

White Paper for Hamburg's Startup Scene

Compact information, exciting stories about startups' initial steps and Hamburg's startup scene

Several dynamic companies with international clout are boosting Hamburg's image as a promising startup location – be they the website provider [Jimdo](#), the career portal [Xing](#), the e-commerce high-flyer [Collins](#), the successful MyTaxi app or gaming giants like Innogames and Goodgame Studios. Each of these Hamburg-based flagships began small and thanks to their pioneering spirit and know-how, then worked their way up to become market leaders. Young pioneers and budding founders will also climb this ladder in future.

[The figures](#) speak for themselves: Hamburg has Germany's highest number of startups with 253 per every 10,000 inhabitants since 2014 putting it ahead of Berlin with 238, according to the startup monitor by the Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW). This positive development is due in no small part to several points of contact for founders in Hamburg. The city on the Elbe offers founders and potential founders a tight mesh of events, advice centres and means of funding. [Hamburg News](#) and the [Hamburg Chamber of Commerce](#) have drafted a white paper to help the local startup navigate this "jungle" of multifaceted public and private offers. In addition to compact information, you can find interesting reports about all kinds of founders and contact partners in Hamburg and the metropolitan region. This paper is by no means complete and instead provides a good overview of Hamburg's startup scene.

This white paper targets young, innovative companies and people who wish to turn a business idea into reality. According to the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce's definition, startups differ from other entrepreneurs insofar as they offer novel products and services or develop new ways of (re-) launching existing products on the market. Thus, startups face special challenges: Their product has to access the market, if the product or service is not yet market-ready. Moreover, the duration and cost of developing a business are difficult to assess. The white paper shows: Founders in the Hanseatic city are not left to fend for themselves when it comes to tackling these typical obstacles.

Hamburg News and the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce wish you a good read!

The white paper is divided into the following **thematic focuses**:

1. Figures, data & facts: An overview of Hamburg's startup scene
2. Providing direction: Main points of contact for founders in Hamburg
3. Networking, founders' talks & startup events: What's happening in Hamburg's startup scene?
4. Pitches & awards: Startups can present ideas here
5. Accelerators, incubators & company builders: Important means of funding for startups in Hamburg
6. Colleges & universities as "docking stations" for startups
7. Fresh capital: Where founders can obtain funding
8. Co-working spaces: Founders in Hamburg can work here
9. Background: Success stories and flops from Hamburg's startup scene

1. Figures, data and & facts: An overview of Hamburg's startup scene

The Hamburg startup scene is constantly in motion. The private initiative Hamburg Startups' publication, the [Hamburg Startups Monitor](#), gives an overview of around 660 fledgling companies across the city (February 2018). The monitor lists innovative companies that have been in existence for less than ten years and are eyeing growth. Accordingly, over 22 per cent and thus the majority of startups are based in commerce, followed by service-based startups with 18 per cent. Tech-based startups rank third and account for 14 per cent while Hamburg's food and media startups are well positioned at 13 und 12 per cent respectively. FinTech and games startups account for a joint share of 9 per cent.

Although relatively few games' companies are founded, the sector accounts for 27 per cent of employees (permanent employees, freelancers and interns) and is one of the strongest in the startup scene. In terms of employees, commerce comes second with over 18 per cent. The Hamburg Chamber of Commerce updates and publishes figures regularly to give a good overview of events in the founders' scene across the Hanseatic city.

2. Providing direction: Main point of contact for founders in Hamburg

Hamburg Invest's Startup-Unit Hamburg

Hamburg Invest has the versatile Startup-Unit Hamburg in place since early 2018 and focuses on all issues related to startups, offers and networks and general queries about the startup location. [Veronika Reichboth](#) and a small team manage the [Startup-Unit](#) with the aim of strengthening Hamburg's startup ecosystem and representing the scene nationally and internationally. The Startup-Unit offers startups [free appointments](#) on a regular basis. The focus is on information about offers by urban institutions and partners, networks and those of the Startup-Unit.

Tip: The digital platform [future.hamburg](#) is the online point of contact to learn about the innovation landscape of the metropolitan region of Hamburg, get inspired and enable local networking opportunities. This is where the inventors behind Hamburg innovations show themselves.

Workshop for Founders at Hamburg Chamber of Commerce

Am I a founder and do I have the knowledge needed to set up my own business?

The startup centre of the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce is the first point of contact for personal advice and support for startups across all industries. Each business startup is individual and unique, so that many personal questions can be answered here, whether it is about the legal form, formal startup requirements or the necessary conditions for entry to the profession. The team of Doreen Hotze, who heads the business incubator, particularly offers feedback discussions on the business plan and financing advice. The startup centre is also a service partner for the startup subsidy (startup from unemployment) and the nationwide promotion

programme "Promotion of entrepreneurial know-how". Business registrations can also be submitted online via the "Point of Single Contact", which is located in the business incubator.

With its [startup workshop](#), the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce also offers the necessary knowledge within the framework of an online tool to create a bankable business plan or to work on the Canvas business model. In addition to an initial orientation with personality test and knowledge check, the startup workshop also offers a concrete planning section. Registered users also have access to an expert who can provide interactive support if required.

- ❖ Additionally, the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce also offers many personal services for budding founders. Experts at the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce give those keen on becoming self-employed important tools for setting up their own business successfully in diverse event formats such as workshops on taxation, franchise consultation day or special informative talks for founders with an immigrant background.
- ❖ [Innovations- und Patent-Centrum](#) (IPC): Fledgling, innovative companies and startups with new products or services are advised in IPC about all the related issues and particularly about property rights. All founders are welcome to register and network on the [Hamburg Chamber of Commerce's XING group](#).



Spot on: 9 Tips for setting up a company successfully – from the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce's business incubator

1. **Write a business plan** – for yourself. Whoever focuses intensely on an idea, the market, the competitors and the business market is more successful and sustainable when setting up a business. People with good plans seldom fail.
2. **Focus on your client, not your idea!** → The worm must be tasty to the fish and not the fisherman.
3. Work out a **unique selling point (USP)**. The uniqueness of the idea i.e. the added value for your customer must be central to all communication. The USP is the criteria according to which a customer buys a product or service – or leaves it on the shelf.
4. If you do not have sufficient expertise, bringing a **co-founder on board** may be helpful sometimes.
5. Keep an **eye on your figures** and understand them! Accounting, cost accounting and pricing are part of everyday life at all companies.



*Head of business incubator
Doreen Hotze © Doreen Hotze*

6. The initial phase of the company's life begins with the self-employed activity. Sufficient reserves are crucial for straddling liquidity gaps when revenue is low. These reserves and other costs of setting-up the business such as acquisition and growth costs must be accounted for sufficiently when drawing up a budget. Subsequent financing based on overlooked acquisition costs or uncalculated risks weaken your position towards the bank. And don't forget to calculate **your own salary**.
7. What good are a smart logo, a great claim, expensive marketing and PR campaigns, if the product is not convincing? You never have a second chance to make a first impression! A **clear communication concept** is vital towards banks, clients and potential investors.
8. Founders **always lack resources such as time and money**. A precise understanding of your own priorities is crucial to the success of your business.
9. Build up your own **network!** Contacts damage only those who do not have any! Nobody can create a company successfully alone. During the initial phase, go to network meetings to make yourself and your product known. Seize every opportunity to network. 

Hamburg Startups – network for the local founders' scene

Nüwiel's intelligent [bicycle trailer](#) causes a stir wherever it appears. In 2017, the inventors of the technical creation headed to the South by Southwest (SXSW) digital and creative festival in Austin, Texas for the second time to present their product to an international audience. Hamburg Startups played a pivotal role and ensured that the founders' diary had plenty of appointments there. The private initiative is committed to ensuring that Hamburg's startup scene networks efficiently and transparently. Accordingly, it helped establish Nüwiel's first contacts with the organisers of the U.S. Food + City Challenge. Hamburg Startups also sponsored the ticket to SXSW.

The Hamburg Startups team, founded and managed by Sina Gritzuhn and Sanja Stankovic, offers events such as the Startups@Reeperbahn Pitch and the Hamburg Startups Mixer. The team hopes to raise international awareness of Hamburg as a metropolis for founders by monitoring the startup scene regularly.

Coaching & counselling at the Hamburg Kreativ Gesellschaft

Established by the city of Hamburg in 2010, [Hamburg Kreativ Gesellschaft](#) is committed to promoting the creative scene. It offers target mainly people in design, art, theatre, architecture, music, literature, press radio, the games sector, film and advertising. The Hamburg Kreativ Gesellschaft offers career starters, the self-employed and founders of start-up custom-made advice sessions, concrete information and business know-how, networking offers, improved workspaces as well as offices and spaces for implementing special pilot projects and new means of funding. The Kreativ Gesellschaft boosts fledgling startups with a constantly growing offer of accelerators, hackathons and startup days etc.

hei. Hamburger ExistenzgründungsInitiative

The [hei. Hamburger ExistenzgründungsInitiative](#) is Hamburg's first point's contact for all those keen on becoming self-employed. During a first introductory conversation, founders receive honest and sound feedback about their business idea. The initiative helps budding funders draw up an [hei.ideenplan \(hei.p\)](#) and offers a step-by-step guide to self-employment using e.g. the [hei.scheckheft](#).

Launched in 1995, the hei was founded by the Ministry for Economy and Labour of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce and the Hamburg Chamber of Crafts as well as associations, guilds, banks and the BürgerschaftsGemeinschaft Hamburg GmbH.

3. Networking, founders' talks & startup events: What's happening in Hamburg's startup scene?

Hamburg has a multiplicity of events, which are of interest to founders with a digital business model. They include, for instance, the Digital Media Conference, the Online Marketing Rockstars or Social Media Week, which are held every spring. In autumn, events like solutions.hamburg, the Reeperbahnfestival, the NEXT and Scoopcamp raise roofs across the digital industry. The following is a selection:

a. Social Media Week provides inspiration

Every year, the [Social Media Week](#) unfolds in global cities like New York, Jakarta and Mexico City as well as in Hamburg under the banner of "Language and the Machine" – "Language meets Technology: Algorithms and the Future of Communication". Many of the free, wide-ranging sessions are of interest to founders of startups. Hamburg News also has plenty of useful social media tips:

Spot on: 10 Social media tips for startups

Dominik Boecker is Online Marketing Coordinator at Hamburg Marketing GmbH and manager of the PIER 42 online agency. Boecker has drawn up ten useful social media tips for startups at the request of Hamburg News:

Tip 1: Develop a strategy

Shaping the social media strategy is the first step as there can be "no measure without destination". Using journalism's 6W method (who, what, when, where, why, which and how), you can set up a strategic, overall framework and gradually add more steps. Then ask yourself: "Who am I trying to address?" What message do I wish to send where, and on which channel? The more precise the



Social media expert Dominik Böcker © Dominik Böcker

strategy, the more you know about your target groups, their needs and social media preferences, the easier it becomes to make custom-made content for your customer and target group.

Tip 2: Listen first, then talk

Social media is like a good conversation. When someone talks only about himself/herself, the other person listens but a connection is not made. Exchanging ideas and making relations are the essence of social media. That means knowing what motivates a target group, identifying their needs and how you can meet their needs. That is best done by listening and taking part in conversations among a target group. Then you can compile successful content.

Tip 3: Keep an eye on the competition

What is going on in your market? Who is doing what? How successful is communication? What's going well, what could be better? The more you know about your rivals and their social media communication, the easier it becomes to address your target group. Benchmarking is thus also part of the basics of social media communication.

Tip 4: Create valuable content

Create content that gives users added value. "Teflon" content that does not stick or does not offer any added value is forgotten as fast as it's consumed and will not further your communication. Solve your users' problems, answer questions, inform and entertain sustainably. Then a chance of long-term brand or product perception will emerge. Remember, the worm must be attractive to the fish, not to the fisherman! Take this tip and make sure your content is interesting and has a headline worth clicking on. Studies show that 80 per cent of click decisions are based on headlines.

Tip 5: Continuity and resilience

Before you start communicating, make sure that it can be sustained over a longer period of time. Start by making sure your activities have the resources and capacities to communicate permanently and continually on the social media web. Resilience, not letting rip, is the key to success in a social media environment.

Tip 6: Call to actions and easy consumption

Believe it or not, "call to actions" are still very helpful and raise the average shareability of content by up to 27 per cent. Make it as easy as possible for followers to consume, comment and share your content. The fewer the clicks, the higher the probability of interaction with your content.

Tip 7: Be where your target group is

That means using the same channels as your target groups. A good Instagram strategy is doomed to failure, if your target groups are more likely to be on special platforms or Twitter. The same applies to the choice of channel and when your content is published. Forget studies showing the best time for publishing content. Look up your own statistics and check when your target groups and followers are most active. That can be highly individual and requires good planning.

Tip 8: Planning and testing

Good planning is half the job and that applies especially to social media activities. Plan the content per channel and according to your editing schedule. That gives you an overview of what you have already planned, which functions work or do not work (can be removed from editing schedule). Be flexible and post content that has arisen at short notice, but that pays and helps you reach your targets. Social media also requires speed.

Testing, trying out and experimenting is the other side of the social media coin. No SINGLE social media strategy or THE formula for going viral can be applied. Experiment and try out your content without losing sight of your target group's needs and their aims. The next point is complementary.

Tip 9: Gauging and analysing

Gauge your activities on different channels and see what effect which measures have. Continually monitoring your activities will make you stand out from unsuccessful content in the long term and allow you to improve your content on each channel.

Tip 10: Invest

Invest time, capacities and (unfortunately) money. Naturally, value-adding contents are still essential. However, the reach of networks like Facebook, the organic (not increased with advertising) is becoming ever more restricted. Advertising campaigns are a tried and tested, key means of achieving a high reach. Budgets have to take account of such advertising measures to be successful in the long term. Few, really successful brands and products do without advertising support. 

b. Online Marketing Rockstars in Convention Centre

Every year, Hamburg's [Online Marketing Rockstars](#) (OMR), who view themselves as a platform for the digital marketing sector, spark a kind of euphoria.

More than 40,000 visitors flocked to the last OMR Festival in the Hamburg Convention Centre. The [event](#) consists of a conference and expo featuring some 200 exhibitors.

The agenda includes over 50 master classes, panels on the expo stage and guided tours. Many musical highlights are featured in addition to the digital marketing stars.



OMR (Online Marketing Rockstars) © OMR (Online Marketing Rockstars)

c. newTV Congress: ways out of digitalisation traps

The moving image sector is facing upheavals - regardless of addressable or programmatic TV, influencers or content marketing, 360-degree/virtual reality or the end of DVB-TV. During the [newTV Kongress](#) in the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce, national and international experts and strategists at leading content and technology providers as well as marketing executives discuss new formats, technologies and the changing market. The newTV Congress targets decision-makers, marketing experts, advertisers, TV producers, digital industry executives and [startups](#).

d. solutions.hamburg: highlighting success factors

Every year in September, the [solutions.hamburg](#) focuses on hot topics in the digital sector during interactive sessions, workshops and keynote speeches. The core of solutions.hamburg is formed of numerous keynotes during the "expert.conference". Special sessions during the "experts' workshops" target only senior developers and IT architects. The solutions.hamburg ends with the traditional silpion.summer festival with around 4,000 guests. Then, bars, live music, DJ sets and a generous buffet transform Kampnagel's grounds into an atmospheric party location.

e. NEXT Conference and Reeperbahn Festival

The [NEXT](#) conference has long since become Germany's leading digital industry conference with over 10,000 visitors from 40 countries. The digital event has been held in Hamburg in co-operation with the Reeperbahn Festival since moving from Berlin in 2015. The Reeperbahn Festival brings the music and digital creative industry together at diverse locations in Hamburg. The wide-ranging agenda includes many sessions, networking events and award shows. Around 32,000 visitors attended the festival in previous years.

f. Hamburg Innovation Summit: meeting point for the future

The [Hamburg Innovation Summit](#) is the place where the Hamburg startup scene meets business, politics and science. Created in 2015 as a stage for new technologies and innovations, the event brings together interested visionaries, founders and future designers. The [Hamburg Innovation Awards](#) are given to new, sustainable business ideas and innovative companies which are rewarded with prize money of 3,000 Euros and high-quality non-cash prizes.

g. Data Journalism & New Storytelling at Scoopcamp

nextMedia.Hamburg regularly invites over 250 experts, decision-makers and innovators in the IT and media sector to the [Scoopcamp](#) in Hamburg to focus on the latest trends and issues at the interface of newsrooms, programming and product development. Topics such as "Data Journalism", "Social Media" and "New Storytelling" in digital media top the agenda.

Read more about events across the digital industry in Hamburg News.

Recurring, smaller events for founders in Hamburg

Hamburg has many recurring, smaller events targeting founders apart from big events lasting several days and with several thousand visitors.



Hit 12min.me – an event from Hamburg © 12min.me/ Kinga Woiciechowska

Networking, startup advice sessions i.e. appointments and founders' talks – several exciting events make overlooking Hamburg's startup scene quite difficult. Some dates are part of superordinate formats. The following is an overview:

1. Hamburg Chamber of Commerce's wide-ranging offer

The Hamburg Chamber of Commerce's monthly "Info Day" provides basic, compact knowledge and is a helpful event for beginners. The three-hour format provides fundamental information about drafting a business plan, the components of financing and important funding programmes for founders as well as commercial and tax aspects. Other exciting events include the so called „New-Chambers“, an informative event for new members and the monthly meeting of young commercial business people, or Hamburg's annual Founders' Day, the Founders' Forum held every three months and the seminar "Successful Self-employment" that can be booked regularly.

Tip: Several event organisers all over the globe and in Hamburg as well post their events on the Meetup platform. [Have a look.](#)

2. Interface digitalisation: 12min.me talks

The [12min.me](#) talks focus on new issues such as virtual reality, artificial intelligence or robotics. The speaker has exactly 12 minutes to communicate their idea to the audience. The "12min.MED – Life Science" talks, for instance, focus on whether doctors and entrepreneurs can come up with joint innovations. The "12min.me – Ignite talks", the original form of the talks, address diverse issues which all focus more or less on digitalisation in our society. A special version entitled "12min.me Startup Slam" is particularly interesting for entrepreneurs. Founders have an opportunity to present their business idea to the audience.

3. Fresh capital: IFB workshop on financing for founders

The [Hamburgische Investitions- und Förderbank \(IFB Hamburg\)](#) holds monthly workshops about grants and financing a startup. Potential founders learn about various public funding programmes and their suitability. Participants should have a concrete business idea and a rough idea of the amount of capital needed to launch the startup. Early registration is recommended, as a limited 12 places are available.

4. Ways to a successful campaign: Nordstarter Crowdfunding Club

The Hamburg Kreativ Gesellschaft's [Nordstarter Crowdfunding Club](#) is a regional crowdfunding page. During the events, people in the creative industries learn how to prepare a crowdfunding campaign and about factors that may influence the result. Participants should at least have an idea of what they want to fund and be interested in crowdfunding. Prior registration for the free event is required.

5. Startup consultation by .garage startups hamburg

How do I write a business plan? Must I create one or does a business model canvas suffice? What grants are available? What means of financing do I have? Which marketing strategy is suitable? Do I have to register as a business or a freelance profession? What are the main accounting and taxation issues? How do I obtain professional and private insurance? Young founders can put these and other pressing questions during the appointment with [.garage startups hamburg](#). The appointment i.e. advice session is held in groups, not individually.

6. Startup Grind (powered by Google for Entrepreneurs) Hamburg

[Startup Grind](#) is a global community for inspiring and boosting networking among entrepreneurs. The community holds local monthly, local talks where founders, pioneers and lateral thinkers share personal stories and experiences with guests. Successful founders in Hamburg such as Alexander Djordjevic, CEO & co-founder of Foodist, Dr. Sibilla Kawala, CEO of Limberry, Hauke Windmüller, CEO & co-founder of FAMILONET & ONBYRD have already seized the opportunities to present their businesses to the community.

7. Startup Speed Dating Hamburg

Founders based in Hamburg can meet each other during "[Startup Speed Dating Hamburg](#)" run by the Startup Guide Hamburg. Each person has 2.5 minutes to talk and switches conversation partners after 5 minutes. Afterwards, participants have 60 minutes to network openly.

8. Developing business ideas at LaborX

The [LaborX](#) for entrepreneurship is an interactive event series in which founders present and develop their business ideas assisted by experts and the audience. Entrepreneurs from all sectors regardless of whether they are in early or later stages of setting up their company can examine their business concepts, improve their chances of success and network with professionals, other founders and interested people.

9. Exchanging with like-minded people at the Hamburg Startups Mixer

Young entrepreneurs can network with each other at the Hamburg Startups Mixer. The event by Hamburg Startups focuses on different aspects e.g. special [networking events for food startups](#). The dates of upcoming events can be found on the Hamburg Startups' web page.

These event calendars give an overview of appointments

The list of events across Hamburg's startup scene may seem never-ending with networking, advice sessions/appointments for startups and founders' talks. To avoid missing regular formats or interesting events, keep track of one or many of the following event calendars:

The event calendar of the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce has regular, interesting startup events.

- ✓ The Hamburg Chamber of Commerce regularly adds new events for startups to the [founders' workshop web page](#).
- ✓ The [Startup Guide Hamburg](#) regularly offers interesting tips about events for founders.
- ✓ The [Hamburg Startup Digest](#) organises appointments according to personal interests and issues a newsletter with information about upcoming events for founders.
- ✓ The [nextMedia.Hamburg's calendar](#) lists its own events and other exciting ones for the digital industry.
- ✓ The [Hamburg Kreativ Gesellschaft](#) announces events for founders and the creative scene in its event calendar.
- ✓ The [Hamburg@work](#) business association collates events across sectors and publishes its own calendar of events including several interesting events for founders.
- ✓ Co-working spaces such as [betahaus Hamburg](#) provide information about their latest events on their web pages.
- ✓ Events by [Digital Media Women](#) and other interesting networking events are presented on their web page.
- ✓ The private initiative [Hamburg Startups](#) has descriptions of exciting events for founders under "events" on its web page.

4. Pitches & Awards: Where can startups present their business ideas?

Young founders have several opportunities to prove themselves and their business ideas. While most pitches and awards come with prize money, others emphasise networking and gaining experience. In any case, the pitches are always thrilling events – with lots of adrenaline and palpitations! The following is a selection:



Startups@Reeperbahn Pitch © Hamburg Startups / Stefan Groenveld

- A professional pitch must be learnt. The focus of [Unipitch](#) is on honing presentation skills. Young founders, students and interested people have an opportunity to present their projects to a large audience. They receive tips from professional coaches on stage. During the Idea Pitching Challenge, participants aim for both the audience's favour and prize money.
- The [nextMedia.Elevator](#) (formerly Webfuture Award) is a must for startups in the digital industry. Ten startups compete against each other in the final round of the contest by nextMedia.Hamburg. The winner gains contacts to investors and experts in the digital and media sector. The first team of prize-winners receives EUR 5,000. The second and third prize-winners receive EUR 2,000 and EUR 1,000 respectively.
- The [betapitch](#) pits ten startups from the Hamburg Metropolitan Region against each other. They have five minutes to pitch their concept to a jury and win over the audience. The winners gain not only free working spaces at betahaus Hamburg for six months, they also qualify for the grand final, the betapitch global in Berlin. There the winner obtains EUR 5,000 in prize money and a week's trip to Silicon Valley.
- The winners of the [South by Southwest-Pre-Pitches](#), held by next.Media Hamburg and Hamburg Startups, receive a ticket to Austin. Two startups are chosen to represent Hamburg's startup scene at the digital and creative

festival in Texas and have an opportunity to make all kinds of international contact while there.

- The [Hamburg Prize for Founders \(Hamburger Gründerpreis\)](#) honours **entrepreneurial** initiative, courage and success in the metropolitan region. Haspa, the daily Hamburger Abendblatt, Hamburg1 Fernsehen (TV), the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce and the Hamburg Chamber of Crafts, Studio Hamburg and the Fischauktionshalle present the award once a year along with prizes in other categories.
- The Hamburg Ministry of Culture and Media and the Hamburg Kreativ Gesellschaft hold a startup pitch for creative business ideas in the music industry. On [Music WorX Day](#), **six founders in the music industry compete against each other**. During the pitch, the contestants present their business ideas to potential investors and a jury of music experts. The winner obtains EUR 5,000 in prize money.
- Once every three months, the Hamburg-based company builder Hanse Ventures holds a pitch in their company in Hafencity. During the "[Ideensturm](#)", founders have five minutes to present their business ideas. The jury at Hanse Ventures examines whether the ideas are based on feasible, implementable business models. Convincing concepts can be further developed with the support of Hanse Ventures.
- The rules in place at the [12min.Slam](#) are even tougher than those applicable to the regular 12min.me event. Founders have only six instead of 12 minutes to win over the audience with their business idea. The startup that garners the loudest applause wins. There is time aplenty to network in relaxed atmospheres after the event.
- During the Hamburg Reeperbahn Festival, five founders present their business ideas to potential investors at the [Startups@Reeperbahn Pitch](#). The winners scoop a media budget worth EUR 100,000. However, the startups must qualify for the final with a convincing application. The event is held by Hamburg Startups.
- During [.garage Startups Hamburg](#), startups present their business ideas in ten-minute pitches and get feedback from the audience and the jury. The most convincing pitch wins a free counselling session for the startup. There is plenty of time to network during the intermission and afterwards.



Spot on: from Hamburg@Reeperbahn Pitch to the international stage

The north German startup Horse Analytics pitched at the 2017 South by Southwest (SXSW) Accelerator at the international creative festival in Austin, Texas. The Hanover-based company made headlines in Hamburg when it competed in the Hamburg@Reeperbahn Pitch among others and continued a tradition begun by Spice VR and Sonormed. The startups had presented their companies in Austin in previous years after triumphing in the finals of the Reeperbahn Pitch. In an interview with Hamburg Startups, Enri Chantal Strobel, founder of Horse Analytics, explained how the application to pitch in Texas came about: "As one of five finalists in the Startup@Reeperbahn Pitch last year in Hamburg, we got to know many people including the judges, Mark Hoffmann, Lars Hinrichs and Ralf Dümmel as well as Claire England and Chelsea Collier, who have special links to Austin, and encourage us to apply." Read more on [Hamburg News](#).



Enri Strobel, founder of Horse Analytics, at the Startups@Reeperbahn Pitch © Hamburg Startups / Stefan Groenveld

5. Accelerator, incubators & company builder: Who funds startups in Hamburg?

Accelerator programmes, incubators and company builders provide financial support for founders' teams and offer know-how and networking opportunities as well. The individual distinctions between all these concepts are not always clear. Basically, accelerator programmes speed up the business development while incubators have a formative influence on the business development. Startups are supported with their operative business and their mentors offer advice about product development or with marketing strategies. Company builders are more involved in the initial development of the business idea. External teams of founders are put together to implement the idea. Diverse means of financing are available in Hamburg with very different emphases. The providers usually offer their support in return for a share of the company. The following is a selection:

- ❖ The **next media accelerator**, initiated by Deutsche Presse-Agentur (dpa), caters to international media startups taking. During a six-month programme, experienced founders and leading media executives in betahaus Hamburg mentor the startups, who receive up to EUR 50,000 in financing
- ❖ The Hamburg Ministry of Culture and Media and Hamburg Kreativ Gesellschaft launched the **Music WorX Accelerator** to give startups comprehensive, professional support and help them develop their innovative business models. During the three-month programme, the fledgling companies receive funding and expert support with their business ideas.



Spot on: Success stories from the Music WorX Accelerator

“Music WorX is linked to an amazing series of success stories,” said Egbert Rühl, Managing Director of the Hamburg Kreativ Gesellschaft. One of these success stories [SofaConcerts](#), which puts international musicians in contact with fans and organises, private live concerts in people’s homes. The founders of the platform, [Miriam Schütt and Marie-Lene Armingeon](#) took part in the 2014 Music WorX Accelerator and won over the jury at the Music WorX Pitch Day to beat startups from other German states.

- ❖ The [startup garage by comdirect bank](#) targets fintech startups. Entrepreneurs and startups undergo a three-step procedure culminating in a “Pitch Day”.
- ❖ Potential highfliers in aviation can apply to the [Airbus BizLab](#) – a six-month global aerospace accelerator. The programme is offered in Toulouse, France, Hamburg and Bangalore, India creating a global network of business accelerators, and targets startups in the early phase of business.
- ❖ The Hamburger Sparkasse (Haspa) and HSH Nordbank launched the [Next Commerce Accelerator \(NCA\)](#) in February 2017. The joint venture brings experts and firms together to drive innovation in electronic trade. Apart from EUR 50,000 in equity capital and access to potential clients and business partners, NCA offers training and coaching programmes as well as office space.
- ❖ The [Next Logistics Accelerator](#) is company-wide and focused on the logistics industry. With globally active investors, supporting partners and over 100 experienced mentors, the [NLA](#) provides access to a state-of-the-art network and supports promising startups from around the world in two six-month programs per year.
- ❖ The [Social Impact Lab Hamburg](#) offers free coaching, support and mentoring to founders with social business models. However, only those who have not officially launched a startup are eligible to apply.
- ❖ The [Hanse Ventures](#) company builder is run by the networker Sarik Weber and Jochen Maaß, an SEO specialist. After a successful pitch, founders receive comprehensive support with implementing their business idea. Founders give Hanse Ventures a 30 to 70 per cent share of their company.



Spot on: Hanse Ventures monitoring Hamburg’s startup scene

The Hamburg-based company builder, Hanse Ventures, has helped establish and shape Hamburg’s startup landscape. Although the Hanseatic ecosystem was quite modest when the company launched in May 2010, there are now university initiatives, urban offers and several co-working spaces. The company builder has grown: “At present, our portfolio includes 12 startups from very different sectors and in various stages of development and that employ 300 staff,” said Tobias Seikel, partner & COO at Hanse Ventures. More information can be found on [Hamburg News](#). 

6. Colleges & universities as “docking stations” for startups

Support from academia can be particularly helpful when setting up a business. Several colleges and universities in Hamburg have centres for founders with different thematic emphases.

Spot on: Harburg’s founders’ scene taking off

Harburg’s former river port used to smell of rubber. Oil mills and rubber processing companies dominated life there. Today, the Harburg river port stands for departure, innovation, research and development.

It all started in 1978, when the [Hamburg Technical University \(TUHH\)](#) was founded in Harburg. Hardly noticed by the general public, this university kick-started reforms that eventually spread to Germany’s entire university scene. But above all, TUHH focuses on forward-looking issues such as green technologies, life sciences, aviation and maritime technologies. Establishing entrepreneurship as a new course of study was an innovation for a technical university.

Activities at der TUHH revolve around future issues such as green technologies, life science, aviation and maritime technologies. The first professorial chair for entrepreneurship was set up here – a novelty for a technical university.

The TUHH strives to make a significant contribution and allow students to become the inventors and entrepreneurs of tomorrow in a targeted manner free of stumbling blocks. To this end, a special “**Working Space**” has been set up in TUHH. There, teams of students can realize their ideas and work on tomorrow’s solutions. This is where networks are established and contacts made. Mentors impart valuable knowledge and events open up brand new horizons. A culture of founding is emerging and making Harburg’s scientific environment an attractive address for students who want to realize their own ideas and venture down new paths.

However, developing new technologies and solutions are just one side of the coin. Developing a business idea and founding a company is the other side. This is where the Startup Dock comes in. Based in Harburg’s Schlosstrasse, it is funded by the German Ministry of Economics and Energy (BMWi) and borne by a wide-ranging association of institutions and companies. Founders who are always one step ahead can be met here on the borders of the former river port. This cutting-edge building pulsates with many eager young inventors who are determined to create something entirely new. Some sit in front of huge monitors while others have retreated to a corner to mull ideas.

A board at the entrance lists companies heading to a new future. Visiolytics, for example, is developing new ways of analysing fluids while Aiconnix.ai is working on solutions to optimize video content on the internet. Another company, [Recalm](#) focuses on active noise cancellation for seats. A company named Bluebird Mountain is developing a drone to rescue avalanche victims.

Dr. Christian Salzmann, Executive Director of the [Startup Dock](#), said: “Around 80 per cent of all startups will be successful,” and points to [Breeze Technologies](#) that recently won the Hamburg Founders Award. Salzmann added: “Harburg offers an almost ideal microcosm for founding a company. This is where young companies find the best conditions for connecting to existing structures and profiting from an industrial environment that represents exactly the technology areas of the future.”

Martin Mahn, CEO of TUTECH, and Hamburg Innovation agree. Both privately held companies are owned by the Hamburg Technical University and the City of Hamburg. They act as advisors, brokers, initiators and co-ordinators between universities and corporations in the region i.e. between research institutes and markets. They also promote networking between science, politics, administration and economy.

TUTECH is also backing the transition of Harburg's former harbour from a purely industrial site into an area for studying, living and business. Mahn remarked: "This will become one of the most interesting, innovative locations in Germany. We want to create a solid basis to drive research and the formation of new companies to benefit the Hamburg Metropolitan Region." Young companies will be unlikely to leave the region, if they have ideal conditions for their further growth.

To this end, TUTECH works closely with the Startup Dock and TUHH and provides a co-working space and incubator, consulting, training and coaching services as well as support for business models and business plans. 

More founders' centres at colleges in and around Hamburg:

- ❖ The Competence Center for Renewable Energies and Energy Efficiency (CC4E) is the nucleus of the growing energy campus at HAW Hamburg. Hopes are high that it will eventually become a Silicon Valley of renewable energies in Hamburg, boost innovations and encourage companies in the sector to relocate or set up new businesses there.
- ❖ The University of Hamburg and the DESY scientific research centre are building a new centre for founders. Part of the 4,000 square metre building will be available to founders rent free i.e. they just have to pay their own utility bills.
- ❖ The business startup service at the Professional School at the [Leuphana University Lüneburg](#) welcomes and funds startups linked to universities and colleges. Startups in various stages of development are supported and advised e.g. about expanding, hiring more staff or dealing with authorities. Founders also benefit from qualification and coaching offers as well as networking opportunities.

7. Fresh capital: Where do founders obtain funding in Hamburg?

Financial support is always an important topic for founders. In addition to the nationwide support provided by [KfW Bank](#), Hamburg has a central institution for Hamburg startups - the [Hamburgische Investitions- und Förderbank \(IFB\)](#). IFB Hamburg provides loans especially for startup projects.

- InnoRampUp is a funding programme run by the IFB and targets above-average, innovative, young startups in Hamburg. It provides grants of up to EUR 150,000.

- The IFB offers equity capital as part of the Innovationstarter Fonds to slightly more developed companies with e.g. Proof of Concept or initial turnover. IFB invests up to EUR 500,000 per financing round in technology-orientated companies that have been in existence for no longer than six years.
- Launched in 2016, the "[Hamburg Kredit Innovativ](#)" is another funding programme. Companies can apply for loans of up to EUR 1.5 million.

Contact partners for crowdfunding in Hamburg

Crowdfunding is a modern means of financing and allows several investors to inject small sums.

- Crowdfunding, crowdlending or crowdinvesting – these various means of funding are enjoying growing popularity. However, some prior information is required for a successful campaign. The [Crowdfunding Portal of the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce](#) gives a helpful overview and explains the differences between classic financing and crowd funding. Information about risks and opportunities and legal aspects is also available. The portal has tips for a crowdfunding campaign and gives practical examples.
- Nordstarter is the Hamburg Kreativ Gesellschaft's regional crowdfunding page for creative projects in Hamburg. Nordstarter is operated in co-operation with Startnext – a crowdfunding programme known across Germany. The funded projects range from feature films, designer products and apps to art magazines, exhibitions and festivals. Hamburg Kreativ Gesellschaft offers the free, monthly Nordstarter Crowdfunding Club. Those interested can find information and learn how to prepare a campaign.
- Additionally, the Hamburg Kreativgesellschaft provides the helpful [Finanzierungs-Finder](#) search function. Users can search according to sub-markets, different kinds of funding and per funder.



Spot on: 5 tips for a successful crowdfunding campaign

Isabel Jansen, who is responsible for the Hamburg Kreativ Gesellschaft's "newcomer programmes" and "crowd-funding" sector, has drawn up five tips for a successful crowdfunding campaign:

Tip 1: Preparation is essential

Many people launching a crowdfunding project underestimate the importance of timely preparation. Apart from an appealing and attractive presentation on the crowd-funding platform, a campaign plan should also be drafted. It should include the schedule and outline where and how to reach a target group. What content should be prepared for use during the campaign?



Expert for „crowdfunding“ and „young talent programmes“ of the Hamburg Kreativ Gesellschaft: Isabel Jansen © Hamburg Kreativ Gesellschaft

Tip 2: Authentic pitch videos

A video pitch is the centrepiece of a crowd funding campaign and should outline the project to the crowd. That works best when the person or team launching the project addresses the crowd directly. Authenticity is important and the video should be two to three minutes in length at the most.

Tip 3: Offer attractive returns

Crowdfunding at Nordstarter is based on the principle of give and take. Those who offer financial backing to a project can choose a previously agreed return as a “thank-you”. Most of the stipulated funding target is achieved by selling this “thank-you”. If a musician, for instance, launches a crowd-funding campaign to produce a new album, he/she can offer the completed album in return.

Tip 4: Networking

Crowd-funding works best when financial supporters are found in personal networks. Establishing a network and advertising are crucial. Those launching a crowd-funding campaign can alert friends, colleagues, family and friends and request funding as well as their support.

Tip 5: Budget realistically

An “all or nothing principle” applies on every crowd-funding platform. Such a funding project is generally considered successful when the required budget has been reached by the deadline and financed the supporters. If that is not the case, money is returned to the supporters. Thus, think about the minimum budget beforehand. Then, planning and financing the project becomes more realistic. 

8. Co-working spaces & business centres: Where can founders in Hamburg work?

Co-working spaces and business centres offer flexible workspaces and inspiring exchanges with other creative minds. The following is a selection:

- Flexible co-working spaces in [Beehive](#) in the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Strasse can be booked quickly and easily per app. The provider relies on a digital model instead of a reception area: After booking online, the tenant received an access code per e-mail. In 2017, Beehive-was due to open another branch in downtown Hamburg and in Bahrenfeld.
- [Betahaus](#) in the trendy Schanzenviertel is one of the main meeting points for the startup scene. It offers numerous events, hosts contests, award ceremonies and expert lectures, betahaus offers far more than simply a desk with internet access Over 340 regular users meet in betahaus, to work, make contacts, swap ideas and give or get Feedback. betahaus has branches in



betahaus at Hamburg-Schanzenviertel © betahaus Hamburg / kathrine-nielsen.de

Barcelona, Berlin and Sofia.

- The [FilmFabrique](#) co-working space caters to people in the movie industry. On offer are flexible office spaces, entire offices for teams complete with technical requirements and a multi-functional studio in HafenCity's Oberhafen. Commercial and non-commercial film projects can be found in FilmFabrique. The workspaces can be leased on a daily, weekly monthly basis or for longer.
- InnoGames GmbH was founded in 2007 and now has 350 employees from around 30 countries in its main base in Hamburg. The three company founders Hendrik and Eike Klindworth and Michael Zillmer have personal experience of the risks and opportunities and associated with their venture and now seek to share their experiences with future startups. To this end, InnoGames has established a co-working space named [InnoHub](#) for founders on the second floor of their offices in Hamburg City Süd. Tenants are supported as part of a mentoring program in which industry experts answer all kinds of queries about founding a company.
- The [intooffice](#) provider is close to the Outer Alster and bang in the middle of the hustle and bustle in Mühlenkamp, Winterhude. It houses 19 offices between eight and 25 square metres in size and a conference room for use by enquiry. The other facilities include a kitchen, fridge, oven and seating area. Entire floors with 300 square metres in space can be booked at intooffice for three months minimum.
- The [Lilienhof Business Center](#) near Hamburg's main railway station and the Alster Lake in the middle of the city offers several floors with fully-equipped workspaces complete internet, phone, fax, printer and Xerox-machine, different-sized meeting and conference rooms and kitchens. The large rooftop terrace with views of Lake Alster has space for 50 people and borders on the event room, which is a special highlight. Individual offices for two and more people can be rented in the rustic storehouse building.
- The [Medienhof](#) in Poelchaukamp in Winterhude targets digital nomads, freelancers, creative minds and smaller startups. The impressive lobby features elaborate Renaissance paintings. Fully-equipped workspaces with internet, telephone extensions, printers, letter boxes, meeting rooms, lockers and a garden complete with a canoe for navigating the canal are available. Several restaurants nearby and the Outer Alster are just a few minutes walking distance.
- The Israeli-headquartered co-working space [Mindspace](#) opened its first German branch in the "Alten Klöpferhaus" on Rödingsmarkt in spring 2016. Mindspace offers around 650 fully equipped high-tech desk spaces on 4,000 square metres of office space 24/7. A team of community and IT managers also offer individual advice in addition to a multitude of events in a collaborative, modern work environment. Mindspace has branches in Berlin, Munich, Tel Aviv, Herzliya and Warsaw.



Spot on: Mindspace from Tel Aviv wants to network the international startup scene more closely

Why was Mindspace the first international branch after Tel Aviv to choose two German metropolises, Hamburg and Berlin? In an interview with Hamburg News, Dan Zakai, founder and CEO of Mindspace, explains that Germany has repeatedly expressed strong interest in Tel Aviv's startup scene. There have been numerous visits by political actors and initiators of various funding programmes. Hamburg



Dan Zakai. CEO of Mindspace © MINDSPACE

as a location fascinated by the strong media industry. The will for more innovation is literally perceptible. The previous demand for office space on the Rödingsmarkt confirmed Zakai in his choice of location on the Elbe. In the future, Mindspace's international locations will need to be more closely networked. "We want to send companies from Tel Aviv to Hamburg and Berlin and vice versa." 

- At [Regus](#), young startups work alongside large companies, SMEs and the self-employed. Regus operates ten business-centres all over Hamburg. A complete list of all the co-working spaces in Hamburg is hardly possible as their numbers are growing constantly. The Hamburg Chamber of Commerce, for instance, provides a comprehensive overview.

Tip: [Shhared](#) in Altona also offers workspaces for founders and freelancers and boost the atmosphere in the Klinkerbau beside the Bahrenpark. The Englishman, Alex Ahom founded Shhared, which is now valued by international founders and freelancers as an entry point to the local scene. Ahom is well aware of the problems often faced by the self-employed with little or no knowledge of the German language.

- Founders can rent workspaces in [Werkheim](#) in popular Hamburg-Ottensen, on a daily, weekly or monthly basis. The flexible workspaces include individual desks in the open space area and separate, closed business units, which can be leased for two months minimum. The Werktalk event features short speeches by freelancers, designers, programmers and founders. Participants can talk and swap experiences in a relaxed atmosphere.

A complete listing of coworking spaces in Hamburg is hardly possible, as new offers are constantly being added. A graphical overview by Hamburg Invest of Hamburg's coworking landscape can also be found [here](#).

9. Background: Success stories and flops from Hamburg's startup scene

Hamburg News reports regularly about the latest developments in Hamburg's startup scene. This section of the white paper contains a selection of success stories and tales of flops:

Spot on: Hamburg's startups make big appearances on "The Lion's Den"

Whether it's ready-mix ice-cream, low-calorie, alternative pasta or a Tinder app for Foodies: A total of six Hamburg-based startups won over judges during the fourth season of the VOX TV show for founders' "The Lion's Den" (DHDL) with their business ideas for food startups. Their wins have strengthened the perception of Hamburg as an excellent location for food companies even more. Every fifth, fledgling company in Hamburg has a food-related business model i.e. an innovative food product or a digital solution, according to the Startup-Monitor by Hamburg Startups.

Spoilt for choice "Luicella's ready mix ice cream"

The two Hamburg-based founders caused [a sensation](#) at the very start of the fourth season of DHDL: Markus Deibler, formerly a professional swimmer and his business partner Luisa Mentele presented their tasty "Luicella's Eismix" a ready-mix-ice-cream. The duo's brilliant presentation ("Sensational!" "Outstanding!") yielded three investment offers. Dagmar Wöhrl and retail expert Dümmel each offered EUR 120,000 in return for a 25.1 per cent share of the company. Thelen, an expert in technology, wanted a 20 per cent share in return for EUR 120,000 as well as his expertise in design and online sales. This offer eventually won over the two founders and prompted them to seal the deal.

Surprise after appearance by founder of "kajnok" founder

The Hamburg-based entrepreneur, Sonja Zuber, was also [spoilt for choice](#) during DHDL: Three "lions" on the show offered her an investment of EUR 200,000 in return for a 10 per cent share of her company. The founder even left the studio with a deal for EUR 400,000 and a 26 per cent share offered by the "guest lion" Georg Kofler, who had triumphed over investors Dagmar Wöhrl and Ralf Dümmel. However, events took a surprising turn in the two months after the show and the deal fell through. Zuber told Gründerszene: "The synergies were not quite as expected... at least not enough to give the investor shares of my company." However, the TV pitch was not unsuccessful and the founder is likely to benefit from ideas learnt there, she said. "We have invested our own money (meanwhile) and can implement what was discussed during the show. We have improved our online presence and are now working with an agency," she added.

Veluvia founder's expertise scores points

And the series of success stories from Hamburg continued: Jörn-Marc Vogler, 45, founder of Veluvia, won over Ralf Dümmel and Carsten Maschmeyer [with his food supplement or "Veluvia" capsules](#). Veluvia's food supplements make a healthy diet possible even when people are undergoing stress, said Vogler on the show. The food supplement or capsules are full of only natural ingredients and free of additives, which is a clear advantage on the market, Vogler assured the "lions". Maschmeyer said: "I'm excited by your expertise," and offered with Dümmel a joint EUR 300,000 in return for a 25.1 per cent share of the company. Frank Thelen, an online specialist, also offered EUR 200,000 in return for a 20 per cent share of the company. However, Vogler eventually opted for the deal with the other judges. Commenting after the show, Vogler said: "We will be able to grow sales to EUR 50 million in five years with two lions on board." Veluvia is probably not the last Hamburg-based success story to emerge from "The Lion's Den".

Foodguide: Investing in the U.S. with Maschmeyer

Digital food platforms also proved successful during the fourth season of DHDL. The Hamburg-based founders Malte Steiert, 24, and Finn Fahrenkrug, 26, won over Carsten Maschmeyer with their ["Foodguide" social gastro app](#). The deal was preceded by a convincing pitch during which Steiert and Fahrenkrug sent another "lion" Judith Williams in search of a restaurant on an imaginary tour of Paris. Similar to Tinder, Williams soon "swiped" her favourite restaurant on Foodguide. The app tracks down restaurants in a user's location and shows photos of the most popular dishes and uploaded by fans. Williams soon had a choice of beef burger, a veggie bowl or a tartar of tuna to order in Paris. Users can also reserve a restaurant table and pay for the food on the app, the founders stressed. Maschmeyer offered to invest EUR 450,000 in return for a 31.6 per cent share of the company. The startup is one of many success stories from Hamburg to appear on the show and is probably not the last. Maschmeyer, who owns among others an investment company in San Francisco, will help the founders expand on the U.S. market. 

Spot on: „Fuck up Nights“ or stories about flops

"Fuck-up" stands for a mess and not every entrepreneur like talking about their mistakes. However, plenty can be learnt from mistakes as Claudius Holler and Daniel Plötz, founders of 1337Mate, explained. They have organised Hamburg's "FuckUp Nights" to give stories about flops a stage. The "FuckUp Nights" are a global event series that originated in Mexico. The recurring event is hugely popular in Hamburg. Every place was taken in betahaus Hamburg when founders outlined their "FinTech-Fails" during FinTech-Week 2016. One speaker, Jonas Piela, co-founder and manager of Avuba, noted: "We had underestimated many points." The FinTech sector is riddled with stumbling blocks like money laundering and other types of fraud, he noted. Finding a suitable partner bank proved tougher than anticipated. [Read the full report](#) and other illuminating reports about "Fuck-ups" in Hamburg News. 

Spot on: Female Hamburg-based founders active in the following sectors:

Women set up companies less frequently than men and this applies across sectors in Hamburg and in other cities. Yet, there are several examples of successful female entrepreneurs in Hamburg. They include for instance, Juliane Eichblatt and Eva Neugebauer of the ["Frischepost"](#) online supermarket, Sibilla Kawala-Bulas, the founder of the "Limberry" dirndl label or Miriam Schütt and Marie-Lene Armingeon, founders of the online platform [SofaConcerts](#) – to name just a few. Commerce is by far the most popular sector among women founders in Hamburg. Some 35 of a total 177 female founders in Hamburg (23.6 per cent, Hamburg Startup Monitor: May 2017) are active in that sector. [Details of the report](#) are available in Hamburg News.

The startup scene is in a state of flux. Hamburg News reports on all these changes. We would be delighted to keep you informed about these and other topics in Hamburg with our [weekly newsletter](#), which is published in German and English. 

Hamburg News and the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce wish you every success with your startup in the Hanseatic city. Good luck!

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