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FOUNDERLABS

JUNE 2025 | ISSUE #02

FOUNDER'S DIGEST

The month's must reads
from the Founderlabs

FOCUS

Startup Mahakumbh 2025 :
A Statement of India's Startup Resolve

SURGE

Why every CEO should
become a brand

IN CONVERSATION

Founder Spotlight : Ashish Gupta,
Founder FretBox



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From the Editor's Desk



At FounderLabs, we don't just track trends—we tune into tectonic shifts. In this edition, we spotlight one such seismic movement reshaping the entrepreneurial landscape: The Rise of DeepTech. From AI-powered healthcare to space innovation and clean energy, Deep Tech represents India's next giant leap—bold, research-intensive, and world-changing. It's not about quick wins; it's about building solutions for the next century. And the visionaries daring to do that deserve center stage.

This spirit of ambition and innovation echoed powerfully at Startup MAHAKUMBH 2025—a landmark event and a statement of India's unwavering start-up resolve. It wasn't just a gathering; it was a declaration: India is not just participating in the global startup race—it's leading.

But while ideas and technology matter, so does identity. Today, every CEO must become a brand. In this edition, we explore why personal branding is no longer optional—it's a leadership imperative. Whether you're running a start-up or leading a large organisation, your personal voice defines your company's credibility, culture, and capital. We also bring you highlights from two high-energy networking events: CMD Club's Leadership Mixer in Noida, where decision-makers exchanged real-world strategies, and Guftagu's Impact Confluence, a vibrant platform where conversations sparked connections, collaborations, and catalytic ideas.



The magazine remains your space—a lab of learning, leadership, and limitless possibilities.

For aspiring founders still tethered to a full-time job, we offer a practical guide on "How to Launch Your Business Without Quitting Your 9-to-5" because entrepreneurship isn't always about taking the leap; sometimes, it's about building the runway.

As we embark on this exciting adventure together, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all our contributors, partners, and most importantly, our readers, for making this dream a reality. Together, let's explore the uncharted territories of entrepreneurship, navigate the challenges, and celebrate the triumphs that define the start-up ecosystem.

And finally, we shine a light on FretBox, a startup redefining modern hostel management—proof that innovation lives not just in labs but in lived experiences. FounderLabs remains your space—a lab of learning, leadership, and limitless possibilities. We're grateful for our growing community of readers, contributors, and believers. Keep writing to us, sharing stories, and building the entrepreneurial narrative of India—one breakthrough at a time.

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Managing Editor

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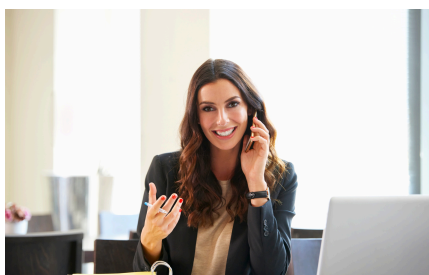
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FretBox is tailor-made for modern age hostels



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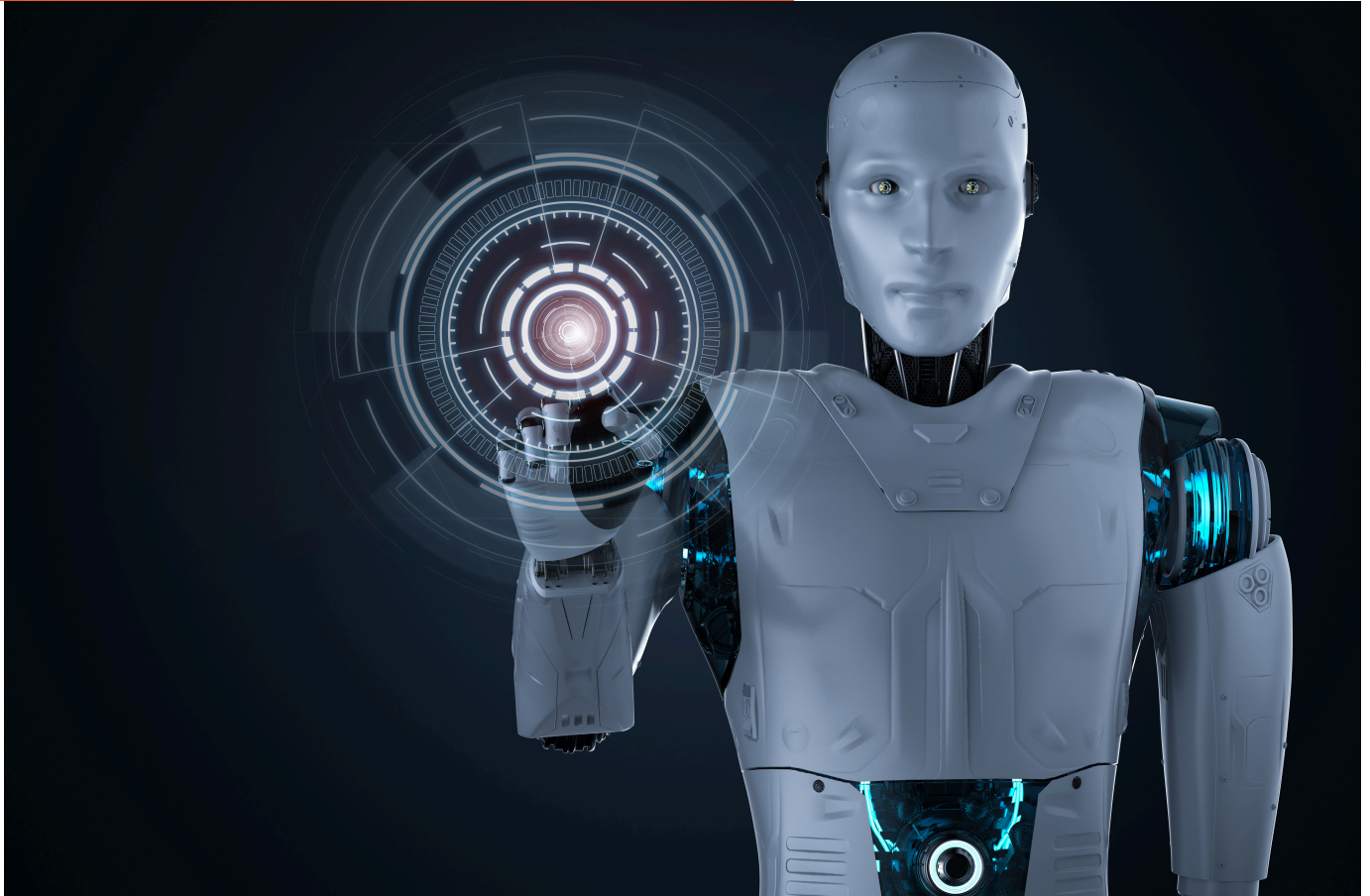
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The Rise of Deep Tech



Why Deep Tech Is Different

Unlike your typical startup that builds with code, deep tech startups build in physics, chemistry, biology, and advanced engineering. They don't chase the next delivery app, they tackle the grand challenges of our times that are impacting the world in a big way like climate change, disease, food security, aging populations, and national defense—with solutions that often look like science fiction. These ventures demand patience, but they reward belief. According to a global study of over 1,100 VC funds, deep tech-focused investments have delivered weighted IRRs of 26%, outperforming conventional tech VC benchmarks.

"Deep tech ventures are more than moonshots. They're mission-driven ventures that solve globally relevant problems," says Ankit Malik, a climate-tech angel investor.

Why the next wave of breakthrough innovation will be Deep, Bold and Investable

The era of quick fixes and consumer-first apps is fading. Replacing it is a slow, science-based, deeper movement rooted in science, advanced engineering, and a mission to solve the grand challenges of our times. Welcome to the world of deep tech, where startups are not just building products—they're building the future.

From quantum processors to gene-editing therapies, deep tech ventures are decoding nature, reprogramming atoms, and creating markets that didn't exist a decade ago. Once seen as fringe experiments, these companies now command nearly 20% of global venture capital—twice the share they held just ten years ago.



What's behind this momentum? And why are investors suddenly betting big on ideas that, at first glance, seem more science fiction than scalable business?

Big bets on deep tech are paying off. According to a global analysis of 1,100 VC funds, deep tech-focused funds clock a weighted average internal rate of return (IRR) of 26%, outperforming traditional venture capital IRRs. Non-weighted returns are neck and neck at 25–26%.

Hotspots of Indian Deeptech

Spacetech: Pixxel, Skyroot, and Agnikul lead a new wave of satellite and launch startups.

Green Energy: Battery recycling, hydrogen fuel, and climate AI are gaining ground.

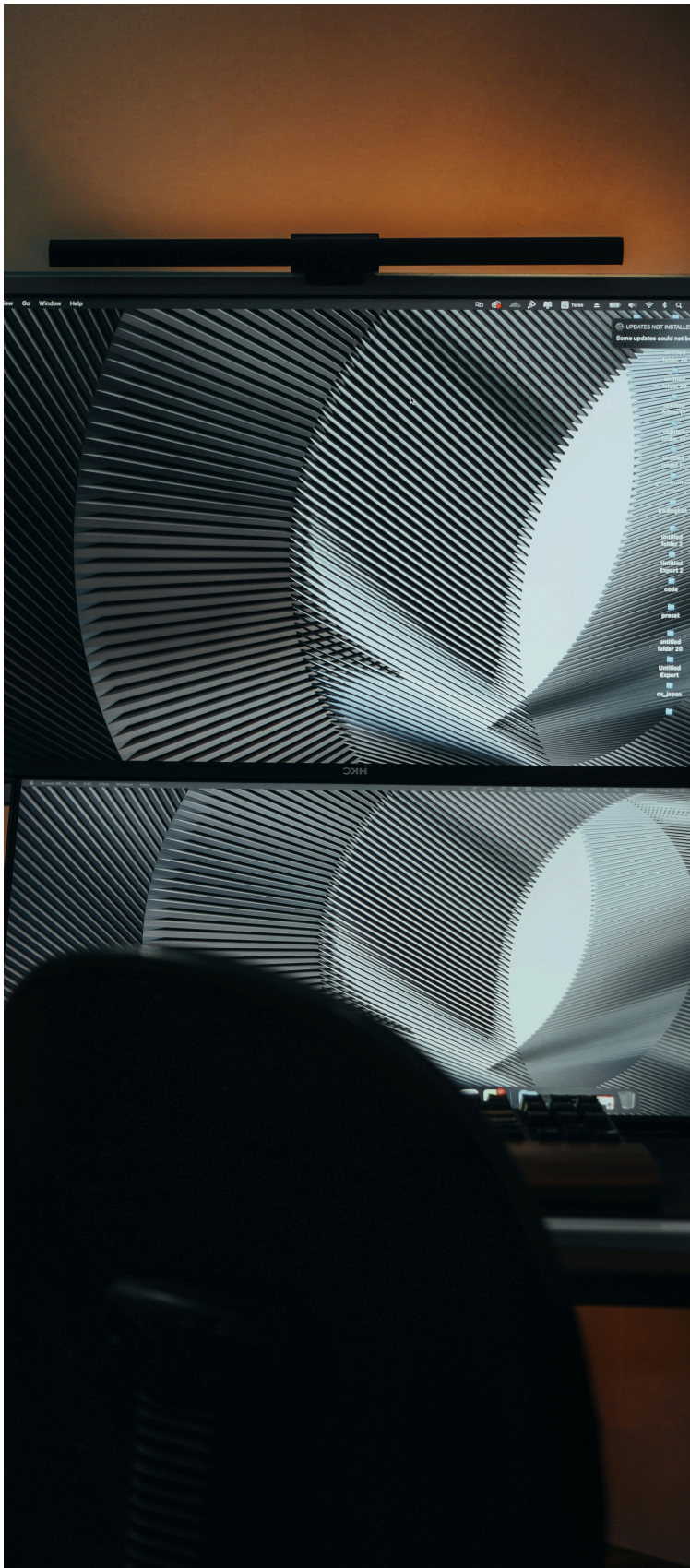
Bio-Innovation: Startups in mRNA, neuroprosthetics, and wearables are redefining health tech



INDIA'S DEEP TECH LEAP

India is at a tipping point. With over 10,000 startups working across frontier tech—including semiconductors, space tech, AI chips, and biotech—the country is fast emerging as a global hub for science-led innovation. Government missions like Startup India, DPIIT's Deep Tech Initiative, and financial support from bodies like SIDBI, DRDO, and BIRAC are accelerating the transformation.

Deep tech has long been perceived as an investor's paradox—intellectually irresistible, yet fraught with technology. “The Indian deep tech ecosystem is entering a golden decade,” says Shantanu Ghosh, founder of a Bengaluru-based robotics company. “We now have the talent, capital, and political will aligned.”



Looking Ahead: From Code to Core

This is more than a tech trend—it's a civilization shift. While deep tech may not go viral like delivery apps, it holds the potential to redefine energy grids, cure diseases, defend nations, and feed the world. For India, deep tech is not just an opportunity. It's a national imperative. The race has begun—and those who build boldly and invest patiently will not just witness change. They'll engineer it.

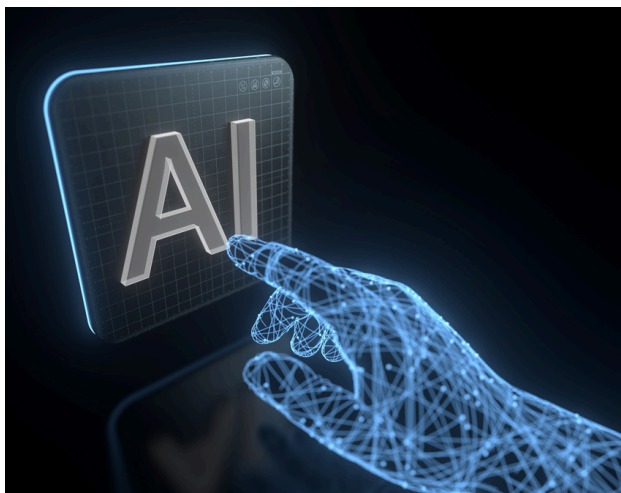
India is uniquely positioned to lead this deep tech revolution. With a massive pool of STEM talent, a thriving startup ecosystem, and government-backed initiatives like the National Deep Tech Startup Policy, the groundwork is being laid for breakthroughs in quantum computing, semiconductors, space tech, and biotech. Strategic investments, coupled with strong academic-industry linkages, can catalyze solutions not just for India, but for the world—from climate resilience to affordable healthcare.

But to truly seize this moment, India must go beyond slogans and startup counts. It needs patient capital, supportive regulations, and world-class research infrastructure. Deep tech is a long game—it requires faith in founders who may take years to go from lab to market. If India gets this right, it won't just be a consumer of global innovation. It will be its crucible. The future won't just happen here. It will be built here.

The Founder's Digest

This Month's Must-Reads from FounderLabs

11 TECH STARTUPS YOU WISH YOU'D THOUGHT OF FIRST



Starting a tech company in India can feel overwhelming, but the right idea paired with seed funding, angel investors, or crowd-funding can lead to sustainable success. From telehealth and EdTech to fintech and IoT, today's most promising tech startup ideas offer real-world solutions. With lean startup strategies, expert mentorship, and a strong business plan, turning your vision into a profitable venture is more achievable than ever.

<https://founderlabs.in/11-best-profitable-tech-startup-ideas-for-beginners-in-india/>



9 SECRETS RECIPES TO BUILD BETTER CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS

Before your first funding round or your 100th download, there's one asset that can make or break your startup: trust. In a world overflowing with products and pitches, the startups that thrive aren't always the ones with the biggest budgets—but the ones that build the strongest customer connections. So, how do you turn curious users into loyal advocates? It all begins with a conversation.

<https://founderlabs.in/9-proven-ways-to-build-better-customer-relationships/>



WHAT 2025 HOLDS FOR THE EMERGING D2C STARTUPS IN INDIA

India's D2C boom is rewriting the rules of brand-building. From AI-driven growth hacks to creator-first strategies, discover how brands like Wakefit and Mamaearth are scaling with speed and purpose. These stories unpack the trends, tactics, and tools powering India's \$100B direct-to-consumer wave.

Building a D2C brand worth watching?

<https://founderlabs.in/what-2025-holds-for-the-emerging-d2c-startups-in-india/>

NPCI GEARS UP FOR A GAME-CHANGER IN DIGITAL PAYMENTS

NPCI is set to revolutionize online payments with 'UPI Meta', a new feature allowing users to save their UPI ID on e-commerce platforms for quicker checkouts. Much like saved card details, this will streamline the UPI payment process by reducing friction during repeat transactions. Currently under discussion and pending RBI approval, UPI Meta could significantly enhance user experience, boost e-commerce conversions, and align UPI with global digital payment standards. A smoother, smarter UPI journey might soon be here.

<https://founderlabs.in/npci-plans-to-launch-upi-meta-to-simplify-online-payments/>



BEYOND THE BUZZ: NIKHIL KAMATH SPILLS WHAT'S REALLY BREWING

In a world obsessed with chasing unicorns, Nikhil Kamath stands out for his clarity and candor. Through initiatives like WTF – What's the Future and a push for non-dilutive funding, the Zerodha co-founder champions authenticity, purpose, and community-driven innovation. His mantra? "Know yourself before you build anything." From redefining sustainability to democratizing startup wisdom, Kamath is guiding India's founders to build with soul—not just scale.

<https://founderlabs.in/why-now-is-the-best-time-to-build-in-india-nikhil-kamath-breaks-it-down/>



FROM SHARK TANK TO SUCCESS: STARTUPS THAT MADE IT BIG IN INDIA



India's startup boom is being fueled by Shark Tank India, government initiatives, and increasing startup funding. Success stories like Skippi Ice Pops, Brainwired, and Revamp Moto show how startups can scale with the right mix of innovation, angel investors, and mentorship. Platforms like AngelList Venture, Google for Startups, and SeedInvest Technology are helping founders secure seed funding and grow. With rising trends in AI startups, sustainable businesses, and health tech, this is the best time to turn your startup idea into a thriving business.

<https://founderlabs.in/from-shark-tank-to-success-startups-that-made-it-big-in-india/>

Startup Mahakumbh 2025: A Statement of India's Startup Resolve



“ The genius in you is what makes startups successful. I see a future entrepreneur in everyone. ”

- PM Modi

When over 3,000 startups, 1,000 investors, and tens of thousands of innovators gathered at Startup Mahakumbh 2025 at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, it wasn't just another start-up expo—it was India staking its claim on the global innovation map. The event, themed around 10 thematic pavilions—from ClimateTech and FinTech to Defence & Space—highlighted not just scale, but substance. Founders displayed cutting-edge solutions: AI-powered brain wearables, EV tractors, defence-grade surveillance drones, and climate-resilient agriculture tools.

The India Fintech Foundation was officially launched during the event, marking a significant milestone in creating a self-regulated, innovation-driven fintech environment. Backed by top policymakers like Amitabh Kant and former RBI Deputy Governor NS Vishwanathan, the foundation aims to enable a sustainable fintech ecosystem by promoting ethical growth and regulatory harmony. Shri Amardeep Bhatia, Secretary, DPIIT, made it a point to visit emerging ventures, including those from the SCO Pavilion, emphasizing India's growing international collaboration in innovation.



Dukaandari hi karni hai?

Union Minister Piyush Goyal's fiery comments questioning whether Indian startups were content with just delivery and gaming apps stirred debate. "Do we only want to be dukaandars?" he asked, contrasting India's consumer internet dominance with China's deep-tech strides.

The comment was divisive. Zepto CEO Aadit Palicha pushed back: "It's easy to criticize consumer internet. But local champions are essential for creating free cash flow and reinvestment." Mohandas Pai went further, challenging policymakers to walk the talk on deep-tech support: "Don't belittle startups if you're not enabling them with long-term capital."

Goyal, however, followed up with praise after visiting pavilions the next day, acknowledging the world-class technologies built by India's youth. The event wasn't just noise. Real innovations stood out that include:

- **Saarathi Labs** launched a low-cost, AI-based diagnostic device for rural healthcare.



Bharat Meets India: From AgriTech to D2C

Pavilions dedicated to AgriTech and D2C brands saw strong interest. Startups like KhetVikalp, which uses AI for soil testing for small farmers, attracted MoUs and serious investor queries.

Meanwhile, the Mobility Pavilion buzzed with EV battery-swapping startups and cold-chain solutions. As GreenRide founder Nitin Gupta put it, "This is where defence engineers and agri entrepreneurs sit at the same table. That's the real win."

Startup Mahakumbh 2025 wasn't just a snapshot of India's startup energy—it was an X-ray of where we stand and where we need to go. Yes, food delivery and fantasy gaming apps were present. But so were precision drones, rural diagnostics, and climate tools. This was design, grit, and ambition—Indian style. If India wants to build the next generation of global-scale startups, the lessons from Mahakumbh are clear: Celebrate all innovation, fund the bold bets, and back entrepreneurs not just with applause—but with capital and conviction.

Fintech Milestone

The India Fintech Foundation launch was a landmark moment. With a vision for ethical growth and better policy alignment, it could redefine fintech's future in India. IndiaP2P co-founder Neha Juneja called it "a game-changer—especially for women-led fintechs."

CMD Business Club hosts networking event in Noida

CMD Business Club (earlier known as CEO Business Club) ,an exclusive networking platform for business leaders, CEOs, and directors, successfully hosted its first offline event on "Business Networking and Product Presentation" at Hotel Mosaic, Noida on 18th April 2025. The event brought together a dynamic group of entrepreneurs, industry experts, and innovators to connect, collaborate, and foster growth. The event commenced with a traditional lamp-lighting ceremony and a welcome address by Durai Kandasamy, Founder, CMD Business Club and Pramodd Kumarh, Co-founder CMD Business Club who shared the platform's vision to unite diverse leadership voices under one community of excellence and growth.





CMD Business Club

The next talk was delivered by Dr Sanjay Jindal, a successful entrepreneur who mesmerized the audience. He shared personal lessons from his journey and how his willpower transformed his path to success. Speaking on the occasion, he said, "It is a wonderful collection of CEOs, and we are humbled and grateful to Mr. Pramodd Kumar and Mr. Durai for creating such a platform where diversified CEOs can contribute to each other, to society, and the country at large."

The event started with an insightful presentation from Debasis Satapathy, a renowned motivational speaker and CGM – HR, NBCC Delhi. Drawing parallels from the lessons of Mahabharata, Satapathy illustrated how our epic narrative offers timeless lessons in leadership and management.

The session covered a wide range of topics including Strategic Thinking and Result Orientation, Empathy and Conflict Management, Talent Identification and Management, Planning and Organizing, Resilience and Perseverance, Proactive Leadership, and Delegation.

He also spoke about ten key characters of Mahabharat and the lessons we can learn from them, brought to life through animated visuals and video clips from the epic.



Dr Sanjay Jindal further added "Entrepreneurship is a game, when you play not to fail, you fail more. Success is easy; don't fear playing. Don't stay in your comfort zone—always have some pain. Pain is the path to success. Play to set new standards, maintain your standards, and success will follow you"

The event also featured business presentations by participating CEOs and founders from diverse industries, including - Vimal Kumar (Kiosks Infotouch Solution), Manoj Pal (Founderlabs Media) Neeraj Singh (XSOL Data), Pramodd Kumar (CEO Business Club), Ms. Smily B Vennikal (SkillBar), Prashant Mishra (Alpha Max Series), Arun Mishra (Inspire Technology), Anantesh Saxena (Saxena Technology), Mudit Goel (Dowin Solutions), Vinay Kumar Singh (BAAZ ERP Solutions), Mr. Ajay Bhat (UEDUCATE), Sanjay Jindal (SJ Security Systems P Ltd – SECOM) Arvind Pachouri (Agreetech Noida), Mahendra Taneja (Ekkaa Technologies), Ashish Mishra (BluPrints), Dhanveer Chauhan and Pankaj Sharma (Mieux Display Pvt Limited), Vinayak Jha (Propickle Technologies), and Chirag Arora (Pulse Promote Digital Marketing Agency/Clip Trust).

FOUNDERLABS WAS THE OFFICIAL MEDIA PARTNER FOR THE EVENT. DEDICATED TO SPOTLIGHTING THE JOURNEYS OF INDIAN START-UP FOUNDERS AND ENTREPRENEURS, THE PLATFORM PROVIDES VALUABLE INSIGHTS INTO START-UP STORIES, FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES, AND EMERGING INDUSTRY TRENDS.

Ms. Smily, wcommanding stage presence and operational finesse brought a distinct energy to the event. A seasoned business transformation expert with rich industry experience, she held the audience's attention with her graceful transitions and



sharp wit, reflecting the precision and excellence that define her professional stature.

The event concluded with a commitment to building a forward-looking, collaborative ecosystem for entrepreneurship and innovation. Our collective efforts will lay the foundation for a strong startup ecosystem—one that contributes meaningfully to national development and drives sustainable growth for the future," stated Pramodd Kumarh, Co-founder of CEO Business Club.

WHY EVERY CEO SHOULD BECOME A BRAND?



In today's hyper-connected and trust-deficit world, your company isn't just what it builds, sell or funds—it's what you, as a leader, stand for. Welcome to the era where your personal brand is your company's biggest asset. Whether you're leading a Fortune 500 enterprise or launching your first start-up from a coworking hub, your personal brand is the magnet that attracts talent, investors, media, and most importantly—trust. It's the story that led your pitch deck, the credibility behind your product demo, and the edge that no algorithm can replicate.

“

YOUR PERSONAL BRAND IS A PROMISE... A PROMISE OF QUALITY, CONSISTENCY, COMPETENCY, AND RELIABILITY.

”



What Does It Really Take?

It requires a consistent communication cadence, where CEOs or founders show up online—not just to promote products but to share insights, question norms, celebrate others, and speak with authenticity. LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, and even Substack aren't just social platforms anymore. They're stages.

Done well, personal branding builds thought leadership and emotional proximity—two critical assets in a world where attention spans are short and trust is hard-earned.

India is already seeing a new wave of leader-creators—think Nithin Kamath (Zerodha), Namita Thapar (Emcure), Peyush Bansal (Lenskart), and Aman Gupta. Each one represents a different archetype, but they share one thing in common: they make their companies feel human.

CEOs must learn to communicate, not just lead

In the start-up world, product-market fit is essential. But so is the founder-audience fit.

The founder who can write with clarity, listen with intent, and speak with purpose is already ahead. Personal branding is not about being perfect—it's about being present. Be visible. Be consistent. Be valuable.

Because in the end, people don't follow companies. They follow leaders with a voice.

What's in it for You?

Here's what an intentional personal brand can unlock for a founder or CEO:

- **Brand Trust:** People trust people more than products. A strong personal brand builds confidence in your business and product offerings.
- **Business Visibility:** It gives your start-up or scale-up the face and voice it needs to stand out in a crowded marketplace.
- **Investor Magnetism:** Investors back founders they believe in. A visible, thoughtful founder earns that belief faster.
- **Community and Collaboration:** From government stakeholders to customers and partners, a personal brand fosters relationships beyond transactional.



Beyond the Logo: The CEO is the Face of the Business

Let's be clear: personal branding is no longer the domain of influencers or celebrity entrepreneurs. It is a core leadership function. Let us take the example of Aman Gupta, the face of boAt, a trendsetting wearable brand in the country.

Today, digital storytelling amplifies what leaders have always known: people buy from people.

While the company boasts over ₹3,000 crore in annual sales, it's Aman's relatable presence, public storytelling, and Shark Tank persona that have built a deep emotional connect with India's youth. People don't just buy boAt; they buy into Aman or look at Anand Mahindra, whose Twitter account reads like a masterclass in leadership communication. He doesn't just promote products; he promotes values—

curiosity, inclusivity, innovation. In doing so, he has built not just a personal following, but an aura that elevates the Mahindra brand at every turn. The ethos, values, and views expressed in his posts have helped him emerge as a thought leader.

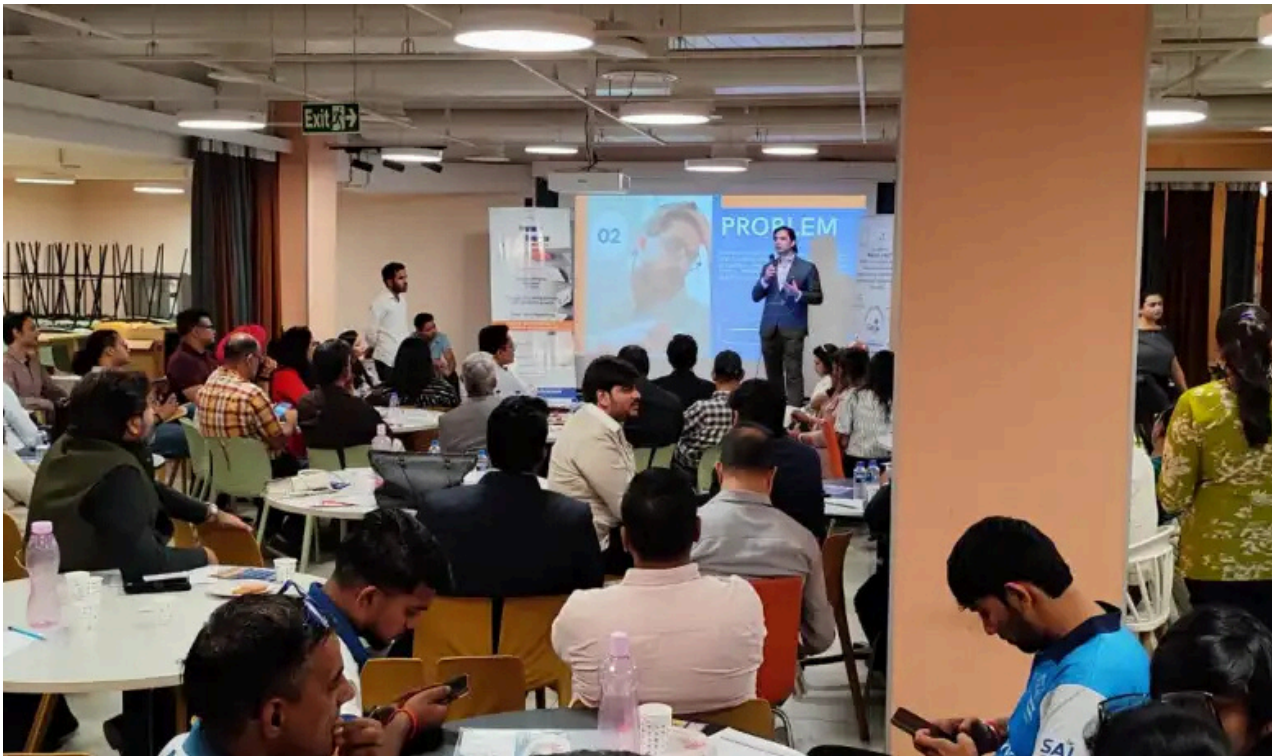
Personal branding is, however, not a new concept. Customers have always preferred to buy from businesses owned by people with integrity or sound values. Brand Ratan Tata has always stood for honesty, empathy, quality, and guarantee. And that is why the businesses run by the Tata Group are doing well.

Personal branding isn't a new phenomenon—it's just finally being acknowledged as strategic currency. Ratan Tata didn't need viral videos or viral hashtags. His values did the talking. Honesty. Humility. Humanity. Even today, 'Brand Tata' evokes trust not because of flashy campaigns, but because of the man behind the mission.

Impact Confluence by Guftagu: Where Conversations Spark Change

Powered by People: The Team That Made It Happen

Behind every great event is a hardworking team, and Impact Confluence was no exception. From conceptualizing the vision to flawlessly executing every detail, the organizing team—comprising Pankaj Chaumal, Pranam Jain, Vibha Jain, Tarveen Kaur, Tanya, Vinita Jagdish Singh, and Apoorva Verma—poured their dedication and time into creating an atmosphere that was welcoming, meaningful, and inspiring.





In an era where networking often feels transactional, Guftagu's Impact Confluence offered a refreshing alternative—an inspiring evening of meaningful connections, purposeful dialogue, and recognition of those creating real-world impact. Held under the thoughtful leadership of Rahul Jain and CA Priyanka Jain, the event brought together over 70 professionals, entrepreneurs, and social change agents at 91 Springboard, Gurgaon. The confluence stood as a powerful testament to how relationships—when built on authenticity and intent—can become catalysts for transformation.

Celebrating Leaders with Purpose

The highlight of the evening was a stirring tribute to leaders who have not only excelled in their respective fields but have done so with a deep sense of purpose and social responsibility. Among them was Navratan Aggarwal, the visionary Director of BikanerVala, whose legacy blends tradition with innovation, and Sunil Bohra, CFO at Uno Minda, widely respected for his strategic foresight in the manufacturing and automotive sector. Also honored was Raj Chetan, National Head at Niva Bupa, recognized for steering health insurance into a more inclusive territory.

The event also acknowledged Payal Garg, Co-founder of Afsir Connect LLP, a driving force behind digital transformation in HR and learning spaces, and Shubham Maheshwari, the founder of Being Chef, who is reshaping food tech with customer-centric models. From corporate leadership to startup excellence, every honoree represented a unique voice in India's evolving business ecosystem—whether it was Sachin Tiwari of Magic Pin, who champions human capital; PC Jain of Great Eastern IDTECH Pvt Ltd., known for his innovations in access technology; or Praveen Ranka, Chairperson of JITO Faridabad, for fostering entrepreneurship with ethics.

FounderLabs is proud to feature Guftagu's Impact Confluence as a model for how India's professional networks can evolve: grounded in values, driven by community, and focused on building a future where business success and social good go hand in hand.

Spotlighting Social Change and Human Spirit

Beyond industry accolades, Impact Confluence also shone a light on those making quiet, consistent efforts to uplift society. The Radhika Foundation, known for its work with children on the autism spectrum, was honored for its compassionate approach to inclusive education. Jashoda Anath Ashram, which provides a nurturing home for orphans, was also acknowledged for its continued commitment to care. Representing the Lakshya Bhartee Foundation, Mr. Kamal Kumar was celebrated for his tireless work in education and grassroots development. A particularly moving moment came when children from India's Special Olympics team were felicitated for their international achievements.

Behind the Magic: Partners and Collaborators

The event's success was also shaped by the generous collaboration of partners and supporters. Ms. Jyotsna The list of inspiring figures continued with Ashish Singla from NatWest Group, who is redefining corporate finance with a global outlook; IAS officer Nikita Jain, celebrated for her dedication to governance; Jagdish Singh of Morris Garages India, known for bringing accountability and rigor to internal audits; Santosh Jha, who leads learning and development at WAISL (GMR Group), known for building future-ready teams; and Sanjay Banerjee from the National Book Trust of India, a staunch advocate of literacy and cultural dialogue. These leaders were not just recognized for professional success—but for the integrity, inspiration, and impact they bring to their communities.

Bhel of Mohan Ghee & Morhav enriched the occasion as the gifting partner, while podcast host Rashmi Khanna of Kya Matlab brought thoughtful conversation to the fore. Public Relations was led by Mr. Paras Kochar, and Media Coverage was powered by Mr. Manoj Pal. Each of these contributors brought their own value to the table—not only through sponsorships or branding but by enhancing the experience with their expertise and engagement.

Vastu Mitra presenters Abhisek Tiwari and Rahul Vadera were also crowd favorites, winning hearts with their thoughtful presentations and authentic energy that resonated with the audience.



Free Tools

To Fuel Productivity

Starting a business means wearing multiple hats—founder, marketer, designer, accountant, and more. For early-stage entrepreneurs, every rupee matters, and making smart decisions about tools and resources can dramatically impact growth. Leveraging free, high-performing tools not only saves money but also streamlines operations, enhances productivity, and accelerates progress.

One of the best tools to manage the chaos is **Notion**, an all-in-one workspace that combines note-taking, task management, databases, and collaboration features. Whether you're managing product roadmaps or writing investor updates, **Notion** makes it all accessible from a single interface. Likewise, **Trello** helps you visualize your workflows using boards and cards, making project management simpler for individuals or small teams.



“Resourcefulness beats resources. Use what's free, make it work, and build from there. You don't need to raise a million to build a million-dollar business. You just need the right tools and mindset.”

Design, Build, and Communicate Without a Big Budget

Design is key to brand perception, and with **Canva**, even non-designers can create sleek pitch decks, social media posts, and marketing material. For building interfaces or prototypes, Figma offers collaborative design functionality that's especially useful for tech and product-led startups. When it

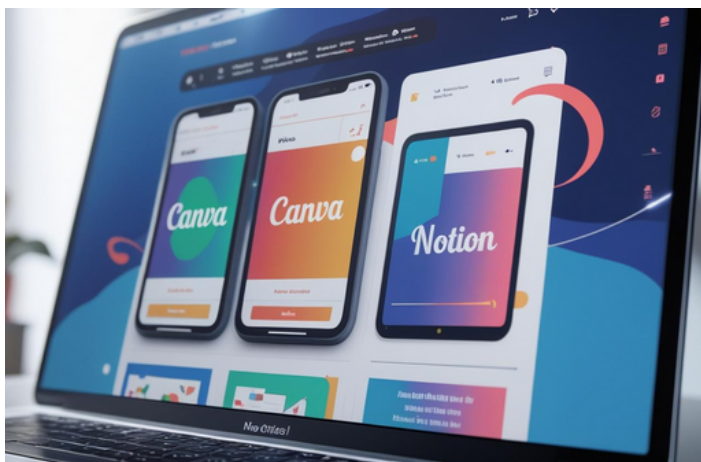
comes to daily operations, the free version of **Google Workspace** gives access to Gmail, Docs, Sheets, Slides, and Forms—tools essential for running lean.

Automate and Analyze Like a Pro

Automation is every founder's best friend. **Zapier** connects your favorite apps and automates repetitive tasks like sending reminders, syncing databases, or collecting leads. **Clockify** helps you track how you spend your time—valuable data when every hour counts. Meanwhile, **Answer the Public** visualizes real-time Google search queries, helping you uncover your audience's burning questions and guiding your content or product decisions.



Creating an interesting, informative, and easy-to-read magazine article is something that every publication needs to know, regardless of their specific themes and topics. Usually, a magazine article can discuss trending topics and themes, or more specific ones such as geography, cuisine, fashion, music, and other fields in interest.



Grow and Nurture Customer Relationships

Your first 100 users are often your most critical. That's where **HubSpot CRM** shines—letting you manage contacts, track deals, and organize communications, all for free. To nurture those leads, **Mailchimp** allows you to run email campaigns, build landing pages, and automate workflows with ease, supporting up to 500 subscribers on its free plan.

Tips To Balance Your Job With Your Entrepreneurial Journey

Did you know that nearly 30% of working Indians have a side hustle?

According to a report by Randstad India, these passion projects often serve as the first step toward full-time entrepreneurship.

For many, starting a business while managing a full-time job is a bold but challenging path. You're balancing your career, personal commitments, and a new venture—all of which can easily lead to burnout or setbacks if not managed carefully. Whether you're chasing a lifelong dream or building a source of extra income, finding harmony between your job and your side hustle is crucial to avoid stress and sustain long-term growth.



Balancing a 9-to-5 with your personal venture begins with intentional time management. Rather than squeezing work into spare hours, side hustlers create structured routines. Early mornings, late evenings, or focused weekend blocks become sanctuaries for creativity.

India's entrepreneurial wave is no longer just about unicorns and VCs. It's about the silent builders, the midnight coders, and the weekend hustlers. If you're one of them, remember: balance isn't a luxury—it's your launchpad.

Overcoming Challenges and Staying Motivated

Balancing a job and a startup isn't easy. Embrace a growth mindset: view obstacles as opportunities to learn. Celebrate small wins to stay motivated and prevent burnout by prioritizing self-care. Exercise or mindfulness recharges your energy, helping you maintain enthusiasm and focus.

Master Time Management



Effective time management starts with prioritizing tasks by urgency and importance. Use tools like the Eisenhower Matrix to identify what truly matters. Block out specific times—morning, lunch, or evening—for business tasks and treat them as fixed appointments to build discipline and consistency.

Build a Strong Support System



Build a strong support network—family, friends, mentors, or peers—to stay motivated and gain fresh insights. Delegate where possible; outsource admin tasks or hire freelancers to focus your energy on strategic growth.

Stay Financially Savvy



Starting a business while employed offers financial stability, but planning is vital. Make a budget for startup and ongoing costs. Keep personal and business finances balanced. Consider funding options like loans or crowdfunding to boost resources without risking personal security.

**"Start where you are.
Use what you have.
Do what you can."**

– Arthur Ashe



Leverage Technology and Automation

Leverage technology to simplify operations. Use tools like Trello or Asana to stay organized, and automate tasks like emails or social posts. Cloud platforms like Google Workspace boost collaboration and let you manage your business from anywhere.



Plan Your Transition Carefully

Transitioning from employee to full-time entrepreneur needs a clear plan. Set milestones like financial goals, product launches, or customer targets to mark readiness. Regularly review progress and stay flexible, adapting your plan as needed.



Founder Spotlight

FretBox

Q1. 1. What inspired the idea behind FretBox?

It all began with a visit to a university hostel during a relative's admission. What seemed like a routine visit turned into a moment of realization—we witnessed the administrative hustle first-hand and saw the opportunity for technology to bring structure and ease. That is when my Co-Founder, Pranjul suggested us to Pivot our society management solution to University Hostels.

Q2. What motivated you to turn the idea into a real-world venture and launch FretBox?

After spending 12 years in a corporate world, I realised I was missing the joy of creating something I would love. In my job, I had projects, challenging too, which got completed, however that did not bring, the success or joy to me. So I decided to be an entrepreneur. Now the challenges were bigger, that pushed me every day.

Every startup begins with a spark—an observation, a frustration, a possibility. For the founders of FretBox, that spark came during a routine visit to a university hostel. What started as a casual encounter soon evolved into a purpose-driven mission: to transform the chaotic world of campus living into a smarter, streamlined experience.

*In this candid conversation, we speak with **Ashish Gupta**, the driving force behind FretBox—a rising startup redefining hostel management across India's universities. From navigating early pivots and personal sacrifices to raising Rs 1.5 crore in funding with sheer conviction, the FretBox journey is one of resilience, reinvention, and relentless execution.*

Read on as the founder shares the why, how, and what next of FretBox—and offers honest advice for every aspiring entrepreneur building in the ed-tech and infra-tech space.



Ashish Gupta, CEO - FretBOX



Q3. Has FretBox ever pivoted its business model or focus? If yes, what was the reason and what changes did you make?

Absolutely. In fact, we have pivoted twice. We originally started as a complaint management solution for government of Jharkhand. Later, we transitioned into society management for residential complexes that finally turned to a India's best Hostel management solution for Universities.

Q4. At what stage did you realize the need for external funding, and how did you approach it?

In the early stages, I invested everything I had—and lost it all. When I quit my job to focus full time on FretBox, I had only loans, no savings to cover me. That's when I turned to friends and family for support. Since I had gone all in, few friends noticed that I will not stop now, and joined the mission to support. Anmol Gupta a friend and CTO Yaantra, took biggest bet and investment started and we were able to raise INR 1.5 cr to prove our conviction.

Q5. What keeps you motivated as a founder, especially during challenging phases?

Failure taught me the value of visible, achievable goals. We broke our journey down into smaller targets—milestones that could be tracked and celebrated. We turned planning into progress to keep us motivated.

Q6. What have been some of the biggest challenges you've faced building FretBox, and how did you overcome them?

Team is the most important pillar of building. With limited resources in hand, we could not hire the best talent available. I needed to build a team of expert our own way, guiding them on how to build and how to sell, how much to response and how to prioritize things.



Learn the ground challenges of your users, feedback oriented development seems slow to begin however it lasts longer.

- Ashish Gupta, CEO

Q7. How do you see the market for FretBox evolving in the next 3-5 years?

Indian educational infrastructure is not just booming, however revamping. Education leaders are investing a good amount of money in upgrading modern infrastructure in hostels with amenities for students. Some of the universities also host upto 35000 students in hostels, that like a city. This growth is inspiring other to stay invested in growth of Indian education sector.

Q8. Can you share a key customer or user story that validated your solution?

Dr Dhruv Galgotia, CEO of Galgotia University became not just our early believer however the fastest one. His vision of having the best technology infrastructure for Galgotia's University stands out. Kalinga Institute of Industrial technology is our biggest deployment to date with 23000 student users and 500+ admin, the scale is really impactful

Q9 What advice would you offer to startup founders who are building in this space

Ans: Learn the ground challenges of your users, feedback-oriented development seems slow to begin however it lasts longer.

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