timeframe, eligibility criteria, and benefits of their support programs in all announcements. They should ensure a fair and equitable selection process for tech startups, identify high-quality mentors, and appoint impartial judges for pitch events. A well-structured support program should follow a progression from hackathons to incubators, accelerators, and post-accelerator initiatives, particularly in Phnom Penh and surrounding areas. Initial seed funding should be provided to support prototype development, while efforts to connect tech startups with potential investors can foster valuable partnerships. Finally, the organizers should offer dedicated post-program support to all participating tech startups, ensuring their continued growth and success regardless of competition outcomes.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

B2B	Business to Business
B2B2C	Business to Business to Consumer
B2C	Business to Consumer
C2C	Consumer to Consumer
ESO	Entrepreneurial Support Organization
FinTech	Financial Technology
IDI	In-Depth Interview
MVP	Minimum Viable Product
NUM	National University of Management
RGC	Royal Government of Cambodia
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

Key Terms		Definitions
Startup		Institution or the process of establishing and managing businesses that harness the innovations in establishing business models under unclear conditions with higher risks but with great potential to grow rapidly (Techo Startup Center, 2020).
Tech Startup		A startup that brings technology products or services to the market (Kem et al., 2019).
Founder		A person who comes up with an idea and transforms it into a new business or startup. Founders can set up a business on their own, or they can do it with others called co-founders (The Startups Team, 2022).
Tech Startup Ecosystem		A society of the tech startup founders with initiative ideas equipped with skills, young, dynamic companies with talents, incubators with mentors and capital, early adopters, and the media. These entities or individuals connect, interact, and help each other to strengthen the ecosystem and increase their value (Aleisa, 2013).
SUPPORT PROGRAMS	Hackathon	A short event where teams or individuals collaborate to develop innovative solutions to specific challenges or themes, typically lasting a few hours to a few days (Bunthan et al., 2024).
	Incubator	A structured initiative that provides resources, guidance, and mentorship to support early-stage startups in their growth and success journey. It offers flexible, long-term assistance (Bunthan et al., 2024).
	Accelerator	A focused and time-limited initiative designed to help startups grow rapidly and scale by offering mentorship, resources, and networking opportunities (Bunthan et al., 2024).
TECH STARTUP SECTORS	Financial Technology	Technology and innovation in the financial sector, both banking and non-banking, designed to use, deliver, and access financial services broadly and inclusively (RGC, 2021b).
	Digital Media and Advertising	Digital content delivery/streaming, advertising, gaming, and news media (Kem et al., 2019).
	E-Commerce and Logistic	E-commerce, social selling, inventory management systems, and delivery services (Kem et al., 2019).

	Digital Marketplaces	Digital classifieds and booking platforms (Kem et al., 2019).
	Development Services	Web development and applications outsourcing for domestic and international clients (Kem et al., 2019).
	Other Disruptor Models	• Transportation: Startups that develop applications or platforms to help users book their means of transportation and deliver packages. • Internet-of-things & hardware: Hardware manufacturing, Internet of Things solutions & smart devices. • Education technology: Startups that focus on the education sector, providing users with educational technology solutions. • Health technology: Startups that use technology to develop health-related products and services. • Agriculture Technology: Startups that actively work towards developing innovative solutions for various problems in agriculture (Kem et al., 2019).
STARTUP BUSINESS MODELS	Business to Consumer	A startup's business model involves selling products or services directly to consumers, mainly in the e-commerce, retail, and hospitality industries (Orienteed, 2024).
	Business to Business	A startup's business model involves selling products or services to other businesses. This type of startup usually has a smaller customer base, but each customer typically spends more money and has a longer lifespan as a customer (Orienteed, 2024).
	Business to Business to Consumer	A startup's business model in which companies act as intermediaries between suppliers and end consumers, enhancing the retail process and facilitating the distribution of products or services through business to consumer channels (Orienteed, 2024).
	Consumer to Consumer	A startup's business model enables consumers to interact with one another and exchange goods, services, or information (Orienteed, 2024).
STARTUP STAGES	Ideation	This stage includes startups that have an idea for a product/service but have not yet created an actual product/service tested it, or demonstrated that there is a market for it (Swisscontact & Impact Hub Phnom Penh, 2021).
	Prototype	This stage includes startups that have built an initial prototype of their product/service and are currently testing it with potential clients. However, they have not yet generated any sales (Swisscontact & Impact Hub Phnom Penh, 2021).

	Operational	This stage includes startups that have generated stable or increasing profits over a longer period of time (Swisscontact & Impact Hub Phnom Penh, 2021).
	Early Operational	This stage includes startups that have generated some sales and gained market traction with their product/service but are not yet profitable (Swisscontact & Impact Hub Phnom Penh, 2021).
	Scaling and Expansion	This stage includes startups that are looking to expand their current operational base/market reach or want to establish one or more new branches locally or internationally (Swisscontact & Impact Hub Phnom Penh, 2021).

01 Introduction

Tech Startup
Founders' Outlook
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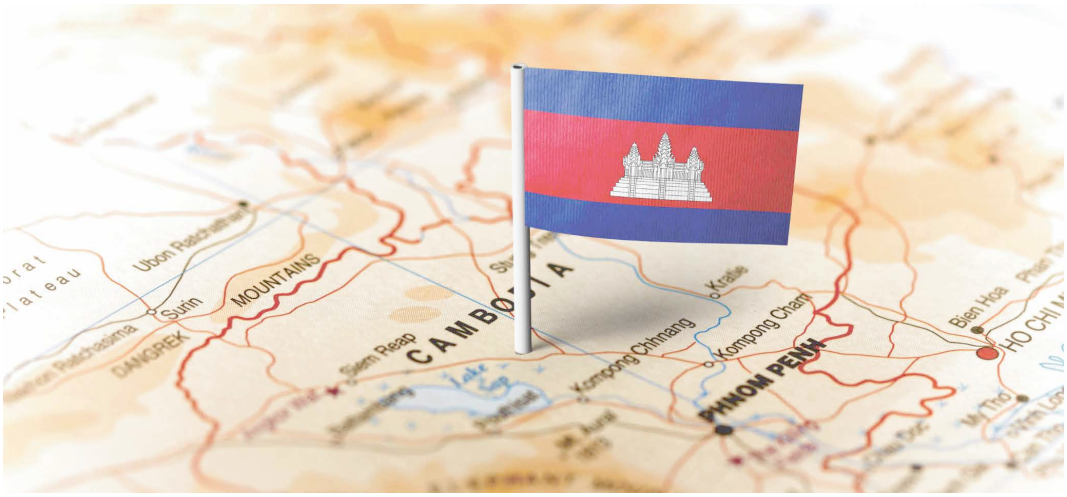

1.1. Background of Research

Over the last 25 years, Cambodia has made remarkable progress in various aspects, such as maintaining peace, territorial integrity, political stability, and socio-economic development.

This success can be attributed to the win-win policy of the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) (RGC, 2023). These achievements have significantly contributed to the nation's macroeconomic stability and fostered the growth of the private sector. As a result, Cambodia has achieved an impressive gross domestic development growth rate of 7% and was recognized as a lower-middle-income country in 2015 (RGC, 2021a). Becoming a lower-middle-income country marks a significant milestone in Cambodia's journey toward fulfilling the RGC's medium- and long-term visions. These visions encompass achieving upper-middle-income status by 2030 and becoming a high-income country by 2050.

To achieve those visions, the RGC must establish a growth model that is both responsive and resilient to changes in the economy and international trade. This is particularly important in the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and rapid technological advancements. The RGC has identified the digital economy as a new source of growth that can boost productivity in other economic sectors in Cambodia and ultimately contribute to achieving the 2030 and 2050 visions (RGC, 2021b). As a result, several policy frameworks and initiatives have been put in place to promote the development of the digital economy. Notable among these are the "**Pentagonal Strategy-Phase I**" and the "**Cambodia Digital Economy and Society Policy Framework 2021-2035.**" These strategies and frameworks aim to fuel the expansion and development of the digital economy. The RGC's focus is on promoting digital businesses, including startups, to foster the growth of the digital economy.

Successful startups such as Airbnb, Uber, Spotify, and Snapchat have spurred the growth and popularity of the term "**startups**" globally, including Cambodia. Based on an extensive literature review, it has been observed that the concept of startup was introduced in Cambodia in 2006 via the National University of Management's (NUM) initiative called the "**National Business Plan Competition.**" This was NUM's first university-based entrepreneurship and pitching competition (Chan, 2018). Once startups

launch technology products or services, they are classified as tech startups (Phong et al., 2022).

Less than 50 tech startups were operated at the beginning of 2013; by 2018, that number had risen to over 300 (Kem et al., 2019).

The increase in number of tech startups can be attributed to several factors, including increasing awareness of basic digital needs, the development of market opportunities related to the digital economy, a tech-savvy demographic, continued entrants from international technology companies creating market opportunities, and the evolution and transformation of startups from various ideation and incubation programs towards becoming viable businesses (Kem et al., 2019).

Tech startups use innovation and technology as the main drivers for creating and introducing new products, solutions, and services to the market.

For instance, a startup can develop a digital marketplace with modern technology that allows businesses and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to offer consumers goods and services more efficiently (Techo Startup Center, 2020). It is undeniable that innovation is crucial to the growth of a digital economy, and tech startups are valuable catalysts and disruptors who bring forth innovative ideas across industries. Tech startups also create jobs and stimulate economic growth by attracting investments and generating revenue (Phong et al., 2022). With their agility and flexibility, tech startups can adapt quickly to changing market conditions and customer needs, which gives them a competitive advantage over more giant corporations (FasterCapital, 2024). According to Ek and Vandenberg (2022), among the

tech startups in Cambodia, the majority are in financial technology (FinTech), followed by media and advertising, e-commerce, development services, and digital marketplaces.

A tech startup ecosystem consists of the tech startup founders and other related organizations that work as a system to support or scale up tech startups. These relevant organizations, either physical or virtual entities, are categorized as follows:

- startups,
- government,
- funding and investment,
- association and development partners,
- big companies,
- universities,
- research institutions, and
- supporting organizations (incubators, accelerators, and coworking spaces) (Feld, 2012)

A robust and vibrant tech startup ecosystem with fully supported functions is undoubtedly required to nurture tech startups and help the tech startup founders overcome challenges toward success.

However, even though the tech startup ecosystem in Cambodia is growing, it is still in the nascent stage (Kem et al., 2019; Vong, Ty, & Chhoeun, 2020).

1.2. Research Motivation

Phong et al. (2022) revealed that over 95% of the tech startup founders received support from at least one entrepreneurial support organization (ESO) within the tech startup ecosystem.

This shows a connection between the tech startup founders and ESOs and suggests that the support ESOs offer to the tech startup founders is on the rise. However, many of those founders encounter significant challenges when trying to access and effectively utilize support programs to promote growth, as there exists a gap between the support provided and the actual needs of the tech startup founders (Bunthan et al., 2024). In Cambodia, several beneficial programs and initiatives support startups and their ecosystem. These range from the development and execution of incubator and accelerator programs and startup-related events to the establishment of key institutions for producing and training talents and the initiation of public and private funding to support startups as well as SMEs (Phong et al., 2022).

Multiple sources within the tech ecosystem have highlighted various support programs for tech startups. Support programs generally include accelerators, coworking spaces, incubators, active investors, courses, and competitions (Dee et al., 2015). The most popular support programs globally are accelerators, incubators, and co-working spaces (FasterCapital, 2024). Cambodia's common startup support programs are hackathons, incubators, and accelerators (Bunthan et al., 2024). In order to improve the quality of these three support programs, it is essential to deeply understand the challenges faced by founders when accessing and participating in these programs. Kem et al. (2019) emphasized that many tech startup founders still struggle to access appropriate support and resources, highlighting the need for tailored support programs addressing specific challenges faced by these founders.

So far, five key pieces of research have been conducted related to tech startups in the last five years, but their focus was not generally on support programs.

In 2019, Kem et al. conducted a study on Cambodia's vibrant tech startup ecosystem to provide an overview of the landscape, identify key challenges and existing support resources, and encourage constructive discussions. Additionally, Khieng, Mason, and Lim (2019) conducted a study on Cambodia's innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem, focusing on the role of academic institutions in supporting startups and entrepreneurs.

In 2021, Swisscontact and Impact Hub Phnom Penh released a research report on "**Connecting the Phnom Penh Entrepreneurial Ecosystem**," which used a social network analysis tool to examine the connections between ecosystem actors and assess the healthiness of the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Cambodia. Phong et al. also conducted a study in 2022 on the tech startup ecosystem in Cambodia, identifying key challenges faced by tech startups and understanding the challenges of ESOs. Furthermore, Ek and Vandenberg, in 2022, conducted a study on Cambodia's ecosystem for tech startups, mapping the situation of tech startups in Cambodia to identify ecosystem support and remaining constraints.

These five studies targeted different respondents and participants from various stakeholder groups, utilizing distinct data collection and analysis methods to achieve their respective research goals and objectives.

However, none of the five studies focused solely on tech startups as their primary group of respondents or participants and the support programs was not their focus.

Additionally, these studies highlighted challenges faced by the tech startup founders in accessing support from ecosystem actors but did not specify challenges in accessing and participating in common support programs such as hackathons, incubators, and accelerator programs.

Therefore, it is clear that there is a need for research on "**Tech Startup Founders' Outlook in Cambodia 2025,**" particularly focusing on their perspectives and experiences with support programs. The research holds two significant implications as follows:

1. The research can be considered a platform for the tech startup founders' voices to be heard. It will ensure that their direct experiences and needs shape ecosystem development greater, leading to more targeted support, better resource allocation, and, ultimately, a more thriving entrepreneurial landscape in the country.
2. The research has the potential to enhance the effectiveness of the three support programs significantly, ensuring the programs meet the founders' expectations and minimize their challenges.

1.3. Research Goal and Objectives

The research goal and objectives are presented in **Figure 1.1**.

Figure 1.1: Research Goal and Objectives, Source: Authors (2025)

1.4. Scope and Limitations of Research

The research utilized data collected from experienced tech startup founders who had participated in one or more of the three common support programs. Specifically, it focused on this group to address the research objectives related to their challenges in accessing and benefiting from such programs. The research included tech startups from diverse sectors, business models, and growth stages to ensure data quality and representativeness.

The research findings can provide detailed insights into three common support programs. However, it is important to note that these findings may not universally apply to all types of support programs offered by different actors in the tech startup ecosystem. Moreover, the research did not involve those support programs' organizers, as it was not part of the research objective. Consequently, the results are based solely on the perspectives of the tech startup founders, without input from the organizers to compare with the tech startup founders' insights.

02
Means and Methods

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2.1. Research Approach

The research exclusively employed the qualitative method to accomplish its goals and objectives, enabling it to comprehensively investigate the experiences of the tech startup founders in support programs. Specifically, it focused on the challenges encountered in accessing and participating in those programs. Moreover, the outcomes of the qualitative method often lead to the development or challenging of existing theories and propose practical implications based on actionable insights (ATLAS.ti, 2024). As a result, the research's findings will inform the development of practical recommendations for enhancing future support programs.

The in-depth interview (IDI) was used as a data collection method to obtain information from the target participants. IDI is a qualitative research method that involves detailed interviews with a small number of participants to delve into their perspectives on a specific idea, program, or situation (Boyce & Neale, 2006). The interview questions are primarily open-ended, which leads to a discovery-oriented approach (Pamela & Jerri, 2020). IDI was considered the most suitable method for the research, given the aim of collecting data on the tech startup founders' experiences, expectations, and suggestions for enhancing support programs in the future.

2.2. Target Participants, Sample Size, and Sampling

To accomplish the research goal and objectives, the target participants of the research is tech startup founders in Cambodia.

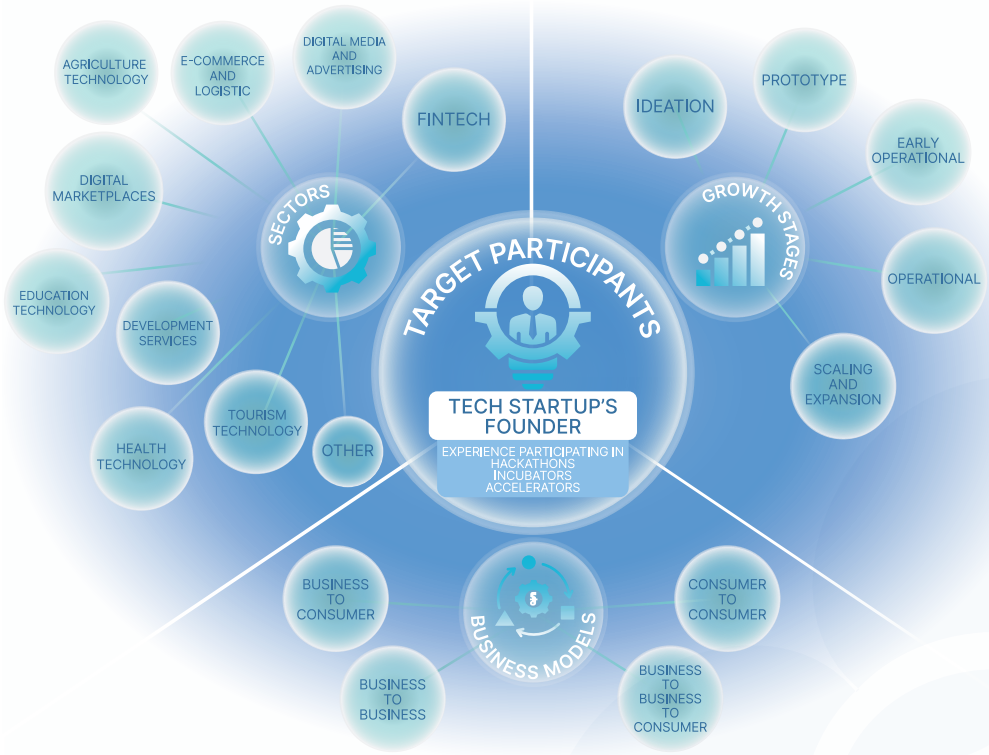


Figure 2.1: Target Participants
Source: Authors (2025)

No comprehensive data is available on Cambodia's total number of tech startups in Cambodia. However, after compiling information from various sources, such as the Startup Cambodia platform and lists shared by some ESOs, it was found that there were 170 active tech startups in Cambodia.

To achieve the research goal and objectives, as shown in Figure 2.1, the target participants were selected from 170 active tech startups based on the key criterion that the founders had participated in one of the three main support programs - hackathons, incubators, and accelerators- within the last three years.

Sixty tech startup founders met the criterion after the screening. Therefore, these 60 tech startup founders were the right target participants who were contacted to join the research. Tech startups were chosen based on sectors, business models, and growth stages to ensure representativeness and data quality. Out of 60 tech startup founders, only 42 participated in the research. The remaining 18 founders were unable to join due to urgent priorities that took precedence over their participation.

When it comes to using qualitative methods in research, there is often a debate about whether the sample size is essential. The sample size does not need to be random, excellent, or structured; what matters is what the researcher considers pertinent to the study (Shaheen, Pradhan, & Ranajee, 2019). Qualitative research often uses smaller sample sizes than quantitative research methods (Dworkin, 2012). The sample size for qualitative research depends on available resources and time, study objectives, or the number of participants needed to yield theoretical saturation (AtukpawuTipton, Higman, & Morrison, 2020). Ritchie et al. (2014) recommend that research utilizing individual interviews should limit the number to 50 so that researchers can handle the analysis's complexity effectively.

With the sample size of 42, data saturation, and the research findings' depth and richness can be ensured to a large extent.

Non-probability sampling techniques are often used in exploratory and qualitative research. In non-probability sampling, individuals are selected based on non-random criteria, and not every individual has a chance of being included (McCombes, 2019). Purposive sampling and snowball sampling were used to recruit target tech startup founders to participate in the research. The tech startup founders were selected purposefully based on the key criterion established by the researchers to ensure that the chosen individuals were relevant to the research questions being addressed.

Furthermore, the researchers aimed to select tech startup founders in a way that ensured considerable diversity among the available participants, allowing for variations based on important characteristics. In addition to this, the research team employed snowball sampling by first connecting with a small group of tech startup founders who met the research criterion and then asking them to refer other tech startup founders who might also meet the criterion.

2.3. Data Collection and Management

An interview guide was utilized as the primary instrument for IDI, undergoing pilot testing prior to the initiation of data collection. The data collection process lasted one and a half months.

The information from IDI was transcribed using Microsoft Word, and the resulting transcripts were meticulously reviewed for the quality of the information presented. Subsequently, each transcript was imported into QSR NVivo software version 12 for in-depth analysis. The research employed inductive coding and thematic analysis to explore the raw textual data, facilitating theidentification of categories, concepts, themes, or processes.

Since the nature of the research is exploratory, the researchers did not predict answers from participants, or what are technically referred to as "concepts or themes," prior to the data analysis.

As a result, the researchers employed inductive coding, carefully reading and interpreting the raw contextual data to develop these concepts or themes. The researchers then used thematic analysis to identify and present recurring patterns in the data. The information collected from participants required the researchers to read and interpret the raw data attentively in order to extract meaning and understand various subjects and interpretations. The researchers developed a comprehensive codebook, organized the codes into potential themes, and discerned trends and patterns associated with those themes. The timeframe of data collection and management is illustrated in **Figure 2.2**.

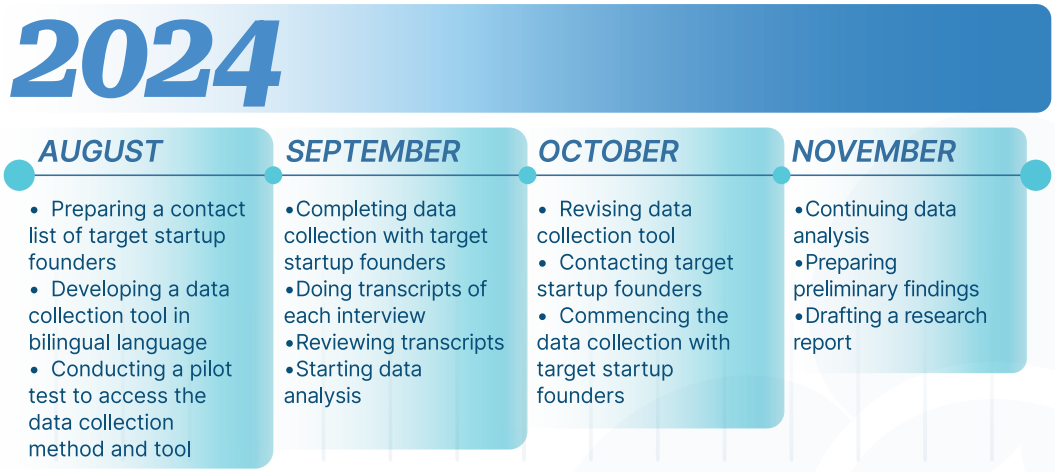


Figure 2.2: Data Collection and Management Timeframe
Source: Authors (2025)

03

Key Findings and Discussion

3.1. Key Demographics

The research collected information from 42 tech startup founders.

The demographic information can be categorized into two distinct categories: the demographics of the tech startups and the demographics of the tech startup founders.

As shown in **Figure 3.1**, the tech startups come from various sectors, business models, and growth stages. A total of 42 startups are represented, with a notable concentration in Development Services *(8 startups)*, followed by FinTech *(6 startups)*, Agriculture Technology *(6 startups)*, Education Technology *(6 startups)* and E-Commerce and Logistics *(4 startups)*. The reaminings were in Digital Media and Advertising *(3 startups)*, Tourism Technology *(3 startups)*, Digital Marketplaces *(2 startups)*, Health Technology *(2 startups)* and Others *(2 startups)*. In the research, the tech startups' business models comprise 28 startups operating under a business-to-business (B2B) model, 22 startups operating under a business-to-consumer (B2C) model, and three startups operating under a business-to-business-to-consumer (B2B2C) model. These diverse business models indicate different segments of the tech startups' business models in Cambodia.

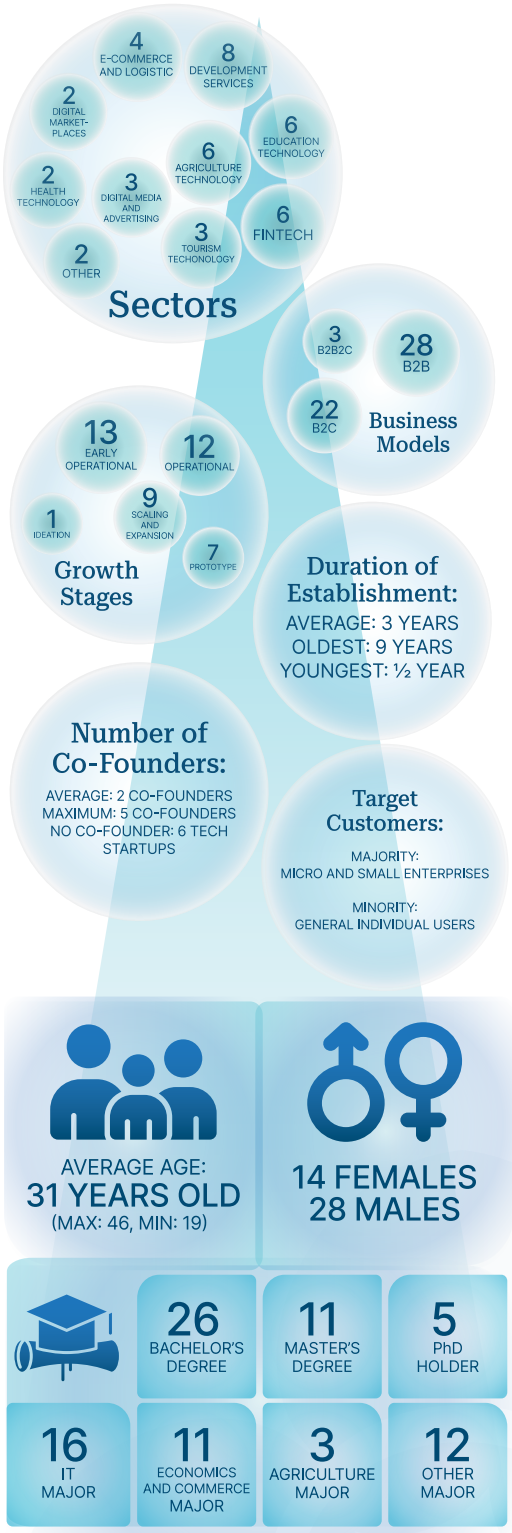


Figure 3.1: Key Demographics of Tech Startups and Tech Startup Founders
Source: Authors (2025)

In terms of growth stages, the majority of the tech startups fall into the categories of early operational (13 startups), operational (12 startups), scaling and expansion (9 startups), prototype (7 startups), and ideation (1 startup). This distribution suggests that many startups are already in the market, with a number transitioning into operational and scaling phases, indicating a pipeline of growth and innovation. Regarding establishment duration, the tech startups vary significantly in age, with the most senior having been established nine years ago and the youngest only half a year ago, with an average age of three years. This range illustrates the diverse experiences and perspectives of the tech startup founders. On average, the tech startups have two co-founders. The primary target customers are enterprises, particularly micro and small businesses, across various sectors, including finance, retail, and restaurants. Additionally, general users encompass a diverse group, including students, employees, farmers, and others, reflecting the wide-ranging relevance of startup solutions across various fields.

Besides the demographic characteristics of the tech startups, it is essential to examine the demographic information of the tech startup founders as participants in the research. The average age of the participants was 31, with the oldest tech startup founder being 46 and the youngest founder being 19. The gender distribution among founders indicates a proportion of 14 females to 28 males. Regarding educational qualifications, all founders hold university degrees. Specifically, 26 individuals have obtained a bachelor's degree, while 11 have earned a master's degree. Furthermore, five founders possess a Ph.D. These high levels of education indicate a strong emphasis on higher education and specialized knowledge among tech startup founders. An analysis of the majors of the graduated techstartup founders reveals educational diversity: 16 founders graduated with degrees in Information and Technology, 12 hold degrees in other disciplines such as Health Science, Social Science, Chemical Science, and Engineering, 11 with degrees in Economics and Commerce, and 3 with degrees in Agriculture. This variety indicates that the tech startup community is drawing talent from multiple disciplines.

The research examined the participation of 42 tech startup founders in three support programs: hackathons, accelerators, and incubators. The findings reveal that 76% of these tech startup founders participated in accelerators, 67% in incubators, and 50% in hackathons.

Notably, the research found that very few tech startup founders reported challenges during the pre- and post-participating stages of these support programs.

In contrast, many challenges were reported during the participating stage. As a result, the research will not address challenges in the pre- and sections for each support program will outline three important topics, which focus on

1. Areas for improvement to optimize the pre-participating stage,
2. Challenges and areas for improvement during the participating stage, and
3. The types of support that tech startup founders received, as well as the support they wished to receive during the post-participating stage for those who did not receive any[1].

[1] It is worth mentioning that none of tech startup founders, who did not receive any support after the hackathons completed, expressed a desire to receive any types of support. Therefore, in post-participating stage of hackathons, only information from tech startup founders who received support will be presented.

3.2. Hackathons

A hackathon is an event where individuals or teams collaborate to create innovative solutions for specific challenges or themes within a short timeframe. These events usually last from a few hours to several days.

Anyone aspiring to become a founder or create solutions should participate in a hackathon program. By taking part in hackathons, individuals or teams can benefit from collaborating with people who possess diverse skill sets, networking with industry professionals, and having the chance to win prizes or gain recognition for their innovative solutions.

HACKATHONS

Box 3.1: Definition and Benefits of Hackathons
Source: Bunthan et al. (2024)

In the last three years, 14 out of 42 founders claimed to participate on behalf of their tech startups in 16 hackathons. It was found that different organizers organized those 16 hackathons, and they were free for entrance. The experiences of their participation delved into three different stages, including

1. The pre-participating stage,
2. During the participating stage, and
3. The post-participating stage

3.2.1. The Pre-participating Stage

Despite not facing significant challenges during the pre-participating stage, pre-participating stage, the tech startup founders still suggested four main areas of improvement, as shown in **Figure 3.2**.

1. **Clear Announcement:** The announcement content should be informative and precise, allowing candidates to determine which hackathon suits them. Vital information in the annoucement are the tech startup sector and other eligible criteria.
2. **Selection Criteria:** When planning a hackathon program, it is important to consider specific sectors of tech startups as the program's theme. This ensures that activities, such as mentorship, are aligned with the program's focus. Moreover, the tech startup founders have suggested that hackathons should be inclusive of former participants who are still founders, providing them with another opportunity to showcase their ideas on the stage
3. **Geographic Expansion:** Hackathons should be expanded and organized in the potential tech industry provinces and towns across Cambodia.
4. **Diverse Promotion Channels:** The announcement should be circulated through various channels beyond social media. There is a possibility that the tech startup founders, who are the targets of hackathons, may not be actively engaged in startup networks and communities at this stage.

Tech startup founders expressed the need for clear communication, selection criteria, geographic growth, and different channels for announcement promotion as key areas for improvement in pre-participating stage of hackathons.

Some of the described shortcomings, if addressed, can increase the efficiency of hackathons.

Organizing successful hackathons requires careful planning and preparation, as noted by Kohne and Wehmeier (2020). Organizers can increase their chances of collaborative participation by making clear announcements of the relevance of the hackathon for targeted sectors, as well as planning around similar themes. Moreover, a broader geographic influence and use of different promotional channels would reach a wider audience of participants and enhance the event experience even more. The guide from the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust and the Scottish Library and Information Council

(2017) emphasizes the importance of thoughtful event planning. The guide suggests that participant criteria, event goals, technological needs, sponsorship options, budget, legal restrictions, and logistical issues should be key agendas for organizers to plan prior to the event carefully.

By integrating research findings with industry best practices, organizers can create lasting relationships and ensure the success of hackathons, ultimately yielding creative results that meet participants' expectations and align with organizational objectives.

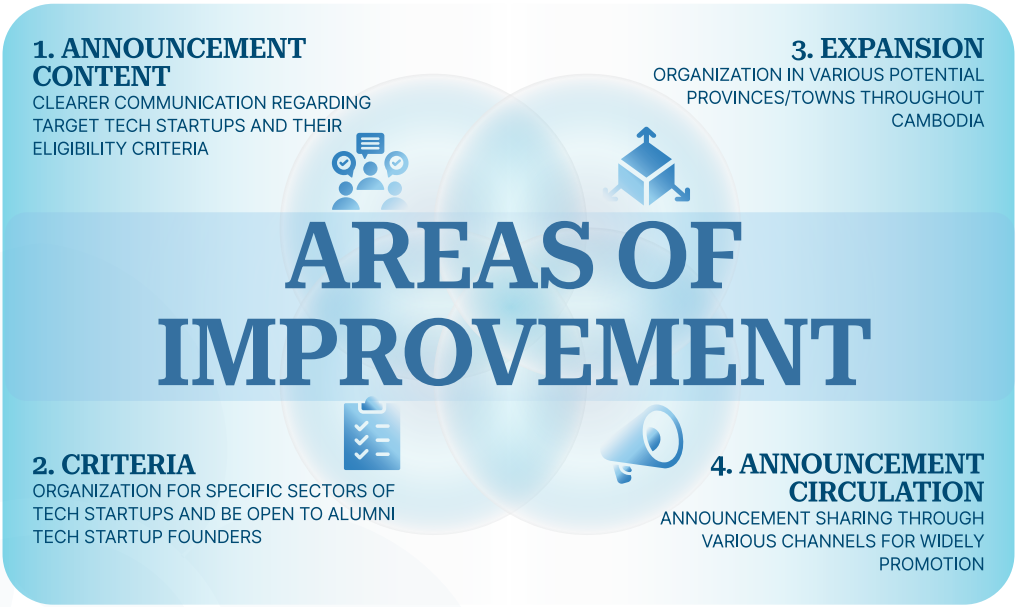


Figure 3.2: Areas of Improvement in the Pre-participating Stage of Hackathons, Source: Authors (2025)

3.2.2. During the Participating Stage

Out of 16 hackathons, 12 were reported by the tech startup founders to encounter challenges during the participating stage. The challenges can be grouped into five primary categories:

1. **Frequent in-person Attendance:** The program requires frequent in-person participation in training sessions. This requirement poses difficulties for the tech startup founders with other commitments. Travel and time away from their existing responsibilities can create substantial barriers to participation.
2. **Language Barrier:** English is the predominant language used throughout the program. Many tech startup founders find it challenging to communicate their ideas effectively and fully absorb the content of the sessions in English.
3. **Quality of Mentors:** The tech startup founders expressed concerns regarding the qualifications of the mentors assigned to them. Many mentors lacked the necessary skills and experience to meet the unique needs of tech startups. Observations indicated that these mentors did not have a solid understanding of the specific challenges faced by the tech startup founders in the tech industry.
4. **Fast Pace of the Training:** The program's training offered is quick and overwhelming for participants. Given the inherently quick nature of hackathons, tech startup founders often find themselves with insufficient time to absorb the material and effectively process their learning.
5. **Loss of Original Ideas of the Tech Startup Founders:** In the program, mentors and organizers altered the founders' original ideas excessively, deterring startup innovation.

To effectively tackle these five identified challenges, the tech startup founders have made a range of thoughtful suggestions aimed at enhancing the overall experience and outcomes of the program, as illustrated in **Figure 3.3**.

1. **Alternative Training Approach:** The tech startup founders suggested the implementation of evening training sessions to accommodate their schedules. The tech startup founders in the research recall the common practice that most tech startup founders are full-time employees and students. Having an evening session and space in between training increases their accessibility to the program without compromising their other obligations. Furthermore, to improve the training experience, there should be space between each session, and the duration of training should be extended. Additionally, it is important to eliminate language barriers by providing options in both Khmer and English. More importantly, while maintaining the originality of ideas, feedback should focus on constructive comments for improvement rather than making changes to the original concepts.

2. **Enhanced Quality Mentorship:** The tech founders described the necessary qualities of mentors qualities of mentors in the program, such as being equipped with business skills and having firsthand experience running a startup. They believe that mentors who understand the intricacies of the tech landscape can provide more relevant and impactful guidance, ultimately supporting the growth and success of their ventures.

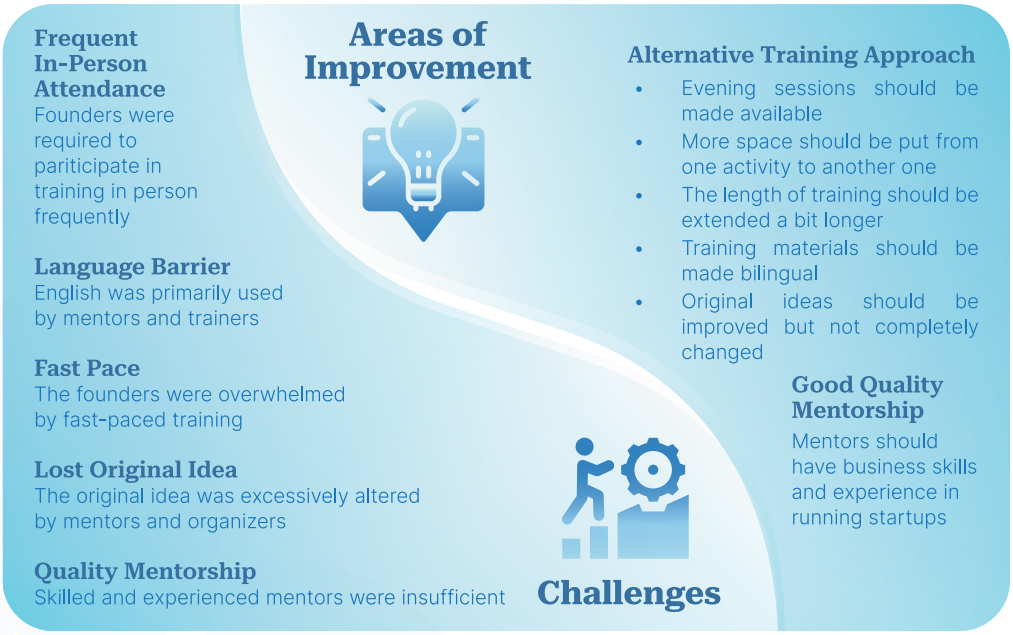


Figure 3.3: Challenges and Areas of Improvement during the Participating Stage of Hackathons
Source: Authors (2025)

This finding highlights that the tech startup founders faced difficulties with time constraints and a lack of experienced mentors, aligning with research on the Tech Startup Ecosystem in Cambodia 2022 (Phong et al, 2022).

These challenges emphasize the need for a solid understanding and experience in managing the tech startups, underscoring the importance of effective mentorship, especially in the early stages of startups. Moreover, the rapid pace of hackathons leaves the tech startup founders with little time to absorb their learning, which can increase stress and hinder their overall performance.

As suggested by the tech startup founders, incorporating breaks between training sessions is essential. These intervals provide time for reflection and assimilation of the material, leading to a more enriching learning experience. While extending the overall duration of training may allow for a deeper exploration of crucial topics, it is essential to note that hackathons can vary in duration. Kohne and Wehmeier (2020) discuss various hackathon formats, including short hackathons, weekend hackathons, and longer durations, which may offer organizers greater flexibility to adapt the structure to better meet participants' needs.

Language barriers are one of the challenges faced by the tech startup founders. It is worth noting that language barriers can significantly affect participation and the overall success of a hackathon by hindering their engagement and limiting their ability to network with peers and mentors. At the same time, language proficiency is considered one criterion, making participants lacking language skills struggle to join or contribute to hackathons effectively. This raises questions about their inclusion or the concept of "equality of arms" as indicated by Kohne and Wehmeier (2020). Therefore, Kohne and Wehmeier (2020) suggest careful consideration when establishing exclusion criteria. Rules perceived as discriminatory can undermine the collaborative spirit of hackathons.

The loss of original startup ideas is reported as an issue encountered by the tech startup founders. Throughout hackathons, there is a tendency for the mentors and organizers to alter the original concepts presented by the tech startup founders excessively. This intervention can stifle innovation and discourage tech startup founders from pursuing their unique ideas, ultimately diluting the originality that hackathons are designed to celebrate.

According to Kohne and Wehmeier (2020), the core of hackathons is to showcase new ideas to venture capitalists and secure investors, emphasizing the importance of maintaining focus from idea generation to implementation to prevent teams from straying from their original concepts.

As highlighted by the tech startup founders, constructive improvement or feedback can encourage innovation and creativity. This approach encourages innovation and creativity while supporting the tech startup founders in refining their concepts. These strategies will create a more effective and supportive training program for the tech startup founders.

3.2.3. The Post-participating Stage

Out of 16 hackathons, nine tech startup founders reported receiving post-program support. In the post-participating program, as illustrated in **Figure 3.4**, they reported to graduate to the next-level program, such as an incubator or accelerator, either automatically or by applying with aid from program organizers. The tech startup founders also valued constant communication in the forms of meetings with mentors, invitations to relevant events, exchanging information between organizers and tech startup founders, and founder-to-founder. Maintaining these communication opportunities among former participants as alumni, as well as with organizers, is recognized as a valuable form of support that tech startup founders receive after the hackathon program.

For those who did not receive any support after the hackathons ended, none expressed a desire to receive any support.

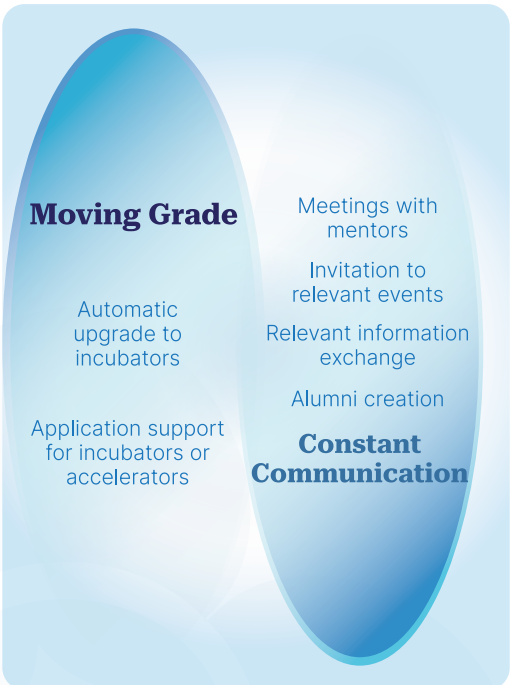


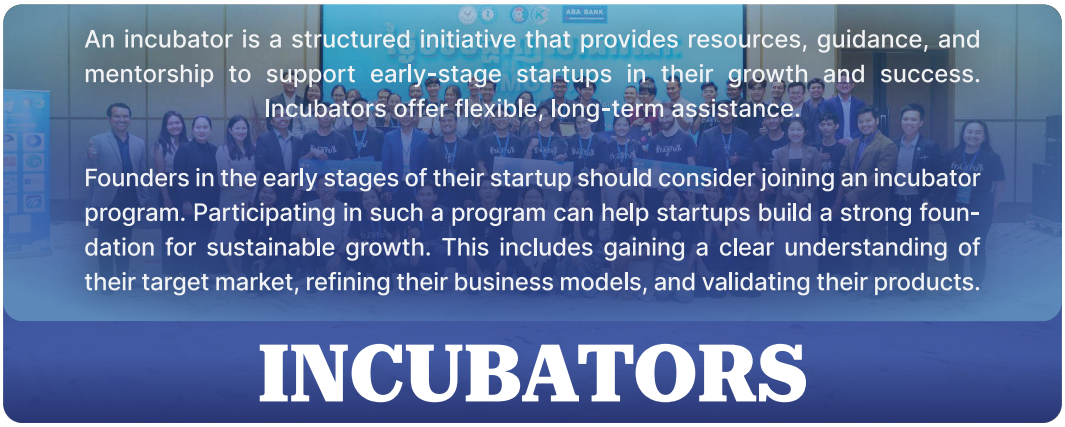
Figure 3.4: Types of Support Received in the Post-participating Stage of Hackathons
Source: Authors (2025)

After hackathons conclude, organizers often conduct follow-up activities. Successful planning and execution necessitate this follow-up to maximize impact (Kohne & Wehmeier, 2020). However, this crucial phase is frequently overlooked. Many ideas generated during the hackathon remain sketches or prototypes, and advancing these concepts or launching new ventures requires additional time and support.

Kohne and Wehmeier (2020) emphasize the importance of ongoing support following hackathons. Organizers can provide participants with opportunities for continued guidance, such as expert consultation hours or online forums for next-step advice. Additionally, offering temporary workspaces allows teams to continue their development. If an idea shows strong potential for a new company, support can extend to finding investors, legal advice, and personnel or financial planning. It is essential to plan engagement strategies with both results and participants during the follow-up phase, which includes preparing necessary materials, allocating financial resources, and establishing a support network.

Ensuring participants are not left unsupported during this phase is critical, as neglect can lead to dissatisfaction and missed opportunities.

3.3. Incubators



Box 3.2: Definition and Benefits of Incubators
Source: Bunthan et al. (2024)

The research found that 28 founders out of 42 total participants claimed to participate in 38 incubators for their startups in the last three years. The experiences of their participation delved into three different stages, including

1. The pre-participating stage,
2. During the participating stage, and
3. The post-participating stage

3.3.1. The Pre-participating Stage

In the incubators' pre-participating stage, tech startup founders who participated in the research provided organizers with two suggestions for improvement, as shown in **Figure 3.5**.

1. **The Announcement Circulation:** The announcement should target university or high school students by setting up information booths or organizing information-sharing events on-site. One method is to reach out to founders who have an existing connection by sending announcements to their emails. Regarding registration, the entry form should be available in Khmer and English to give applicants more options.
2. **A Confirmation Mechanism:** The mechanism for program applications should be in place to inform participants, including their submission status, successful confirmation, and schedule confirmation. After submitting their application to the program, founders find they rarely receive feedback, thus unsure of the success of their submission. In addition, successful applications suggest to add a follow-up plan in this stage, such as a phone call or email to inform the steps to participating stage. This practice reduces the chance that founders missed essential events in the pre-participating stage, due to avoidable cause such as conflicting schedules. It is proposed that digital calendars and event reminders should be utilized to aid this process. It increases efficiency and time effectiveness for both organizers and tech startup founders.

The findings from the pre-participating stage identified suggestions from the tech startup founders based on their experiences with incubators. The purpose is to broaden the scope of target participants through announcements and outreach efforts. The suggested groups for outreach include

university and high school students, who could be approached through information booths, and outstanding tech startup founders, whom we could contact via email. This approach aims to increase the participation of university and high school students in incubators. This suggestion has several advantages, especially considering that incubators are designed to support early-stage startups (Bunthan et al., 2024).

The primary benefit is likely for outstanding tech startups and university students who have already launched their startups, as they could maximize the advantages offered by the program.

Additionally, exploring initiatives like pre-incubator programs for high school students could provide valuable early support for young tech entrepreneurs.

Figure 3.5: Areas of Improvement in the Pre-participating Stage of Incubators
Source: Authors (2025)

3.3.2. During the Participating Stage

Out of 38 incubators, 28 were reported by tech startup founders to have experienced challenges during their participation in the last three years. **Figure 3.6** illustrates five main challenges as follows.

1. **Improper Curriculum:** Some tech startup founders perceived that some courses in the incubators were too general in concept and were not practical in their daily operations. Some courses were too similar to accelerator programs and did not meet the specific needs of tech startup founders.
2. **Intensive Program:** Some incubators were reported to require a high quantity of in-person training. The program provided advanced assignments but was impractical for the founders' tech startups.
3. **Undisclosured Criteria:** Incubators that did not clarify their selection criteria for participants, mentors, judges, and the criteria for selecting winners created a gap in information for tech startup founders. Transparency in these criteria fosters trust and confidence among tech startup founders, providing the necessary environment for them to thrive in the program. Many founders expressed concerns about the program dynamics, as they observed participants were in different business stages. Knowing the judges' selection criteria could help participants prepare better for their pitches. Additionally, disclosing the criteria for selecting winners would create a sense of fairness and satisfaction in the competition.
4. **Timing:** The incubators indicated a lengthy period of training sessions but a brief time for mentor meetings, which the tech startup founder preferred over the training sessions.
5. **Quality Mentorship:** The founders of the tech startup reported that the mentors provided through the program struggled to understand the specific context of their startup and could not offer effective guidance. Some mentors were perceived to have limited technical skills, which hindered their ability to explain concepts and address the technical aspects of the startups, ultimately not meeting the needs of the founders.

In response to the identified challenges, the tech startup founders suggested three key areas for improvement during the participating stage of incubators, as follows.

1. **Training Mechanism:** A mechanism suggested by the tech startup founder was online training, with each session recorded and shared to enhance its usefulness. Organizers should consider scheduling sessions in the evening to accommodate tech startup founders who have full-time jobs. Additionally, a feedback mechanism after the training to encourage proactive and spontaneous communication regarding the challenges faced during the program.
2. **Proper Selection:** It was suggested that the selection criteria of tech startups, judges, and mentors in the incubators be refined. The criteria of tech startup founders participating in the incubators should be in a similar business stage to maintain synergy

within the cohort. The selected mentors and judges should be in the same or most relevant expertise and industry, and aligning with incubating tech startups. Careful selection of these groups, perceived as factors, encourages a dynamic learning pace, sharp and relevant mentorship, and a sense of fair competition.

3. **High-Quality Mentors:** It was recommended that mentors in incubators possess extensive knowledge and experience in their fields. Furthermore, mentorship should be available full-time to tech startup founders to ensure greater accessibility. Lastly, tech start-up founders highly preferred one-on-one mentorship as it allows for more personalized guidance and support.

Figure 3.6: Challenges and Areas of Improvement During the Participating Stage of Incubators
Source: Authors (2025)

The improper training curriculum and intensive program were a major challenge faced by tech startup founders during the participating stage in incubators can reflect the one-size-fits-all approach, which refers to an approach that is standard and not tailored to individual needs, according to Collins (2025).

Mentoring Complete (2023) stipulates that many incubators tend to follow a one-size-fits-all approach, providing generic support and training programs that do not fully address the specific needs of individual startups or companies. This approach explains tech startup dissatisfaction with the curriculum and training mechanism when it does not fit with tech startup founders' expectations. Phong et al. (2022) also reported that tech startup founders could not allocate adequate time to fully participate in incubators as they had other commitments. To improve this, the tech startup founders suggested changing the training mechanism to be more flexible in terms of available sessions and providing a feedback mechanism for the training. Mentoring Complete (2023) emphasizes the need for a more supportive and practical training environment to better assist participants in their development stage.

To truly make a difference, incubators should adopt a more flexible approach, tailoring their programs to meet the unique challenges and goals of each business they work with.

Similarly to the experiences of participating in hackathons, the tech startup founders reported that quality mentorship was also a challenge during the incubator participating stage. Phong et al. (2022) found that incubators provide an ideal environment for startups to build and establish networks with relevant individuals who can offer support, as well as for startups to find mentors. Moreover, these supports are crucial in providing guidance and support to tech startups that are still in their early stages.

However, there was a lack of experienced mentors who were experts and capable of operating and managing a startup.

The lack of quality mentors is not a new challenge in incubators; it is rooted deep in the tech startup ecosystem (Ek & Vandenberg, 2022). Phong et al. (2022) also found that actors in ESOs, particularly incubators, accelerators, and development partners, encountered difficulties in recruiting quality mentors to provide mentorship and guidance to tech startups in their support programs.

Mentorship is an essential driver to success for founders participating in incubator programs, and therefore, one of the priorities to address is eliminating this obstacle in the founder's journey through the incubator program.

An interesting finding in the research is the undisclosed criteria of startups, judges, and mentors selection that tech startup founders perceived as a challenge during the participating stage in incubators.

Similarly, some applicants believed that participants who already had existing businesses had a greater advantage than the ones who did not, according to findings from Startup Week and Weekend that were included in the Supporting Young Entrepreneurs Guidebook – Incubator and Accelerator Programs created by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2021.

The Startup Week and Weekend did not disclose the selection criteria for participants or information about mentors either. The UNDP guidebook (2021) emphasizes the transparency of the activities taking place in the startup ecosystem that is tailored to Cambodia. In addition, it explicitly stipulates that the classification of the stage of a start-up is crucial for separating unique characteristics and concentrating areas of support for each program, including incubators. The UNDP guidebook (2021) also mentions critical components for developing and running a successful startup support program, including incubators. Among the most important components are the mentors' backgrounds, the target audience, and the selection criteria.

In order to guarantee transparency and fairness in the incubators, the tech startup founders who participated in the research also suggested that the organizers enhance the selection criteria for judges, mentors, and tech start-ups.

3.3.3. The Post-participating Stage

In the last three years, 28 tech startup founders participated in an incubator. Of these, 21 tech startup founders reported receiving some form of support after their participation, while the remaining seven did not receive any support. **Figure 3.7** illustrates the types of support desired by those who did not receive any and the support that was received by those who did. The support offered to the tech startup founders included funding and investment opportunities, mentorship, branding promotion, office space, and partnership agreements.

1. **Funding and Investment Opportunities:** The tech startup founders received connections with potential investors, which opened up pitching opportunities to investors in-country and overseas, commonly in Asia.
2. **Mentorship:** Continual mentorship was commonly received after the program, providing a critical support system for participants as they transitioned into new roles or pursued further business development.
3. **Branding Promotion:** The incubator organizer promoted the founder's start-up brand domestically and globally. This was perceived as helpful support to tech startup founders, as they gained more spotlight on their startups and fostered more opportunities to build a potential customer base and essential networks.
4. **Office Space:** The tech startup founders were offered office and storage spaces free of charge, which tech startup founders utilized for business operations and organized promotional meetings and events.
5. **Partnership Agreement:** The tech startup founders were invited to investor matching events, which resulted in partnership agreements. They

expressed their appreciation for the incubator organizers' role as honored guests at the ceremony for signing these partnerships. This support was seen as significant for enhancing the credibility of the tech startup founders and boosting the confidence in the partnerships.

The tech startup founders identified three key types of support they desired after participating in incubator programs. The three types of support are as follows:

1. **Network Connections:** The tech startup founders expressed a strong desire for assistance in connecting with stakeholders within the tech startup ecosystem, particularly investors, mentors, other startups, and potential clients. They viewed the period following the incubator as a crucial opportunity to establish important connections that could help their startups thrive. To facilitate this, they suggested organizing networking events and meetings with targeted stakeholders after the completion of the incubator programs.
2. **Continuous Support:** The tech startup founders desired the extension of support after the incubator was completed. This ongoing support would involve staying in touch with former participants and sharing updates about both the tech startups and the incubator programs.
3. **Technical Support:** The tech startup founders requested that the incubator organizers offer guidance on scaling operations, product development, and business expansion. In addition, they wished for assistance with IT solutions and access to cloud storage facilities.

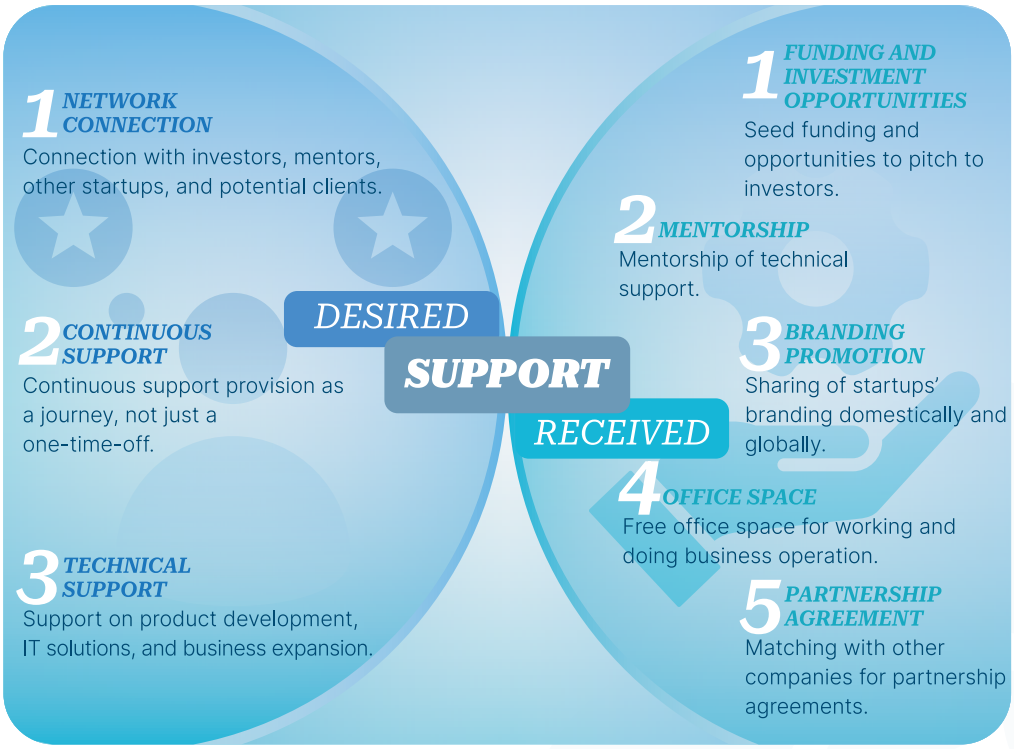


Figure 3.7: Post-program Support of Incubators
Source: Authors (2025)

Lack of ongoing assistance after incubators conclude frequently leaves startups struggling to scale and negotiate the market's intricacies. The long-term viability of the tech startup's journey depends onestablishing a framework for ongoing guidance and resources after the incubators are completed (Mentoring Complete, 2023). Phong et al. (2022) strongly recommends the provision of post-program supports to tech startups because it is crucial for startups growth.

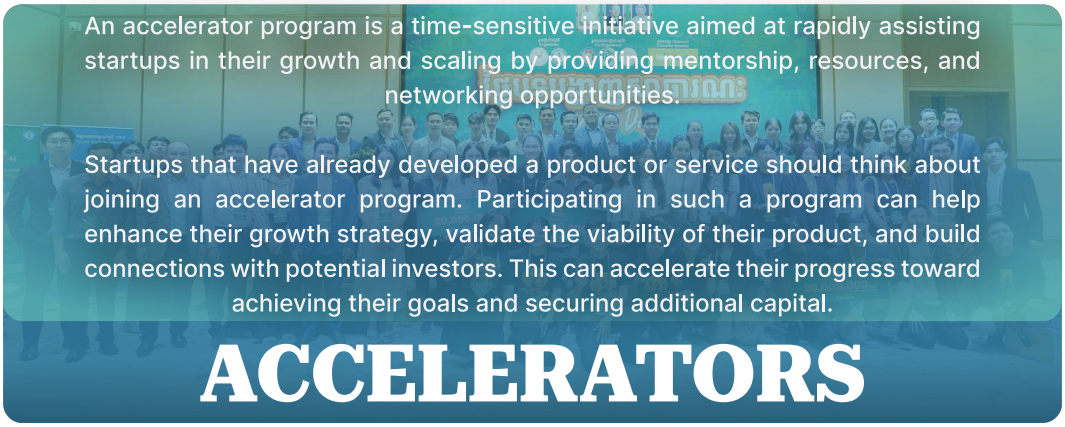
This is consistent with the research findings that seven startup founders, who did not receive any support after the incubators concluded, wished to receive post-program support as they perceive those support will guide and navigate them to a greater growth stage.

The UNDP guidebook (2021) suggests that network support is the most common post-program support for incubator or accelerators. Resources like a mentorship pool, other business owners, paid or pro bono professional services (like legal or investment consultants), and coworking spaces can all be a part of this network support. Therefore, the network support defined by the UNDP guidebook (2021) covers most of types of support that the tech startup founders received or wished to receive.

In the research, funding and investment opportunities was also found as a type of support that the tech startup founders received. This is consistent with two programs listed in the UNDP guidebook (2021) that provided post-program support regarding to investment. With dozens of investors and business executives present, the presentation highlights the businesses developed in **"Full-Time Young Entrepreneur Incubation Model from Idea to Prototype"** program. After they complete the program, high-achieving participants will have the chance to secure additional money to support their business. Finding partner investors and providing ongoing mentorship until beta testing were examples of post-program support in **"FinTech Solutions to Solve Existing SME and Corporation Problem Statements"** program.

Beside resources and mentorship, capital and investment support in post-participating stage will help tech startup founder to scale up their businesses successfully.

3.4. Accelerators



Box 3.3: Definition and Benefits of Accelerators
Source: Bunthan et al. (2024)

In the research, 32 founders out of 42 claimed to participate in 45 accelerators on behalf of their tech startups in the last three years. The experiences of their participation delved into three different stages, including

1. The pre-participating stage,
2. During the participating stage, and
3. The post-participating stage

3.4.1. The Pre-participating Stage

In the pre-participating stage, the tech startup founders suggested four key areas for improvement as illustrated in **Figure 3.8**:

1. **Announcement Circulation:** The accelerators' announcements should be widely published across various media channels beyond the organizers' social media. Organizations should diversify the formats of these announcements by including short videos and posters to capture the audience's attention better.
2. **Announcement Content:** The announcement should contain comprehensive and essential information, including the whole program's timeline, clear eligibility criteria, and the benefits of participation, such as business professionalism development.
3. **Eligibility of the Participating Tech Startups:** Accelerators should prioritize new tech startups over former participants. Restricting the criteria was assumed to provide more opportunities for dedicated tech startup founders who are in demand for accelerator program benefits.
4. **Schedule of the Program:** It was suggested that the organizer should digitize the entire program schedule and implement an automatic notification system for the tech startup founders who successfully got selected into the accelerator. It was perceived to minimize unnecessary absences and enable both founders and organizers to stay organized, reducing the stress of rescheduling during the program. Additionally, The program should schedule breaks between sessions. The tech

startup founders expressed the importance of a flexible schedule, which can be addressed through an initial assessment with participants in the pre-participating stage.

Recruiting participants for the program is one of the most crucial aspects of launching and sustaining an accelerator. According to the research's tech startup founders, the announcement's eligibility, circulation, and substance were all crucial areas for improvement in order to reach a large number of the proper target founders with enough information to make an informed decision. To attract candidates, accelerators must employ targeted marketing and clear communication regarding the program's requirements, timeline, benefits, and target audience (Nesta, 2024). Universities, associations, investors, entrepreneurs, and social media are just a few of the organizations, stakeholders, and channels accelerators can work with to find and attract startups (Nesta, 2024). In order to choose the best candidates who are qualified to join accelerators, accelerators must make it clear in their announcement that they have distinct admission criteria and areas of concentration. According to Richard, Naomi, and Steve (2020), the founding team, the idea or product, the market, and the progress are all significant shared components of accelerator admission criteria.

In the meantime, the tech startup founders who participated in the research particularly suggested that only recently established tech startups should be allowed to attend accelerators since they believed that these startups needed the assistance that the accelerator offered.

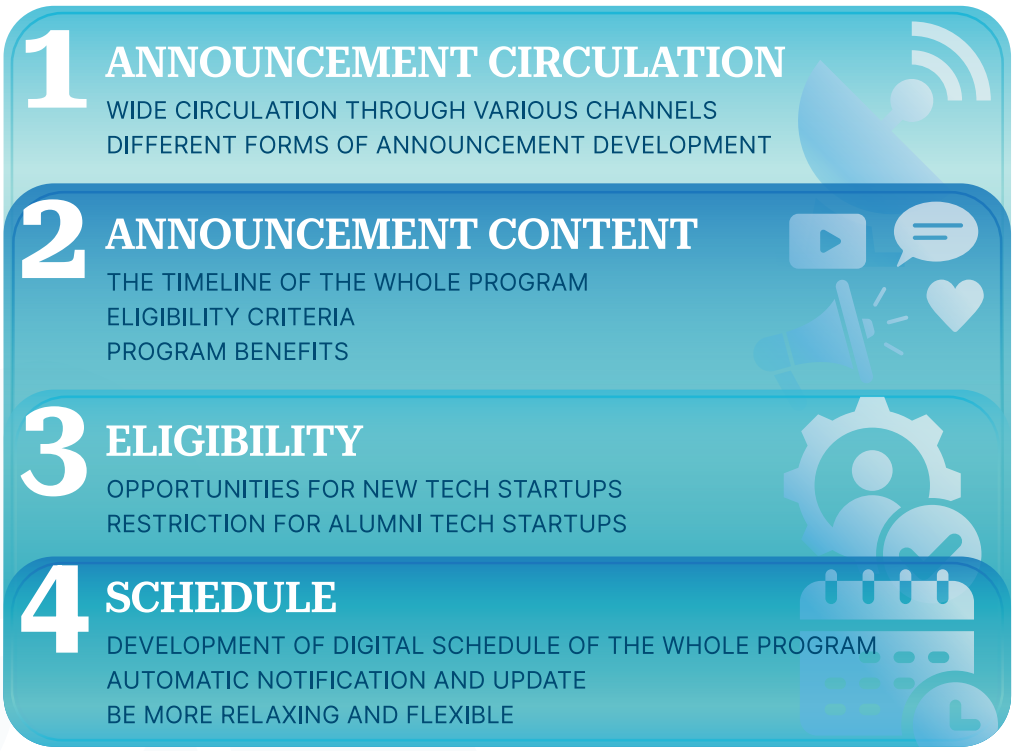


Figure 3.8: Areas of Improvement in the Pre-participating Stage of Accelerators
Source: Authors (2025)

Another area for improvement, according to the tech startup founders in the research, was the accelerators' overall program schedule. Participants may only learn about their activities at the beginning of each week, or the schedule may be distributed before the program begins. Startups will have to deal with a whirlwind of activities from the first day of the accelerator, including meetings, workshops, events, mentorship sessions, tight deadlines, and constantly shifting agendas. Although there are many options available, not all of them will be necessary or a top priority for every startups, and founders must avoid being dragged in too many different directions, which would waste time (Richard, Naomi, & Steve, 2020).

The participants of the program must, therefore, be aware of the schedule beforehand in order to plan ahead and be well-prepared, which will help them better manage their time. The tech startup founders also recommended digitizing the schedule.

According to Rae (2023), posting a calendar or schedule online enables users to access it from anywhere, manage it simply, set reminders so they never miss a meeting again, coordinate schedules in a matter of seconds, and instantly book follow-up meetings.

3.4.2. During the participating Stage

Out of 45 accelerators, 24 were reported by tech startup founders to have encountered challenges during the participating stage that hindered interaction within the accelerators. Six challenges were identified as follows:

1. **Frequent In-person Attendance:** The accelerators designed with frequent in-person events were challenging for tech startup founders in the early stage of operation. They tend to oversee daily operations with limited team capacity, and the requirement to participate in physical sessions was a struggle for founders.
2. **Schedule of the Accelerators:** The tech startup founders recalled experiences where there were quick changes to the program. No concrete schedule was provided in advance, and in some cases, meetings with mentors were difficult to schedule, as they conflicted with other training sessions that had been committed to. In some programs, the tech startup founders encountered sudden changes to the session schedule, requiring them to adjust their other commitments swiftly.
3. **Tech Startup Eligibility to the Program:** The accelerators were open to tech startups from diverse business stages and sectors. The mix of startup competency levels was too contrasting: ideation, growth, and expansion stages. It was also observed that some tech startup business sectors did not match the program's theme.
4. **Quality mentors:** A lack of skilled and experienced mentors was observed. The founder emphasizes the experience of receiving mentorship from mentors who lack business operation skills and a more substantial portfolio in establishing tech startups.

5. **Language Barrier:** Accelerators were conducted in English throughout the program. Founders find themselves in a challenging situation when the mentor and trainer are English speakers.
6. **Selection Criteria:** When the accelerator's selection criteria and backgrounds of the judges and mentors were not disclosed, the tech startup founders participating in the program began to doubt their qualifications in selecting successful startups in competitions. Some founders felt that the judges did not have the appropriate expertise to evaluate the startups effectively, raising concerns about their eligibility for the task. The mentorship quality during the accelerators also raised questions among tech startup founders in mentor selection.

As illustrated in **Figure 3.9**, the tech startup founders identified areas for improvement to enhance their experiences within the accelerators. Four specific areas for improvement are detailed as follows:

1. **Good Quality Mentorship:** Mentors should be able to provide in-depth guidance and precisely communicate ideas to startup founders. Tech startup founders expect practical advice for their tech startups and precise explanations on how they could implement it.
2. **Good Curriculum:** Training materials should be more specific, with practical strategies, and bilingual. Practical exercises that support the tech startup founders in examining their tech startup strategy are commendable. Training material in Khmer and English should be available for those with limited proficiency in English.
3. **Criteria Selection:** Participants suggest the top criteria for tech startup participation and judges in the accelerator program. Tech startups should be selected based on their stage of operation to maintain the commonality of business experience among participants. Moreover, the judges should be selected based on the program's theme. For example, a fintech expert or senior staff member sits in for a fintech theme pitching.
4. **Pitching:** The pitching section of the program should allow participants to present in either English or Khmer. When necessary, the tech startup founders hope to pitch in their native language. If the judges and audience are English speakers, logistical accommodations should be made, such as hiring a translator.

Figure 3.9: Areas of Improvement in the During Participating Stage of Accelerators
Source: Authors (2025)

One of the challenges that tech startup founders faced during the participating stage was frequent in-person events. It is aligned with accelerators' intensive nature and length of time to scale up participating start-ups, as Faster Capital (2024) explained. However, there was no suggestion for reducing the frequency of the events; instead, a concrete schedule is being pointed out. It also echoed the finding in the pre-participating stage, where the schedule should be concretized early in the program. It indicates the preferences for a good schedule arrangement to prepare participating tech startup founders. The tech startup founders' feedback further specifies the need for mentors with practical business skills and the ability to convey ideas to the mentees. This finding adds a layer to the general concept of good mentorship and enriches the selection criteria in the accelerator.

The tech startup founders' suggestion for a **"good curriculum"** with **"specific and practical strategies"** and **"practical exercises"** reinforces the idea of stage-specific support mentioned in the UNDP guidebook (2021).

The founders' specific request for bilingual training materials in Khmer and English is a crucial point for discussion as it is most relevant for Cambodian tech startup founders.

The UNDP guidebook (2021), a proven support program conducted in Khmer, promotes interaction during the session, particularly among young startup founders. However, it is notable that the English language used in training and pitching for the accelerator program is essential to significant access to foreign investors and mentors. Addressing this challenge by making translation arrangements might resolve the founder's challenge to access funding and investment opportunities within the program.

The language issue is common for accelerators and other supporting programs in the research, forming some basis for strategically mapping the most appropriate language to specific supporting programs.

The tech startup founders' suggestion to select startups based on their stage of operation directly supports an argument of the UNDP guidebook (2021) for stage-appropriate programming. The tech starup founders' additional point about matching judges' expertise to the program theme (e.g., fintech expert for fintech pitches) adds another critical dimension to program design. Therefore, keeping coherent between the programming and the participants' selections is an important reminder.

3.4.3. The Post-participating Stage

A total of 32 tech startup founders participated in an accelerator in the last three years. Of these, 22 founders reported receiving some form of support after their participation, while the remaining 10 did not receive any support. **Figure 3.10** illustrates the types of support desired by those who did not receive any, as well as the support that was received by those who did. The received support was categorized into four types: network connection, growth opportunity, branding promotion, and technical support.

1. **Network Connection:** Through events organized after the accelerators, the tech startup received more connections with giant corporates, potential partners, investors, and other startup founders domestically and globally. For example, an organizer gathered an alumni and arranged an exposure trip abroad to meet investors in countries, specifically Thailand, South Korea, and Japan. Lastly, the tech startup appreciated the gathering effort with a network outside the accelerator cohorts.
2. **Growth Opportunity:** The program organizer created a collaboration opportunity to partner with corporates and potential investors for the tech startups' business development. With facilitation from the program organizer, partnership matching was reported to boost the tech startup after participating in the accelerator.
3. **Branding Promotion:** The accelerator organizers aided in the tech startups' public relations, explicitly promoting their startup brands through short interview videos and promotional content. The promotion was also through the program organizer's social media postings and press coverage.
4. **Technical Support:** The tech startup founders received noticeably supportive IT solutions, specifically cloud access and technical advice regarding app development. They also received consultation regarding compliance, taxation, and audit.

In addition, the tech startup founders who experienced a lack of ongoing support after participating in accelerators expressed the need for assistance to foster their ventures' growth. These desired supports were categorized into four distinct types, which are as follows:

1. **Network Connection:** The tech startup founders voiced interest in the opportunity to continue networking with their mentors, matching investors and potential partners, including other tech startups in Cambodia, and possibly extending to Asia.
2. **Funding Accessibility:** The tech startup founders desired to have more opportunities to pitch to investors, government agencies, development partners, and financial institutions within the organizer's ecosystem. It increased their potential to raise venture capital.
3. **Mentorship:** The tech startup founders desired to receive mentorship on technical aspects and business operation strategies after the accelerator program. The mentorship was suggested to aid tech startup founders in validating their products in the market. A model of investor-founder mentorship was suggested in IDIs, where investors play a mentoring role that specifically helps founders align their tech startups with industry demand.
4. **Branding Promotion:** The tech startup founders desired support from organizers to promote their startups' products and services through various media channels. The program organizer's social media is perceived as a trusting source for customers and potential investors, enhancing the tech startups' credentials.

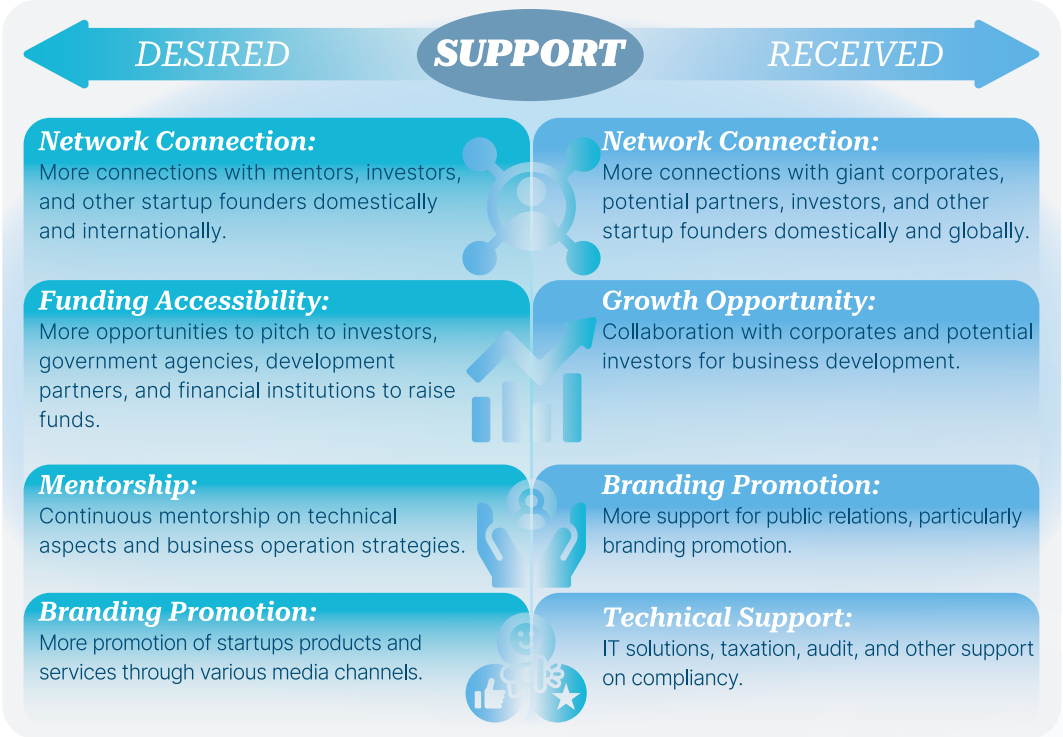


Figure 3.10: Post-program Support of Accelerators
Source: Authors (2025)

The findings show that the tech startup founders experienced receiving support from accelerators over the past three years, including:

1. Network Connections,
2. Funding Accessibility,
3. Mentorship, and
4. Branding Promotion.

These supports shared significant commonality with the desires of startup founders who could not access them, including

1. Network Connections,
2. Growth Opportunity,
3. Technical Support, and
4. Branding Promotion.

This correlation highlights the importance of support in ensuring the viability of tech startups after accelerators. The lack of such support was observed in tech startup ecosystem research in 2018 (Kem et al., 2019), in addition to funding accessibility, mentorship, and the opportunity to receive feedback and business insights from the corporation counterparts.

Integrating the desired supports into future programming could facilitate the entry of participating tech startups into the market and achieve venture growth.

04

Conclusion and Recommendations

4.1. Conclusion

Over the past three years, the tech startup founders have increasingly participated in accelerator programs compared to incubators and hackathons.

Accelerators, which offer structured programs with mentorship, funding, and resources designed to scale a business rapidly, seem to attract more founders seeking to refine their business models and connect with investors. In contrast, while incubators provide valuable support for tech startups in their early stages, and hackathons foster innovation and collaboration, they have not drawn the same level of engagement from founders during this timeframe.

This trend highlights a growing preference for intensive and time-bound programs that promise quicker pathways to market readiness and investment opportunities.

Many tech startup founders highlighted the critical role that both the content of their announcements and the distribution strategies for those announcements play during the pre-participation phase of three widely recognized support programs. They noted that crafting compelling and informative messages is essential for attracting attention and interest while stressing that an effective distribution plan is necessary to reach the right audience and maximize impact. This approach enhances visibility and increases the likelihood of securing valuable support and resources from the programs.

Many tech startup founders have voiced their apprehensions regarding insufficient high-quality mentors within various support programs.

They highlighted that effective mentorship is crucial for navigating the complexities of building a successful startup. As a result, these founders are urging program organizers to prioritize recruiting and selecting experienced mentors who can provide valuable guidance, resources, and industry insights. They believe that enhancing the quality of the mentoring component of these programs could significantly improve the outcomes for emerging entrepreneurs.

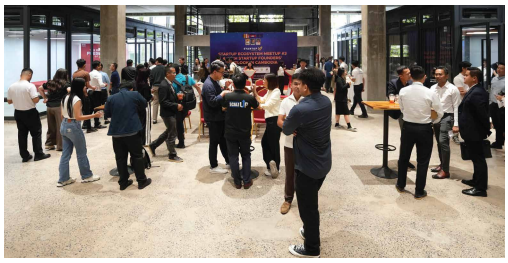
The tech startup founders have also expressed that a significant challenge they

face with the three support programs is the high level of demand for participating in the intensive program. This demand manifests primarily in the substantial time commitment and effort required from the founders. They highlighted that balancing the rigorous activities and expectations of the program with their ongoing startup responsibilities can be quite taxing, often leading to overwhelming feelings. As a result, founders need to navigate a delicate balance between program participation and the operational needs of their fledgling companies.

This intensity can also hinder their ability to manage other crucial aspects of their startups, such as product development, market outreach, and team management.

Several tech startup founders shared their feedback regarding the types of post-program support they wished to receive but ultimately did not. They articulated specific needs and resources that were vital for their continued growth and success after completing the program. Interestingly, this desired support closely mirrored the assistance successfully accessed by other founders who had previously completed the programs. These successful founders benefitted from tailored mentorship, access to additional funding opportunities, networking initiatives, and ongoing educational resources contributing to their post-graduation business development.

The disparity between desired and received support among the founders underscores a potential gap in the programs' offerings that should be addressed to serve future graduates better.



4.2. Recommendations

In light of the research findings, a set of actionable recommendations has been crafted specifically for the tech startup founders and support program organizers aimed at fostering innovation and entrepreneurship. These recommendations are designed to provide practical guidance and insights that can help enhance the success and sustainability of tech startups in today's competitive landscape.

For Founders

1. Actively enhance knowledge and skills to foster personal growth and resilience, essential for success in the entrepreneurial landscape.

2. Conduct thorough research on programs that align with your business's objectives and verify that you fulfill their eligibility criteria.

3. Prepare for the significant time commitment and personnel allocation necessary for the entirety of the support programs.

4. Adjust your mindset to engage in support programs for the opportunity to grow in knowledge and skills; concentrate less on potential rewards or prizes.

5. Keep the organizers of the support programs informed about your business situation, including any progress, challenges, or specific support you require. It is essential to adopt an active approach rather than a passive one. Remember that your tech startups are yours, not the organizers'.

For Organizers

1. Ensure that the announcement explicitly includes the timeframe and schedule, the startup eligibility criteria, and the associated benefits of participating in the support programs.

2. Should prioritize mentor quality and availability for one-on-one sessions. While full-time mentors are not necessary, they should have sufficient time to dedicate to the program.

3. Strategically select tech startups to ensure equitable competency and appoint judges capable of delivering impartial evaluations for the pitch day.

4. Develop a comprehensive series of support programs that progress from hackathons to incubators, followed by accelerators, and extend to post-accelerator initiatives in Phnom Penh and other potential provinces or towns.

5. Allocate initial seed funding to assist tech startups in developing their prototypes or products. Furthermore, connections with investors should be fostered to facilitate potential investments or strategic partnerships, offering ongoing guidance throughout their pursuit of success.

6. Provide dedicated and structured post-program support to all participating tech startups, inspiring them to thrive regardless of their competition outcomes.

05

STARTUP STORIES: 39

Tech Startup
Founders' Outlook
in Cambodia 2025

The research involved interviews with a total of 42 founders; however, three of the founders opted not to disclose their startup narratives in this report. The startup stories presented below are arranged in alphabetical order based on the names of the startups.

Tim Den
Chief Executive Officer
ADSA Cambodia

Chhin Lihour
Co-Founder &
Chief Executive Officer
AsurRaa & KrubKrong

Tin Kolmen
Founder &
Managing Director
BIGEIGHT Co., LTD.

Yorn Sophearith
Managing Director &
Head of Trainer
BKD Academy

Leak Chanmolika
Co-Founder
BOBA

Ley Kamthong
Co-Founder &
Chief Executive Officer
CheckinMe

Lonh Nget
Founder
CLOTH BIRD

Dr. Houng Peany
Founder &
Technical Manager
CONSA Tech

Ek Manil
Co-Founder
DamDoh

Lay Vila
Founder &
Chief Executive Officer
Delightech

Bun Saosopheakneath
Co-Founder
Dosslarb

Keat Savry
Founder
Elephant Pump

Kong Sreypech
Co-Founder
GuideMe

Chhon Nary
Founder
INNO BOX

Sou Sethey
Co-Founder &
Chief Executive Officer
Jalat Logistics

Sum Sopha
Founder &
Chief Executive Officer
Jobify

Sok Sothearath
Founder
JUNLEN

Pech Pongponharith
Co-Founder
Kakcent

Eung Porhai
Co-Founder &
Chief Executive Officer
Karpia

Tith Kamrang
Founder &
Chief Executive Officer
Kotluy

Phan Layheng
Co-Founder &
Chief Growth Officer
KrubKrong

Tuy Hong
Founder &
Managing Director
Localize

Khoun Sophorth
Co-Founder &
Chief Executive Officer
Morakot Technology

Chea Sreylin
Co-Founder
OPTIMUS

Dr. Chea Vireak
Co-Founder &
Chief Executive Officer
PillTech

Chhim Socheata
Co-Founder
PrimPharma

Khen Pheakdey
Co-Founder &
Tech Lead
Quanta

Chhang Seha
Co-Founder
RoboTech Academy
Siemreap

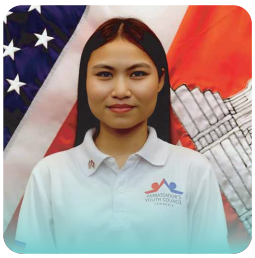
Va Sovanpong
Co-Founder
Runaway

Sok Lak
Founder
Scholar Book

Dr. Y Phoura
Founder &
Chief Executive Officer
Scholarar

Lee Ngeap
Founder
SNAPKYU

Horn Sokchanlida
Co-Founder &
Chief Executive Officer
Solo Landscapes



Kin Sosetha
Co-Founder
TamDan

Norng Rithy
Co-Founder &
Chief Executive Officer
TapApp

Ty Sokmey
Co-Founder &
Chief Commercial Officer
TenBox

Ou Ketsovaddey
Co-Founder
UniFlow

Pech Soveaddh
Co-Founder &
Chief Executive Officer
Uot App

Mao Sovanna Kong
Co-Founder &
Chief Executive Officer
Zippy Express

My startup idea began with my background in Agro-Industry and selling agricultural products, where I noticed limited market reach for local farmers. Inspired by the need for better market access and consumer confidence in safe produce and fueled by insights from UNDP's digital training, my co-founders and I created ADSA Cambodia to efficiently connect farmers with wider markets and promote healthy, quality agricultural products.

My product prototype builds on existing Cambodian agricultural products, which I transformed for wider sales through our platform and social networks. We also created a collaborative network, allowing farmer communities and local enterprises to list their products without restrictions.

Our product has several unique features:

1. Agricultural products with clear origins, making home delivery easy;
2. Prices that are 5-15% lower than the current market and competitors;
3. A one-stop hub where customers can purchase a variety of Cambodian products.

ADSA has a diverse customer portfolio. We cater to daily wholesale buyers at our distribution points, ranging from 15 to 30 active retailers, and have 2,130 active users engaging with our online platform for agricultural products. Our customers benefit from partnerships that enhance our offerings and overall service delivery.

Tim Den,

Chief Executive Officer
ADSA Cambodia

"Experiment with what you love in the field you want to engage in and solve. Don't be afraid of making mistakes; what matters is to innovate and learn to improve accordingly, based on each person's vision."

My passion for tech and business began early, inspired by my parents' entrepreneurial journey and my love for coding. In 2020, I founded AsurRaa to create essential tools like POS systems and e-commerce solutions to empower Cambodian businesses. With products like Krubkrong for small enterprises, I aim to support local business growth and showcase Cambodia's tech potential globally.

Transforming my idea into prototypes involved close collaboration with small business owners to understand their daily challenges and needs. Based on their feedback, I developed AsurRaa's core features, like the POS system and e-commerce platform. Their insights on payment processing and inventory management helped refine each version. This continuous feedback loop ensured AsurRaa's tools are intuitive, adaptable, and genuinely valuable to businesses.

AsurRaa guides clients through digital transformation, delivering tailored, innovative solutions to make a lasting impact. With a client-centric approach focused on quality, their expert team is dedicated to preparing businesses for the future.

AsurRaa serves more than 20 enterprise clients, including large businesses, government agencies, and NGOs, providing tailored technology solutions like eCommerce platforms, CRM, CMS, app development, automation tools, and LMS. Known for scalable, adaptable solutions, AsurRaa empowers clients to enhance operations and drive growth.

Chhin Lihour,

Co-Founder & Chief Executive Officer
AsurRaa & KrubKrong

"My advice to new entrepreneurs is to understand the problem you're solving. Focus on meaningful needs rather than flashy ideas. Start small, test your concepts, and embrace feedback. Building a startup is a marathon; resilience and adaptability are crucial. Surround yourself with mentors and a supportive team. Stay focused on creating value, and your chances of success will increase."

Initially, BIGEIGHT focused on marketing consulting, but during the COVID-19 pandemic, we saw a pressing need for businesses to strengthen their digital presence. To address this, we expanded into technology, Marketing on Tech & App, developing websites, apps, and UX/UI solutions to help our clients adapt to a rapidly shifting digital landscape.

To bring our idea to life, BIGEIGHT CO., LTD. focused on creating practical prototypes that showcased our full-service marketing and advertising solutions. We started by working closely with clients from various sectors—like food and beverage, finance, and insurance—to understand their needs. Using this insight, we developed prototypes that integrated advanced technology and tailored brand strategies to optimize market performance. This approach allowed us to refine our offerings, ensuring they were aligned with project objectives and could effectively elevate businesses in the digital era.

Our focus is quality-oriented, targeting mid-sized and larger businesses. We specialize in creating personalized, lifestyle-driven apps that resonate with customers and enhance engagement.

Our portfolio spans a range of industries, including banking, FinTech, and technology platforms, with clients such as Grab, Move (LM Car), Food Panda, Morakot Technology, Banh Ji, Localize Tech, and Commercial banks. As Cambodia embraces digital transformation, we're well-positioned to meet the rising demand for tech solutions among platforms and suppliers.

Tin Kolmen,

Founder & Managing Director
BIGEIGHT Co., LTD.

"My advice for young entrepreneurs is to start small, as they can learn from smaller businesses rather than jumping into something big that they may not fully understand or be able to manage effectively. For startups, avoid having overly ambitious goals and prioritizing reputation over business growth. Startup founders should have a clear understanding of finance, with the ability to manage and control finances effectively, as well as having knowing tax compliance services."

Yorn Sophearith,

Managing Director & Head of Trainer BKD Academy

The seed for BKD Academy was planted long before its official founding in 2024. It sprouted from a deep-seated passion for teaching that took root within me back in 2015 when I first embarked on my entrepreneurial journey. Even while navigating the demanding manager role in a private company, I couldn't ignore the pull towards education. In 2016, I embraced a part-time lectureship in economics, eager to share my knowledge and inspire young minds.

This desire to empower others through knowledge grew into something more. By 2017, I was actively engaging with SME owners and young professionals, delivering private training and coaching programs. I relished the opportunity to witness their growth and transformation as they absorbed new skills and strategies. I even took on the role of hosting, curating events, and fostering a vibrant learning community.

Then came 2020, a year that tested the resilience of businesses worldwide. The COVID-19 pandemic forced us to adapt, and I wholeheartedly embraced the shift to online learning. Webinars became my new stage, and I found innovative ways to connect with and support SME owners, often inviting expert trainers and speakers to enrich the experience. This period wasn't just about survival; it was about utilizing technology to expand my reach and impact.

The accelerator program I joined that same year with CJAP proved to be a turning point. It provided me with invaluable insights, resources, and a network of like-minded individuals. More importantly, it solidified my vision for BKD Academy – a training firm that wasn't solely driven by profit, but by a commitment to fostering sustainable development and contributing to the SDG goals.

Today, BKD Academy stands as a testament to that vision. We collaborate with diverse organizations, delivering both online and customized training courses designed to equip individuals and businesses with the tools they need to thrive. But beyond the curriculum and the certifications, BKD Academy is about igniting a spark of lifelong learning, empowering individuals to reach their full potential, and contributing to a more equitable and sustainable future.

"This journey, though challenging at times, has been incredibly fulfilling. It's a story of passion, perseverance, and purpose, woven with threads of innovation and a deep commitment to making a positive impact. As BKD Academy continues to grow, I am filled with excitement for the countless stories of transformation that are yet to be written."

In the early stages, our idea emerged from our experience with technology and a growing awareness of issues in education, the environment, and daily life in Phnom Penh. Our first hackathon, the Canadia Bank Hackathon, sparked our interest in fintech and inspired us to explore how technology could solve practical community problems.

We transformed our idea into a prototype by participating in a startup incubation program, which provided crucial insights into both the technical and business aspects. We adopted a hybrid strategy, collaborating with tech companies as consultants and conducting research to develop and refine our fintech prototype.

Our products and services attract customers through a combination of robust research capabilities, strategic business insight, and technical expertise. We conduct thorough research to ensure our solutions address real community needs. Our engineering backgrounds enable us to innovate more effectively, while our hybrid business model combines product development with consultancy, helping clients improve both their technology and marketing strategies. With these special features of our service, we have successfully collaborated with two companies.

Leak Chanmolika,

Co-Founder
BOBA

"My advice to new or young entrepreneurs is to have a clear vision, mission, and goal for your startup. Build a strong team, continually hone your skills, and seek new experiences to foster growth. Stay happy, remain open to learning, and embrace both successes and failures as valuable opportunities for improvement."

The idea for CheckinMe emerged during a conversation with a friend in 2021. He struggled with staff management—employees were often late, quit without notice, or stopped showing up. He suggested creating an app for employees to scan attendance, similar to ABA's payment system, with real-time updates sent to Telegram. This inspired me to build a prototype to address these challenges. Encouraged by this potential, my team and I launched the MVP, gaining over 100 business users within three months.

I transformed MVP into fully-fledged software by meeting customers directly and working closely with them. Through this process, customers gradually shared their specific needs, allowing us to continuously improve the software from year to year. Today, our business is more than four years old.

Our software offers three key features: Affordable Pricing, High Quality, and Ease of Use. It streamlines attendance tracking by replacing fingerprint scanners with a mobile-based solution, providing instant updates via Telegram. Additionally, it automates payroll generation with just a few clicks, saving time by accounting for employees' attendance and working hours. These features make our product efficient and user-friendly, attracting customers seeking practical business solutions.

Ley Kamthong,

Co-Founder & Chief Executive Officer
CheckinMe

"I encourage young entrepreneurs to keep striving and seek knowledge through training programs like hackathons, incubators, and accelerator programs, which are available for free at the Techno Startup Center and related institutions. Engaging in these opportunities can enhance your skills and understanding of entrepreneurship. Additionally, I urge you to actively leverage Cambodian technology to advance the tech sector and contribute to the digital economy in Cambodia."

In the early stages of my startup journey, the idea for my laundry app, CLOTH BIRD, emerged from a personal frustration I faced while managing my own laundry shop. I noticed how challenging it was for customers to find convenient and reliable laundry services, especially in a market saturated with traditional shops. This inspired me to create a solution that would streamline the process, making it easier for people to access laundry services through an on-demand app. To transform this idea into reality, I began developing prototypes by collaborating with local developers and gathering feedback from potential users, ensuring the app would meet their needs effectively.

CLOTH BIRD boasts several unique features that attract customers, including a user-friendly interface, real-time tracking of laundry orders, and a loyalty program that rewards repeat users. These features not only enhance the customer experience but also set us apart from traditional laundry services. As for our portfolio, we currently serve mostly hotel customers, and the app has gained traction since its launch, with a growing user base that appreciates the convenience and efficiency it provides.

Lonh Nget,

Founder
CLOTH BIRD

"To young entrepreneurs aspiring to launch their startups, my advice is to embrace risk and stay passionate about your ideas. Don't be afraid to iterate and adapt your products based on customer feedback, as this will help you refine your offering. Surround yourself with a supportive network, seek mentorship, and be prepared for challenges along the way. Remember, perseverance and a genuine love for what you do can drive your success in the startup world."

Dr. Houng Peany,

Founder & Technical Manager
CONSA Tech

Through my work with food and cosmetic SMEs in NGO-led projects, I identified key barriers to their growth, including limited R&D, lack of innovation, and insufficient technical knowledge. These challenges made it difficult for them to compete with imported products. Many SMEs struggled to find local experts for tasks like product formulation, often relying on costly and logistically complicated services from neighboring countries or Korea. This inspired me to create a startup offering local R&D, formulation, and training support tailored to SMEs, enabling them to innovate, improve product quality, and enhance technical expertise. Our services help strengthen local businesses and the overall economy.

To turn our concept into prototypes, we first identified the technical needs of food and cosmetic SMEs. We aimed to offer comprehensive services, including R&D, technical staffing, packaging design, production planning, and equipment and ingredient consulting. By partnering with a laboratory facility, we were able to test our R&D services and gather feedback to refine our offerings. Through iterative partnerships and practical experience, we developed prototypes that met industry needs, establishing ourselves as a reliable technical service provider for SMEs in food and cosmetics.

CONSA Tech's service is unique for its comprehensive one-stop service, which supports clients from the initial concept and technical operation until the final product. This ensures an efficient process that helps products successfully reach the market while reducing clients' time and effort.

We currently serve around 25 customers, including key partners like GIZ and Khmer Enterprise, who collaborate with us on projects supporting local industries. Most of our clients are food and cosmetic SMEs in Cambodia's northwest region, our main target area. They typically select a comprehensive package, including R&D, technical training, ingredient and equipment consulting, and packaging design. Many continue to work with us long-term, valuing our support in their growth and quality standards. Our client base is steadily growing, with new customers joining each month as our reputation expands.

"One of the most important pieces of advice I would give to a new or young entrepreneur is that building the right team is crucial. Look for people who not only have the skills you need but also share the passion and vision."

For two decades, I have worked with various NGOs addressing critical social issues, with education being a core focus, as I believe in its power to eradicate poverty. I've seen firsthand how education transforms lives, yet it's heartbreaking to witness children dropping out of school to scavenge for food, while many fathers leave their families to find work. Reflecting on my own childhood during Cambodia's civil war, when I lost my father, it pains me to see families still separated by economic hardship, despite the advances in technology and communication today.

I transformed my vision for DamDoh into a prototype by blending technology with local agricultural knowledge to address the food crisis. The process involved fostering community collaboration and continuously integrating feedback to refine the tool. As the prototype evolved, it became a powerful tool for improving agricultural practices and building a more resilient community. This journey taught me the importance of community involvement, collaboration, and iterative development to create solutions that truly meet local needs and turn challenges into growth opportunities.

Our services draw customers in through three essential features. First, we empower farmers to become agripreneurs or farm managers by equipping them with the skills needed to effectively oversee their farms. Second, we emphasize the promotion of sustainable farming practices that yield benefits in three key areas: economic growth for farmers, environmental preservation, and the strengthening of local communities. Finally, we facilitate market access through traceability technology, ensuring transparency and trust within the supply chain, which adds value for both farmers and consumers.

Ek Manil,

Co-Founder
DamDoh

Around 2000 downloaders, 300+ engaged farmers, 8 modeling farms with 4 more to come for this year, and 500+ farmers has been trained.

"Creating exceptional products should not be as challenging as assembling a capable team to accompany you on your journey. Avoid imitating others; instead, focus on identifying specific, familiar problems that you can address and that will inspire your team to join you. Prepare yourself for rejection, criticism, and a lack of support. Remain resilient, dream big, but start with small steps. Be humble enough to ask for assistance, and generous enough to share your knowledge with others."

Lay Vila,

Founder & Chief Executive Officer Delightech

Established in 2018 and officially registered with the Ministry of Commerce in 2021, Delightech was born from a powerful realization: millions of people in emerging markets lacked access to affordable and reliable financial services. Vila, a passionate entrepreneur envisioned for social impact, identified the challenges individuals faced, including bureaucratic hurdles, lack of collateral, and no credit history. Supported by a team of dynamic Cambodian professionals with extensive experience in financial technology and core banking systems, Delightech was created with the dream of using technology to make financial inclusion a reality. Today, Delightech is more than a startup—it is a catalyst for change, breaking down economic barriers and working toward a future where access to credit is a right, not a privilege.To turn this vision into a practical solution, Delightech developed the LUYLEUN mobile application, an AI-powered digital lending platform that offers unbanked and underbanked individuals instant loans with minimal documentation. By leveraging advanced technology, the app provides alternative credit scoring to facilitate urgent cash flow demands. Users can access financial products anytime, building credit through repayment to unlock more tools and services. This fosters financial inclusion by bridging the gap between formal and informal economies, creating a seamless connection between individuals and banks.

Delightech's standout features make it a unique player in the market, particularly through its innovative LUYLEUN platform. LUYLEUN offers instant loan approvals with immediate cash disbursements, flexible repayment terms, and advanced AI-powered credit scoring. Key features of LUYLEUN include accessibility, allowing users to apply for and receive loan approvals directly through a smartphone without the need for physical branch visits. The platform also excels in speed, leveraging advanced algorithms to approve and disburse loans, often within an hour. Personalization is another highlight, as LUYLEUN uses alternative data to tailor credit terms, ensuring fair and flexible options for users with little or no credit history. The app ensures transparency with clear terms and no hidden fees, while gamification features like financial tools and repayment rewards enhance engagement and education.The company has achieved remarkable milestones. LUYLEUN has been downloaded over 150,000 times, 100,000 registered users, and approximately 500 active monthly borrowers. These accomplishments underscore .

"For aspiring entrepreneurs, Delightech emphasizes the importance of solving real-world problems with purpose and innovation. By combining technology with trust, startups can break barriers and create meaningful impacts. Persistence, adaptability, and a customer-focused approach are essential to building scalable solutions. Success lies in addressing market gaps, leveraging technology, and staying committed to making a difference."

Dosslarb was founded in 2020 to address the lack of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) education for young Cambodians. Growing up, I witnessed the challenges arising from limited information, such as adolescent pregnancy. This motivated me to create a platform that provides accessible SRH education and support for youth.

After university, I gathered a team of like-minded individuals and launched Dosslarb. We started by creating content and organizing workshops, gradually expanding our reach through collaborations with youth, content creators, and key opinion leaders (KOLs).

Dosslarb provides accessible, youth-focused SRH education through digital campaigns, content production, and workshops. Our strength lies in creating relatable content, fostering a supportive community, and offering personalized referrals to trusted SRH services.

Over the past four years, Dosslarb has built a community of 35,000 followers and reached over 17 million people, with 4 million video views. We have engaged directly with over 500 youth through workshops, collaborated with 10+ partners, and empowered over 300 individuals with personalized SRH referrals.

Bun Saosopheakneath,

Co-Founder
Dosslarb

"For anyone starting out, focus on something you truly care about. Passion makes it easier to push through tough times. At Dosslarb, balancing this project with full-time jobs was challenging, but knowing the impact we could make kept us motivated. Start small—our journey began with just a few pieces of content, and we learned and grew along the way. Most importantly, surround yourself with people who share your vision and values; a dedicated team can inspire you and drive growth together."

In the early stages of my startup, my personal experiences with solar water pumps and participation in incubators and hackathons helped me develop a focus on clean technology innovations. I identified the high cost of crop irrigation for small-scale farmers using diesel pumps as a key issue. Our survey of vegetable farmers in Siem Reap revealed that diesel and gasoline costs for irrigation range from $1,350 to $1,650 per hectare per year. This insight drives my belief that the Elephant Pump has significant market potential to meet these needs.

We turned our idea into a prototype by defining objectives, researching existing technologies, and designing preliminary sketches. We selected durable materials, built the prototype, and conducted tests and field trials to improve efficiency and stability. Feedback helped us refine the design and prepare for market strategy.

Elephant Pump serves farmers with less than 3 hectares of land and access to surface water by providing an affordable, high-flow solar water pump. This floating submersible pump reduces CO2 emissions by an average of 3,652 kg per year. We also offer free consulting on installation and maintenance.

Since its inception, Elephant Pump has sold 24 solar pump systems to farmers around Tonle Sap Lake. Our target customers are farmers with less than 3 hectares of land who grow vegetables, rice, or fruits, and who have access to surface water like ponds, lakes, or rivers. We focus on those in remote areas without grid access and who face high irrigation costs using diesel or gasoline pumps.

Keat Savry,

Founder
Elephant Pump

"Before starting a new business, it's essential to focus on key internal qualities, including a passion for your venture, innovative ideas, and the ability to recognize opportunities. Relevant experience and knowledge, a strong team, and a deep understanding of customer needs are crucial for providing effective solutions. Additionally, having a strategy for reaching target customers and a robust network will significantly enhance your chances of success."

When I was in my second year of university, a tour guide asked my father to ask me to build a website for him in order to promote himself. I found it odd that one tour guide needed a website, considering that if 100 tour guides each needed a website, it would require a lot of effort and expenses. This led me to the idea of creating a platform for all tour guides to sell their services. This way, they wouldn't need to spend money on individual websites and I also find it easy for the tourists to find a tour guide for their trips faster and easier.

I transformed my idea into prototypes by first refining the core concept through market research and identifying key features that solved the specific problem I wanted to address. I then created wireframes to visualize the platform's design and user flow, focusing on essential functions like booking, guide profiles, and guide searching.

The special or crucial features of my product, GuideMe, include a user-friendly platform that connects travelers with verified/certified tour guides. Key features like real-time availability and user review. We are still designing our platform prototype, we haven't had customers use our product/service yet.

Kong Sreypech,

Co-Founder
GuideMe

"Since I'm still learning to be a startup founder, I don't think it's the right time for me to give advice to anyone on this. But, if I were to give advice, I'd say just go for it. Even if it's not perfect, it's better than regretting not doing anything. Keep learning, improving yourself every day, and challenge yourself to try something new."

The idea for INNO BOX arose from the challenge of engaging students in STEM education. The traditional, theory-based approach was boring and ineffective, and the lack of hands-on experiments led to disengagement. This motivated us to create an affordable, interactive solution that bridges the gap between theory and practice.

We drew inspiration from Mark Rober's CrunchLab approach, using on-shelf materials and a 3D printer to build our prototype. This allowed us to create affordable, hands-on experiment kits for STEM education.

INNO BOX offers a hybrid approach to STEM education, combining physical kits, personalized digital experiences, and an integrated platform with video tutorials, gamified challenges, and global collaboration. This fosters interactive, project-based learning and stimulates critical thinking.

INNO BOX has provided affordable STEM kits and educational resources to schools and students, promoting engagement and innovation. While specific customer numbers aren't detailed, our solution aims to reach and inspire young learners globally.

Chhon Nary,

Founder
INNO BOX

"Focus on solving a problem you're passionate about, understand your market, and secure funding. Build a talented team, prioritize customer satisfaction, and be adaptable. Remember, success takes time, so maintain balance and believe in your vision."

Jalat Logistics was established during the COVID-19 lockdown to address the inefficiencies in last-mile delivery in Cambodia, where demand surged as businesses struggled to fulfill orders. We aimed to create a cost-effective solution that allows businesses to manage multiple deliveries and keep recipients informed about their status.

Starting in a small basement with just five drivers, we used basic tools like Google Sheets and Maps as our MVP to prototype our system. With each delivery, we gathered feedback to refine our operations. Once our MVP proved effective, we invested in developing a comprehensive system tailored to our needs.

Jalat Logistics offers unique features that appeal to customers, including tech-enabled solutions that streamline internal processes, allowing partners to access parcel information and reports with a single click. Our scalable system caters to both SMEs and larger companies, ensuring ease of use.

Since our inception, Jalat Logistics has experienced three consecutive years of triple-digit growth, serving thousands of clients daily, from local shops to larger e-commerce platforms in Phnom Penh. We are now a trusted partner for many businesses, providing reliable delivery services with the capacity to handle up to 2 million parcels annually. Our achievements include winning first place in the ASEAN-Korea Startup Week and recognition as a semi-finalist in the Mayor of London's Entrepreneur program.

Sou Sethey,

Co-Founder & Chief Executive Officer
Jalat Logistics

"Embrace your uniqueness and work toward something you truly believe in, validating your ideas through real practice. Remember, "Success inspires, but imitation dilutes innovation." Prioritizing your mental well-being is challenging but essential for long-term success. Maintaining this balance will drive you forward and support sustained personal and professional growth."

The idea for Jobify emerged during our university studies, inspired by a Japanese professor who introduced us to the Business Model Canvas. We saw challenges in Cambodia's tech job market, including limited access to information, low awareness of opportunities, and low salaries. Motivated to address these issues, we created Jobify. The name "Jobify" comes from combining "Job" and "Satisfy," reflecting our vision of making both job seekers and employers satisfied. Starting as a pilot project, we tested it in a 2018 startup competition and won first place. After graduating in 2019, we conducted market research and officially established Jobify, securing angel investment from Japan in 2020 to further develop the platform.

We transformed our idea into a prototype by leveraging Internet and data resources to create a basic job portal connecting IT job seekers with local opportunities. During COVID-19, the demand for digital transformation in sectors like SMEs, banks, and microfinance created opportunities to highlight the value of tech talent. This helped us attract clients and educate stakeholders about the potential of tech careers, which inspired further development of our prototype into a full product/-service.

Jobify is Cambodia's #1 IT-focused job matching service, offering IT recruitment and Software-Engineer-as-a-Service solutions. These services address client needs, generate revenue, and enhance our data-driven matching algorithms for accurate talent placement. Companies benefit from free online consulting, access to skilled IT specialists, faster hiring, and up to 70% cost savings. We also developed a PWA and mobile app with advanced AI and sleek UI/UX, enabling jobseekers to upload CVs, match with relevant jobs, and swipe to apply or pass.

Our portfolio includes over 762 job listings and more than 13,000 registered users on our platform. We serve over 150 companies, providing IT recruitment and digital strategy solutions. Our startup has also received an award at the Digital Platform Accelerator (DPA) program as a leading company in technology job matching in Cambodia.

Sum Sopha,

Founder & Chief Executive Officer
Jobify

"I advise young entrepreneurs to gain experience by working with startup companies, as this provides valuable insights into business operations and management. Building a strong, unified team with a shared vision is crucial, as a good team can turn even a weak idea into success. Embrace challenges and always keep practicing, as persistence is key. Additionally, always focus on the end result, and plan with flexibility (Plan A, B, C) to navigate obstacles. Success often comes from the journey, and others will recognize your achievements once you deliver results."

I came up with the idea for JUNLEN in 2017 while studying sustainable agriculture and researching agricultural technology trends. Seeing smallholder farmers struggle to access sustainable farming knowledge and achieve a stable income motivated me to focus on vermicomposting technology, which offers environmental and economic benefits. My goal is to support households and communities in achieving food security, stable income, and improved lifestyles.

I have worked with farmers using human-centered design and communication to successfully introduce vermicomposting technology through JUNELN in phase one. Additionally, we are implementing a contract farming business model that provides ongoing training and stable income. I continue to learn about entrepreneurship, leadership, and management, embracing lifelong learning.

Crucial features of JUNLEN's products are natural and organic fertilizers that help plants healthy, increase crop production by up to 40%, save water consumption, and enrich soil through microorganisms. The value of the company is a social enterprise with a strong commitment to bringing profit and ongoing impact to partners and the ecosystem.

JUNLEN's portfolio includes over 5,000 customers, comprising smallholder farmers, urban farmers, and commercial farmers, who use our organic fertilizer product.

Sok Sothearath,

Founder
JUNLEN

"Advice for young entrepreneurs, Identify who you are, and what passion you have, and invest in yourself to achieve those goals, seek help from people who have goal alignment, keep life-long learning, Stay positive, keep doing good for yourself and others, and last but not least Think global Act local."

With a passion to drive a meaningful change that could make a lasting impact, Kakcent was established as a digital platform and envisioned itself to build a financially literate Cambodia. Launching a start-up was not without its challenges. Back in 2020, Mr. Ponharith together with his co-founder, began Kakcent as a small blog, publishing articles about saving, budgeting, debt management and investing in Khmer language. Even with limited resources but unlimited determination, the team relied on their pursuit in creativity, consistency and cultural relevance to gradually grow the platform.

As our approach quickly resonated with the audience, Kakcent has gained a loyal following since, and gradually transformed from a simple blog into a comprehensive platform offering a mix of articles, videos, and interactive tools. By 2021, Kakcent had established itself as a trusted name in the financial literacy community, catching the attention of partners and collaborators, enabling the platform to host a series of brand collabs and even launch its first line of personal financial guidebooks.

In 2024, Kakcent ventured into merchandising with the launch of products designed to inspire better money habits, from guidebooks to flagship items, Kakcent offers practical tools including budgeting notebook and savings wallet, which reflect the brand's core philosophy of financial mindfulness. These products were warmly received and marked a new chapter in the brand's journey. To this date, Kakcent has evolved into a holistic financial literacy platform, bridging digital and offline media while holding a strong commitment to address financial education for every stage of life.

Pech Pongponharith,

Co-Founder
Kakcent

"From humble beginnings to becoming a trusted household name, Kakcent's journey is a testament to the power of determination, creativity, and a desire to make a difference."

Eung Porhai,

Co-Founder & Chief Executive Officer
Karpia

I come from a cybersecurity background, and during my work in the field, I noticed a significant gap in the availability of cybersecurity services in Cambodia. There was a clear lack of local cybersecurity resources, and most service providers were based overseas. This created challenges for businesses here, who needed reliable, region-specific expertise but struggled to find it.

Seeing this opportunity, I gathered a group of close friends and colleagues—each with complementary skills in cybersecurity, tech, and business—to start Karpia. Together, we aimed to build a cybersecurity company that could serve the local market with tailored solutions and support.

To further solidify the foundation of our startup, I joined a program with TSC. The program provided me with the resources, mentorship, and network needed to turn our vision into a viable business. With that support, we were able to fully launch Karpia and begin addressing the cybersecurity challenges facing local businesses here in Cambodia.

Transforming our idea into prototypes was an exciting but challenging process especially us coming from technical background. Our specialist skills in cybersecurity made the process of transforming our idea into prototypes a natural progression. Providing cybersecurity services is what we've been doing in our day-to-day work for years, so it was easier for us to identify the needs of our clients and develop a solution that addressed them. With a deep understanding of the challenges businesses face, we started by focusing on the core features that we knew would deliver real value.

One of the key features that sets us apart is the credibility and expertise of our team. We are well-recognized figures in the cybersecurity space in Cambodia, with a strong reputation built over years of hands-on experience. Our team's credibility and expertise in cybersecurity, backed by years of experience and international certifications, distinguish us in Cambodia's market, earning client trust despite being a new company. Within just this year, we've had the opportunity to work with a growing number of clients across various sectors, including the banking industry, insurance providers, and government institutions. These partnerships reflect the trust that organizations place in us to secure their critical systems and data .Our portfolio includes a mix of services such as proactive threat detection, vulnerability assessments, security consulting, and compliance solutions, all tailored to meet the unique needs of these industries. What sets us apart is our ability to deliver high-quality, reliable solutions that address both technical and organizational cybersecurity challenges.

"Focus on solving real problems, talk to potential customers and validate your idea. Build a strong, diverse team that shares your vision and complements your skills. Stay adaptable and open to learning, as the startup journey is full of challenges and pivots. Most importantly, be patient, persistent, and passionate about what you're building."

In my 20-year career in Microfinance and Banking, I witnessed significant financial challenges, with over 80% of Cambodians lacking financial literacy. This inspired me to create Rithipul Co., Ltd in 2019, Cambodia's first financial education firm, to address low savings and over-indebtedness through essential financial literacy training. I realized that daily practice is crucial to make financial literacy effective and impactful.

I transformed my idea into a prototype by launching Kotluy in 2022 as a comprehensive financial education tool. This platform was developed to help users set goals, budget, and track transactions while providing access to financial products and resources. The user-friendly interface ensures accessibility for varying levels of financial knowledge.

Kotluy offers a unique points system that motivates users, enhancing engagement. With 20,000 downloads and 2,500 active users as of October 2024, our app is well-received. We recently partnered with Wing Bank and received recognition, including an Honorable Mention in the Reverse Innovation Cohort 3 at the TSC and a nomination for the World Summit Awards 2024. Our collaborations with various associations help provide financial literacy programs, making our service attractive to customers seeking ongoing financial education.

Tith Kamrang,

Founder & Chief Executive Officer
Kotluy

"My advice for new entrepreneurs is to address real problems with passion and dedication. Start small, iterate based on user feedback, and be prepared for a journey that requires time, resilience, and continuous learning. Build a supportive network of mentors and advisors, and maintain a strong belief in your vision."

In the early stages of Krubkrong, we identified that small retailers in Cambodia faced challenges in digitizing their operations and managing sales. In response, we developed Krubkrong, a user-friendly SaaS platform that streamlines operations, manages inventory, handles payments, and facilitates e-commerce to empower retailers with scalable digital tools.

To create our prototypes, we researched small retailers to pinpoint their pain points, which guided our core features, including inventory management and POS systems. After developing a wireframe and a basic prototype, we refined it based on feedback from select retailers, ensuring a focus on simplicity, affordability, and scalability.

Krubkrong offers key features, such as an all-in-one management platform that integrates POS and e-commerce functionality, enabling seamless sales tracking and reporting. Our cost-effective solution is designed for ease of use and includes a simple e-commerce platform to help retailers reach new customers. Upcoming features, like a loyalty program and a Telegram Shop Bot, will further enhance customer engagement.

Since launch, Krubkrong has grown steadily, serving over 50 micro and small retailers, including shops, cafes, and service businesses. We aim to reach 250 paid subscribers by next year and are continuously adding new features to meet our customers' evolving needs.

Phan Layheng,

Co-Founder & Chief Growth Officer
KrubKrong

"To succeed as a startup founder, focus on solving real market problems, prioritize customer feedback for product refinement, and launch with a MVP. Build a strong team, remain resilient and adaptable, and engage with the startup community for support and growth."

The idea for our start up came from our experience at a private institution, where we discover a lack of convenient, locally developed accounting software for SMEs. Recognizing that creating such a standard accounting software required a solid foundation in accounting, I dedicated time to various accounting training programs, where I fortunately met my advisor . With the advisor's guidance and my research, I developed a working prototype within three months.

Our software offers key advantages: seamless usability in the Khmer language, significant time and cost savings compared to foreign products (such as faster invoice generation and payment processing), reduced human error, and a user-friendly interface for both accountant and none-accounting. We now have over 600 customers actively using our platform.

Tuy Hong,

Founder & Managing Director
Localize

"My advise to young entrepreneurs is to gain work experience first. It builds teamwork skills, provides insight into real business needs, and strengthens technical abilities, crucial for anticipating and managing product challenges as your venture grows."

My co-founders and I were working for one of the MFIs (Microfinance Institutions) before we co-founded Morakot about 10 years ago. There were over-registered MFIs back then, a few of them had good and standard software solutions for their lending business which is very expensive to start with (at least $500K). Most of the MFIs were still small and could not afford the software. The software is implemented and supported by overseas companies with many challenges (Local context mismatch, Language Barriers, High implementation cost: Hotel, Per-diem, Flight.., and consultant fee). We saw there was a huge demand among those MFIs for a better solution with reasonable price support by the local team (Cambodian team).

Once the other co-founders were convinced with the idea, we formed a development team to start building the product, after 8 months of development, we released our first version to our first customer for testing. We received good feedback and improved our product from there.

Our solution is developed and supported by a local team that understands the unique context of the MFI business and regulatory compliance in Cambodia. We offer better pricing options compared to imported products, ensuring affordability without compromising on quality. Our team leverages the latest technology, resulting in improved performance, greater efficiency, and lower costs for both ownership and operation of the software.

We currently serve 56 MFIs and banks across three countries—Cambodia, Thailand, and Myanmar. Our platform has helped disburse over $1.5 billion in total loan portfolios, and it tracks 650,000 end customers within the system.

Khoun Sophorth,

Co-Founder & Chief Executive Officer
Morakot Technology

"Focus on what you excel at, build products that customers are willing to buy and pay for, and always keep a close eye on your numbers, including cash flow, market trends, and your team's performance."

In the early stages, we noticed Cambodia faced significant security challenges, especially as medium and large enterprises expanded. Safety was still largely managed with traditional methods like security guards, which limited real-time threat detection and efficient operations. This inspired us to create OPTIMUS—a solution designed to enhance security and streamline operations by offering real-time threat detection and optimizing routine tasks for Cambodian businesses.

We have a team consisting of three members with a software engineering background, each of us specializing in a different skill set such as AI, backend, and fronted development. So, to turn this idea into a prototype, we mostly utilize online sources and technologies that are free and available to access on the internet to develop the system.

Our services offer personalized customization and consultation to address specific pain points in our customers' businesses, allowing us to tailor solutions with functions that meet their unique needs and enhance operations. We also provide ongoing maintenance and technical support, ensuring solutions perform optimally with a dedicated team ready to assist and make adjustments as needed. Key features include report generation for business analysis, vehicle registration to distinguish between guest and employee vehicles, automated alerts for flagged plates with past issues, and vehicle status inspection to monitor current and departing vehicles at resorts or hotels.

OPTIMUS is an AI system designed to enhance and optimize your business operations automatically by managing and tracking vehicle access information, thereby reducing the workload of security guards.

Chey Sreylin,

Co-Founder
OPTIMUS

"My advice to a new entrepreneur is to build a team with diverse skill sets and avoid getting too caught up in competitions or external events. Stay committed to your business idea if you have a clear vision and goals—don't feel pressured to change your solutions based on others' perspectives. Focus on what truly drives your business forward."

In the early stages, PillTech was born out of a deep understanding of the challenges faced by independent pharmacies in Cambodia. As a pharmacist managing operations both in the U.S. and Cambodia, I saw firsthand the barriers pharmacies face in accessing a wide range of quality products, especially in underserved rural areas. The idea was to create a digital B2B platform that would streamline the procurement process, allowing pharmacists to save time and focus more on patient care. The specific issue we aimed to solve was the lack of reliable access to medicine in the provinces, where small pharmacies struggle with limited purchasing power and inconsistent supply.

We started by creating a simple prototype of the platform, focusing on user experience to make it easy for pharmacists to browse, order, and track inventory. We iterated based on feedback from pilot users, ensuring the interface was intuitive and addressed the pain points of the pharmacies. Our early trials involved close collaboration with a small group of pharmacies, helping us refine the features that were most impactful.

Today, PillTech's platform stands out with its unique blend of a comprehensive product range, POS System with sale tracking and inventory management, and ongoing training for pharmacists through PillTech Academy. These features have attracted a growing base of over 3000 active pharmacy customers nationwide, with a strong presence in provincial areas. Our success lies in building trust and providing tangible value, including access to Sanofi's GHU products focusing on diabetes and high blood pressure, and tailored promotions that cater to the needs of smaller pharmacies.

Dr. Chea Vireak,

Co-Founder & Chief Executive Officer
PillTech

"For aspiring entrepreneurs, my advice is simple: Start by deeply understanding the problems your target customers face, focus on creating a product that truly solves these pain points, and be ready to iterate based on feedback. Building a successful startup requires resilience, a clear vision, and the ability to adapt quickly."

The idea for my startup came from nearly 20 years of experience witnessing recurring health challenges, both personally and within my community. I observed a lack of information on healthcare services, including hospital locations, available treatments, and pricing. Patients and their families were hesitant to seek care due to trust and cost concerns, and there was no centralized way to track medical histories or ensure follow-up care. These gaps inspired me to create a service that provides accessible healthcare information, guides patients to appropriate hospitals, and facilitates medical records and ongoing care.

We transformed our idea into prototypes by leveraging the expertise of each co-founder in individual healthcare and tech sector. Together, we identified key challenges in healthcare and developed the PRiMPHARMA app and Facebook page. These platforms provide health education and services, addressing issues like cancer prevention and women's health, offering a practical solution to the problems we observed in the healthcare sector.

Our app offers key features that attract customers, including access to hospital partner names and service pricing, the ability to track patient medical histories, direct appointment scheduling with doctors, and easy access to health information. Additionally, the app provides nearby hospital locations and directions, making healthcare services more accessible and convenient for users.

We are in the process of developing the application and are facing challenges such as limited human resources, financial resources, and various skills and knowledge that could support us in taking the next step forward.

Chhim Socheata,

Co-Founder
PrimPharma

"My advice to young entrepreneurs is to thoroughly understand the challenges before choosing a solution. Build skills, gain experience, and prepare yourself as both a leader and entrepreneur. Have a clear vision, solid strategy, and the ability to execute. Continuously learn, network, and stay resilient in the face of challenges. Be honest, trustworthy, and open to feedback, and always acknowledge your strengths and weaknesses. Make decisions with wisdom, maintain professionalism, and treat others with respect and empathy. Success comes from continuous learning, preparation, and supporting your team and clients."

In the early stage, we gathered a group of friends from a bootcamp to discuss challenges we noticed in the startup and SME space, particularly around funding and execution. From our experiences in hackathon and incubator programs, we realized that many promising startup ideas struggled to move forward due to a lack of accessible capital and operational support. This insight motivated us to create Quanta, a platform designed to address these challenges and help startups reach their full potential.

Quanta offers a comprehensive peer-to-peer lending and crowdfunding platform that connects startups and SMEs with lenders. Our platform stands out by providing a seamless process for businesses to access the capital they need, while offering lenders a transparent, secure way to invest in growth-oriented ventures. This makes Quanta attractive to both startups seeking funding and lenders looking for reliable, impact-driven investments.

Khen Pheakdey,

Co-Founder & Tech Lead
Quanta

"My advice to young entrepreneurs is to deeply understand the problem you're solving and assess where you stand in terms of capabilities and readiness. Be prepared to pivot and adapt as you learn from both successes and setbacks, and stay persistent. And lastly, consider using Quanta as a solution to help navigate the funding challenges you may face in the near future."

The idea for my STEM education startup emerged from attending workshops focused on STEM programs, where I learned about various businesses and their strengths and weaknesses. Recognizing the limited access to STEM education for youth, particularly in Cambodia, I saw an opportunity to create a space for children aged six and above to engage in STEM learning. Additionally, many schools in certain provinces had not yet implemented these programs. This motivated me to start a business that would provide essential STEM education and help bridge that gap. To bring my idea to the martket, I sought additional learning opportunities and worked to enhance my knowledge and skills. Recognizing my own lack of understanding about running a business, I also looked for organizations that teach aspiring entrepreneurs how to start a business.

People are interested in my business for several reasons: the curriculum aligns with current industry standards and is unique to the provinces; schools need extracurricular programs for activities outside regular hours; and competitions at the end of the program encourage students to showcase their creativity and skills.

In the first quarter, our business promotion attracted 10 students to enroll in our educational program. In the second quarter, we launched 2 classes with a total of 20 students.

Chhang Seha,

Co-Founder
RoboTech Academy Siemreap

"For me, I believe all entrepreneurs should seek to understand their business and participate in workshops that teach business concepts. This helps them gain more knowledge and refine their business models to ensure they align with their goals. Learning from entrepreneurship programs is truly beneficial for those looking to start a business."

Runaway is a group of youth travelers formed to promote both digital media and the tourism industry, locally and internationally. The name "Runaway" in Khmer, "រត់ចោលស្រុក," reflects our mission. After years of traveling and observing, we noticed that while many tourists are fascinated by Cambodia's culture and history, locals often lack a deep understanding of their heritage. This gap is especially evident when travelers seek fun rather than cultural exploration. We realized Cambodia faces two major issues in tourism: supporting the local economy and helping locals better appreciate their own culture. Additionally, tourism guides are struggling to find work, as they have no platform to connect with travelers. This insight inspired us to create a startup aimed at addressing these challenges.

Runaway is a group of travelers focused on promoting both local and international tourism, inspiring youth through travel. This year, we launched "Usher," a digital platform that connects travelers with local guides. The platform allows users to easily book guides by selecting a destination, ensuring high-quality service at affordable prices while supporting the local community.

On the platform, you can discover and get to know more about traveling and tourism and each tour guide inspirational story as well. Aside from that, you would get goosebumps when experiencing traveling with the tour guide. They are not just a service provider but someone who tells your stories that blood as Cambodian never heard before. We ensure the platform will provide information and knowledge to users and we believe the platform is one of demand in the tourism sector to help, to improve, and to grow better. Due to a lack of support fund, technical support as well as timing, we're not able to launch the app yet we believe the business model still had potential toward tourism industry.

Va Sovanpong,

Co-Founder
Runaway

"We can see many start-ups come and go year by year, we hope good businesses will make a good impact on society. We see a lot of businesses that focus on international success or popular business. Yet I believe the only way we have the same goal in one place is what we do for our local and supporting local. Keep believing in your idea although it failed today keep in touch it will turn into real business by yourself in one day."

In the early stages, the idea for Scholar Book came from my family's strong passion for books. In 2016, we had collected around 2000 books in our own family library. In 2019, I noticed that many institutions in Cambodia have allocated their budget to customize library solutions, yet they struggled to find providers who could organize, supply, and manage libraries to meet their specific needs. Provincial libraries also faced logistical challenges, as buying books in the city required significant time and resources. Additionally, we saw a rising interest in reading among young people in Cambodia. These specific issues inspired me to create Scholar Book, offering specialized library setup and management services to make books and libraries more accessible and better suited to local demands.

I transformed my idea into the Scholar Book prototype by leveraging my experience in library work, where I connected with over 100 libraries and identified key needs. Inspired by data integration practices abroad, I initially developed a library platform with a small team in 2018. When this approach didn't succeed, I continued solo in 2019, adapting a POS system specifically customized for library management.

A unique feature of Scholar Book is its acquisition service, which includes book recommendations tailored to each institution's specific library needs. We also encourage families to create a small library at home to help children develop reading habits.

Scholar Book manages a portfolio of approximately 4,000 book titles and provides access to over 10,000 online book titles for libraries. We currently serve around 100 library clients in Cambodia, along with customers from the U.S., Taiwan, and Germany. Additionally, our website receives nearly 1 million views each month.

Sok Lak,

Founder
Scholar Book

"My advice to young entrepreneurs is to spend at least 10 years gaining experience by working for others before starting your own business. This will help you learn valuable skills, test business ideas, and build a strong network. Starting a business requires strong management abilities and stable financial resources, so it's essential to gain as much knowledge and experience as possible before launching your own startup."

The idea for Scholarar originated from my personal struggle to secure a scholarship to study in Japan, where I encountered a significant lack of information and support. This challenge motivated me to share my knowledge and mentor students, especially when realizing that 66 percent of Cambodian students still do not know how to apply for scholarships. With over 200,000 students missing out on life-changing opportunities each year, my team and I founded Scholarar to guide and support them throughout the scholarship application process.

We began by transforming our ideas into prototypes by conducting personalized consultations and mentorship to understand each student's specific needs. Using data-driven methods, we matched students with scholarships while also offering preparation courses, language training, and application reviews. This hands-on approach has already resulted in Cambodian students successfully receiving scholarships to more than 15 countries around the world. To scale our impact and reach a larger audience, we are now developing the Scholarar app to streamline the process for hundreds of thousands of students.

Our application uniquely integrates personalized scholarship matching powered by data science and machine learning with affordable mentorship, document preparation, language training, and a bookstore. This comprehensive platform simplifies the scholarship process, making it more accessible and efficient, which is essential for capturing a growing market of aspiring students.

At present, the Scholarar app has acquired more than 5,000 application users, including our 500 students who are actively pursuing scholarships. With 250,000 followers across social media platforms (Facebook, Telegram, TikTok), we anticipate reaching more than 100,000 users by the end of next year. This year, we were honored to be recognized as a top startup in the DPA - Digital Platform Accelerator 3 Program organized by TSC.

Dr. Y Phoura,

Founder & Chief Executive Officer
Scholarar

"For aspiring entrepreneurs, here is our advice: Focus on solving problems where your skills excel. If you are uncertain about where to start, consider freelancing as a way to refine your expertise. Be patient and persistent—success often requires three to seven years of dedicated effort. Build a team with complementary skills, ensuring you have roles such as CEO, CFO, and CTO. Seek mentorship through hackathons, incubations, acceleration, or by reading books on entrepreneurship. Always remember that the initial stages of a startup are about learning and experimentation while scaling up requires a strategic focus on sustainable growth and long-term success."

The idea for SNAPKYU emerged after I returned home from my studies in Canada. I was motivated by a deep desire to contribute to my country's growth and help it thrive in today's rapidly evolving world. The experience of studying abroad opened my eyes to the opportunities and challenges in a fast-developing environment, and I wanted to bring that knowledge back to Cambodia. I envisioned SNAPKYU as a platform that could benefit everyone over the age of 16, addressing a gap in the market and providing a solution to meet the needs of a growing, tech-savvy population.

SNAPKYU stands out from other social media platforms by combining social networking with a Peer-to-Peer (P2P) service marketplace, specifically designed for the local community in Cambodia. It offers a free app where users can share content, chat, and connect through a marketplace for buying and selling products and services, all within a Cambodian-centered platform. The app is particularly appealing to young adults, with the majority of our users falling within the 18 to 24 age group. As of now, SNAPKYU has attracted around 350,000 active users, showcasing its growing popularity among the youth of Cambodia.

Lee Ngeap,

Founder
SNAPKYU

"My advice to new or young entrepreneurs would be to approach tech startups with caution. If you're thinking about starting a tech business, it's crucial to be fully aware of the challenges ahead. Ideally, tech ventures should not be started lightly. However, if you are determined to proceed, my recommendation is to secure at least USD 500K in funding first. This will give you a solid financial foundation to navigate the complexities of building a tech company and increase your chances of long-term success."

In the early stages, we saw a gap in tourism community markets, recognizing both high potential and a need for local job creation. This led us to eco-tourism, aiming to benefit communities and address environmental challenges. Our journey also highlighted issues like deforestation, wildlife poaching, and damage from irresponsible tourism, which motivated us to develop solutions to protect these natural sites.

We used market research through social media to shape travel package options and adapted to COVID-19 guidelines, turning challenges into opportunities. This approach allowed us to refine and strengthen our initial product model, continuously adjusting to meet customer needs.

Our services offer unique, nature-focused experiences with a commitment to environmental responsibility, safety, and personal challenges. We provide opportunities for solo exploration and adventure, consistently surprising guests with something fresh and new.

Our portfolio includes recognition as a green tourism agency, an ASEAN award for contributions to community-based tourism, and over 3,500 national and international customers. We serve around 60 community-based tourism sites across Cambodia and have expanded into Laos, Thailand, and Indonesia.

Horn Sokchanlida,

Co-Founder & Chief Executive Officer
Solo Landscapes

"My advice to a new entrepreneur is to start with small, manageable steps before attempting bigger tasks. Seek guidance from experienced advisors, stay focused on your goals, and prioritize both your physical and mental well-being. Success is a journey, so be determined and patient as you grow, and always make sure to build a strong foundation before expanding further."

TamDan is a revolutionary platform that aims to solve parents' problems with early childhood education. The platform provides a holistic approach to early childhood education, encompassing all aspects of a child's development, including cognitive, social, emotional, and physical growth.

One of the main challenges parents face is finding the right educational resources for their children. TamDan helps parents overcome this challenge by providing a comprehensive collection of educational materials tailored to meet the needs of children at different stages of development. The platform offers a wide range of resources, including books, videos, audio recordings, and interactive games, all designed to enhance a child's learning and development.

Another common problem parents face is the lack of time to engage in their children's learning. TamDan understands this and offers flexible learning schedules, allowing parents to fit their child's education around their busy lifestyles. The platform also provides a range of tools and resources that enable parents to track their child's progress, ensuring that they stay on top of their child's learning journey.

TamDan also recognizes the importance of a child's emotional and social development. The platform offers a range of activities and resources that promote social interaction and emotional well-being. These resources include interactive games, storytelling sessions, and opportunities to connect with other parents and children in the TamDan community.

Kin Sosetha,

Co-Founder
TamDan

"In conclusion, TamDan is a valuable resource for parents looking to provide their children with the best possible start in life. The platform's holistic approach to early childhood education, flexible learning schedules, and range of resources make it an excellent choice for parents looking to support their child's learning and development."

Our startup idea emerged when our founder recognized the challenges taxi drivers face in attracting customers through traditional methods. This limited their income, prompting us to create an app that connects drivers with passengers, helping them earn more and streamline their operations in the digital age.

We transformed our idea into a prototype through participation in the Turing Hackathon Cycle II of Techo Startup, which inspired us and provided essential mentoring to develop our prototype.

Tap offers 24-hour customer service, ensuring safety and reliability from booking to drop-off, which keeps customers coming back. We provide a comfortable travel experience with efficient service, and our skilled drivers receive positive feedback. Additional features include allowing pets and offering insurance services, enhancing the overall customer experience.

Norng Rithy,

Co-Founder & Chief Executive Officer
TapApp

"Love what you do and be prepared to face challenges without giving up. Success takes time and effort, so stay motivated, continuously seek new ideas, and give your best. Celebrate every achievement, even if it's small, and believe in your vision."

The idea was started back to 10 years ago when my co-founder and I started a food store business together and we faced the issues of sourcing products from many suppliers. That's how Tenbox is created to solve food service businesses' pain points, by collecting all types of suppliers into one marketplace, so that they can find, source, compare prices, and track delivery in real-time.

We started testing our idea by building a website from Shopify as our prototype. It would take us 1 day to set it up. We started running advertising on social media to see if we had traction from our targeted customers into the website, which is how we validated the business idea. Then we invested in developing our own marketplace site.

Tenbox is created to address the challenges of convenience and accessibility. We build the platform as a one-stop solution for store owners to easily find many types of suppliers, as well as access new suppliers or the original distributors that are able to provide a better price or wholesale price.

For the past 3 years, we have accumulated 4,000 plus registered businesses into our platform. We have worked with all types of suppliers which are not limited to distributors, wholesalers, local producers, and also farmers to give a variety of options to our buyers.

Ty Sokmey,

Co-Founder & Chief Commercial Officer TenBox

"Don't feel small of the origin you are from. Your market size is not limited only here. Your solution may be needed in Singapore, Europe, or even the United States. Just go out there and ask. Resources are available everywhere including the technology that folks at Silicon Valley are using, so we can build great stuff out of it. Think big and act big."

The story begins with one of our co-founder's mothers facing challenges in managing her rental business. She often loses track of invoices, lacks the time to collect utility meter readings, and finds it difficult to calculate totals efficiently. Her experience inspired us to address these issues. Before finalizing our current solution, we conducted an interview with potential customers to understand if they were facing similar problems, ensuring we tackle the right pain points.

We conducted market research and interviewed potential customers to determine whether they faced similar challenges, ensuring that we addressed the most relevant pain points. We also asked about the features they would find most useful. By gathering this information, we were able to transform our idea into a prototype tailored to our customers' needs, genuinely helping them in their work.

Our platform features an automated rent calculation tool that ensures accurate and efficient rent calculations, eliminating manual errors and saving time. Additionally, the SmartMeter is an internet of thing device that automatically collects data from utility meters (electricity, water, or gas), sending real-time usage to a central system. It enables remote tracking, simplifies billing, improves accuracy, and provides usage insights and alerts for unusual patterns, helping users manage resources efficiently and prevent issues.

Currently, we are in the Research & Development (R&D) phase. During this stage, we are focusing on market research and developing our first prototype. This allows us to understand customer needs and refine our product. As we're still testing and improving, the product hasn't launched yet.

Ou Ketsovaddey,

Co-Founder
UniFlow

"Building a startup is one thing, but building a startup that truly solves real customer problems and addresses their pain points is much harder. If I were new to this, I'd focus on identifying the core issues customers face before even thinking about solutions or technology."

I like to explore and prototype new things. I like reading articles about what's new in technology and foresight trends of technology. Whenever I have a good available time, I always manage to have adventure trips around Cambodia and abroad which is a passionate factor for me to create Uot App.

Founded in 2019, Uot App is a digital community for trip lovers which is built by Cambodians. By using Uot App, users will get the real value of having a nice trip with enjoyment, saving, and the feeling of being local traveling around Cambodia. Our vision is to connect trip lovers in Cambodia to Asia and the globe. Our mission is to build a digital platform for trip lovers to promote Cambodian tourism and enhance human well-being.

Pech Soveaddh,

Co-Founder & Chief Executive Officer
Uot App

"To young entrepreneurs, keep going on your startup journey by doing, learning, improving, and sustaining your startup. Our Cambodia nation need you all to grow the economy in the next 5-10 years."

Before starting this company, I gained experience in buying and selling products online and identified a major issue with the manual delivery system. Delivery drivers often had to repeatedly call customers, leading to failed deliveries. Our goal is to create a smart delivery system that simplifies the process for both senders and receivers. By collecting customer data, we aim to identify patterns, improve accuracy, and enhance the overall delivery experience.

To start our business, we developed a prototype using a manual approach to identify potential leads and partners. We created a Telegram booking bot for customers to easily book deliveries. As we gathered feedback from these initial leads, we used the data to develop a full delivery system web app, integrating it with Telegram mini-apps to bring the Zippy platform directly to customers.

Zippy Express offers a one-stop logistics solution for online sellers in Cambodia, covering storage, packing, and delivery. Our platform allows customers to manage inventory, track deliveries, and enjoy a convenient, stress-free experience, enabling them to focus on selling their products.

Currently, 150 shops use our service, with approximately 20 using our inventory and packing services. Our customer portfolio includes sellers of beauty cosmetics, fashion apparel, and accessories (watches, necklaces, etc.).

Mao Sovanna Kong,

Co-Founder & Chief Executive Officer
Zippy Express

“My biggest takeaway as a startup founder is to "go with it" and embrace the mindset of "Say yes now, figure out later". I didn’t let doubt hold me back, and when I believed in a decision, I moved forward after discussing it with my partner. Instead of waiting for perfection, I acquired our first customer early and used their feedback to shape our product. This approach helped us learn quickly and create a service that truly met our customers' needs, leading us to find our product-market fit.”

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