Walmart Wants to Help U.S. Entrepreneurs Get Their Products on Its Shelves. Here's How to Get Your Stuff in the Door.

If you are an entrepreneur with American-made products, Walmart wants to help you go big.

Axios reports that Walmart shared details of its new "Grow with US" program, designed to make it "easier for U.S.-based entrepreneurs to navigate the complexities of retail and bring their products to a national stage."

Related: Walmart Is Paying Some Delivery Drivers to Verify Their Identities. Here's Why.

It is a four-step program that gives entrepreneurs training, mentorship, and resources needed to grow with the company, John Furner, Walmart U.S. president and CEO, told Axios.

On Walmart's corporate site, the program is outlined in four steps: education and e-learning modules; opportunities to get discovered through open calls and Walmart Marketplace; mentorship time with experts; and the ability to apply for financing options.

Furner told Axios that in 2024, more than 60% of Walmart's suppliers were small businesses.

How to Get Your Product in Walmart

If you want to get your stuff on their shelves, the first step is to register with Walmart as a small business. You'll need to supply a voluntary SBA certification or request small business verification through Walmart.

The company also announced that applications for its annual Open Call event will open June 24, 2025. Open Call allows U.S.-based small and medium-sized businesses to pitch their shelf-ready, made, grown, or assembled in America products to Walmart and Sam's Club merchants.

The main Open Call will take place October 7-8, 2025, in Bentonville, Arkansas, but there will also be "pop-up pitch events" where entrepreneurs can get feedback and possibly land a spot at the main event. Check out Walmart's Road to Open Call schedule to see if you can pitch in at a local event.

https://www.entrepreneur.com/business-news/walmart-program-aims-to-help-us-small-businesses/490882

'Gradually Stop Using Contractors': Duolingo Is Replacing Contract Workers With AI

Duolingo is adopting an "AI-first" approach to its business, and the language learning platform will reduce its reliance on human contract workers as it assigns AI their responsibilities.

In a memo to employees on Monday, Duolingo CEO Luis von Ahn detailed the company's official "AI-first" stance.

"AI is already changing how work gets done," Ahn wrote in an email publicly shared through Duolingo's LinkedIn account. "When there's a shift this big, the worst thing you can do is wait."

As part of its AI-first strategy, Duolingo will shift workloads from contractors to AI and "gradually stop using contractors to do work that AI can handle," per the email. The company will also reward AI use in hiring new employees and in performance reviews of existing employees. Teams will additionally only be permitted to hire new members if the group cannot automate the work.

Related: 'Make Chess as Accessible as Possible': Duolingo's Next Move Is Teaching Users How to Play Chess

Duolingo has eliminated contract workers in favor of AI before. Last year, the company cut 10% of its contractors after reportedly deciding to use AI for translations.

However, Ahn reassured staff in the email that "Duolingo will remain a company that cares deeply about its employees," and that being AI-first wasn't about "replacing" workers with AI but about allowing existing employees to focus on creative work and problem-solving over repetitive tasks. The company said that it would support staff with full-time staff training, mentorship, and AI tools.

Duolingo CEO Luis von Ahn. Photo by Kevin Dietsch/Getty Images

Ahn also explained why Duolingo was choosing to go all-in on AI now. He stated in the email that Duolingo bet big on mobile in 2012, focusing on creating a mobile-first app at a time when mobile apps were primarily companions for full-fledged websites. The move worked out well: Duolingo's app won the 2013 iPhone App of the Year with 10 million downloads and grew organically after that. Now, Duolingo has over 500 million registered users.

"This time the platform shift is AI," he wrote in the email.

Related: 'Get 100X the Work Done': Shopify CEO Tells Employees to Try AI to Get Work Done Before Asking for More Human Workers

Duolingo is focusing on AI by using it to create content and power features like Video Call, which Duolingo introduced in September. Video Call allows learners to practice speaking in their target language through a video chat with an AI character named Lily.

Duolingo isn't the first company to recently announce an AI-first strategy. Earlier this month, Shopify CEO Tobias Lutke told all employees in a memo that "using AI effectively is now a fundamental expectation of everyone at Shopify." Lutke told Shopify staff that they should maximize what they could do with AI before asking for more resources or additional human employees.

He also said that Shopify would add AI use questions to its performance and peer reviews.

Duolingo had a market capitalization of over $17 billion at the time of writing.

https://www.entrepreneur.com/business-news/duolingo-will-replace-contract-workers-with-ai-ceo-says/490812

This Gene Therapy Startup Wants to Change the Way We Age

Opinions expressed by Entrepreneur contributors are their own.

What if you could slow aging and improve your biological

function with a single 30-second shot? That's the promise behind Minicircle, a gene therapy startup with lofty ambitions. As Founder and CEO Mac Davis put it recently on the One Day with Jon Bier podcast: "We want to extend the length and quality of human life."

How the treatment works

Minicircle is best known for its therapy focused on the hormone follistatin, a naturally occurring protein that can increase muscle mass, improve recovery, and reduce inflammation. One injection, delivered into body fat, takes about 30 seconds and can last up to a year.

The treatments are not yet approved for use in the United States. So, patients must travel to countries such as Mexico and Honduras, where the company currently administers its gene therapy under medical supervision.

Related: **3 Biotech Innovators Advancing Genetic Therapies**

New approaches to aging

Follistatin is not only being studied for performance enhancement but also for its potential to impact aging. Some animal studies have suggested that it could extend lifespan by over 30%. While much of the research is still in its early stages, there are signs that it could increase lean muscle mass, decrease body fat, and improve overall quality of life.

"I noticed a shift in how I felt – more aware, more present," says Davis. "It wasn't just physical; it was a sense of clarity, of being more connected to my body and the world around me."

Davis believes that therapies like these represent a broader change in how we approach health: moving from symptom management to improving function proactively. "Gene therapy,

at its core, offers the possibility to address issues before they become problems, focusing on enhancing function rather than simply treating dysfunction," he explains.

Big-time backers

Minicircle doesn't operate like most biotech companies. Davis didn't go to business school or raise money through traditional channels. For a long time, no one would fund it.

"I didn't come from a family of businesspeople," he explains. "I didn't have any financial backing. We tried to do a crowdfund. We raised $400. The guy asked for it back later."

Then Sam Altman heard about it at a hotel bar and wrote a check. Peter Thiel was next. "I went there and I was like, hey, these are the vials. This is the idea. What do you think we should do with this?" Davis says. Thiel ended up talking for most of the meeting. He invested, too.

Minicircle used that support to build a small, highly specialized team. One of its lead scientists is a former NFL athlete who later earned a PhD in Molecular Medicine and Mechanisms of Disease. "He joined our clinical trial because he thought it would give him access to a next-generation gene therapy," Davis says. "Then he really liked it and he joined the team."

Related: This Is the Overlooked Industry You Should Start Investing in Now

The business of building the future

Minicircle's work sits at the intersection of science, ethics, and entrepreneurship. Davis is learning as he goes.

Since then, the stakes have only grown. So has his appreciation for what matters most.

“The cost of a bad relationship is bigger than I ever knew,” he says. “And the upside of a great one is even bigger.”

With patients already seeing results and more therapies in the pipeline, the mission stays simple: extend human potential—ethically, safely, and accessibly.

“Longevity isn’t about living forever,” Davis says. “It’s about having the freedom to live the way you want, for as long as possible.”

What’s next

Minicircle’s next therapy targets a different hormone: Klotho. It helps prevent calcification in arteries, kidneys, and the brain. “It reduces improper calcium buildup,” Davis says. “And that’s huge for heart health and longevity.”

The therapy is currently being tested abroad, since gene therapy remains tightly regulated in the U.S. But the company plans to apply for FDA clinical use later this year.

“We’re applying for approval from the FDA to clinically administer this in the U.S. by the end of the year,” he says.

https://www.entrepreneur.com/starting-a-business/this-gene-therapy-startup-wants-to-change-the-way-we-age/490813

How AI, Funding Cuts and Shifting Skills Are

Redefining Education — and What It Means for the Future of Work

Opinions expressed by Entrepreneur contributors are their own.

In recent weeks, the academic world has been rocked by news that billions of dollars in federal funding have been frozen or withdrawn from some of the most well-known universities in the country. These shifts have disrupted research, derailed planning and shaken the foundation of institutions long dependent on what now feels like a relic of the past: steady, unquestioned government funding.

But this moment is not just about budgets. It's about readiness.

The education system — particularly higher education — is being tested on all fronts: from declining enrollment to waning employer trust, from outdated course catalogs to rising student skepticism, and most powerfully, from the sudden and exponential rise of artificial intelligence.

As someone who's helped launch AI and emerging technology programs across the globe, established global innovation centers as hubs for learning and development and worked with companies on enterprise-wide reskilling, I believe this is not the time to panic. This is the time to rebuild.

We are at a historic inflection point. The old frameworks are fading. The future is already arriving — and it won't wait for us to catch up.

Related: How AI Is Transforming Education Forever — and What

It Means for the Next Generation of Thinkers

When memorization doesn’t make sense anymore

A few weeks ago, my 10-year-old son Matthew asked me why he had to memorize historical dates when ChatGPT could give him the answers instantly. He wasn’t complaining; he was confused. Why are we being taught to work around the very tools the real world expects us to use?

Then there’s my five-year-old, Zachary. He doesn’t “use” AI — he absorbs it.

He passively consumes answers from “Cha-Gi-PiPi” (that’s what he calls ChatGPT) like it’s a magical oracle. He taps the mic, asks it questions about trains or dinosaurs and trusts it completely. To him, this isn’t technology — it’s just how knowledge flows.

And that’s the point: He doesn’t question it, contextualize it or challenge it … yet. He’s growing up in a world where AI is normal, automatic and invisible. Which means we — as educators, innovators and lifelong learners — must teach the next generation not just how to *use* AI, but how to *think with it*.

Higher education is about to get out of sync — and everyone will feel it

U.S. undergraduate college enrollment has declined by more than two million students since 2010, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). In fall 2023 alone, enrollment dropped by another 0.6%, continuing a long-term downward trend.

At the same time, employers are steadily shifting toward skills-based hiring and micro-credentials. Meanwhile, learners are turning to YouTube, AI tools, bootcamps and virtual programs that meet them where they are.

This is not about convenience. It’s about alignment.

And while higher education has made major strides in response — particularly in online learning, industry credentials and AI exploration — many institutions are still operating within systems that were designed for a different era.

Related: Why We Must Reimagine Education in the Age of Technology

This isn’t just a tech shift — it’s a cognitive one

AI is not just another tool. It’s a new mental model. Students can now access real-time tutoring, instant content generation, personalized feedback and creative prompts with the swipe of a screen. For them, it’s not artificial — it’s ambient.

And yet, most education systems are stuck debating whether to ban it, regulate it or ignore it. The risk is that we’re preparing students for an analog world that no longer exists.

The World Economic Forum’s Future of Jobs Report 2025 estimates that 39% of core job skills will change by 2030, identifying analytical thinking, AI literacy and creativity as critical capabilities. These are not just resume boosters — they’re survival skills.

More importantly, the report makes one thing clear: We’re still educating for a workforce that no longer exists. One defined by static roles, predictable ladders and siloed knowledge. That era is over, and education must move forward accordingly.

5 imperatives for a better future of learning

As we face a convergence of AI acceleration, funding disruption and societal change, here are five urgent actions for leaders in education and innovation:

1. Integrate AI thoughtfully and systematically

Yes, schools should be teaching students how to use and challenge AI. And many already are — I'm fortunate to be collaborating with brilliant minds in academia who are actively piloting AI-powered tools, embedding them into classrooms and reframing what it means to learn.

But let's not minimize it: This is hard work. It requires rethinking pedagogy, redesigning assessments and helping educators become co-learners. The institutions leading this change won't just teach AI — they'll be transformed by it.

2. Redesign learning for exploration, not memorization

In a world where information is infinite, facts are just the beginning. The true value lies in asking better questions, connecting ideas and applying insight.

We must shift away from rote memorization toward curricula that nurture curiosity, agility and original thought. And yes, that means assessments have to evolve, too.

3. Scale co-innovation and cross-sector partnerships

Higher education must move beyond internships and advisory boards toward true co-creation with industry. That means working side-by-side with companies to build relevant, modular, real-world-aligned learning tracks.

These partnerships aren't new, but they've never been more necessary. The institutions that succeed will blur the line

between campus and career.

4. Use AI to humanize education, not just automate it

AI can streamline grading, flag struggling students, optimize course design and deliver real-time feedback. But its real power lies in what it frees educators to do: mentor, inspire and connect.

Let's use AI not to remove the teacher, but to elevate the teacher's role to its most human expression.

5. Champion innovation and entrepreneurship as core, not elective

Innovation and entrepreneurship aren't side projects. They're the engines of resilience. The students who can invent, adapt and build in uncertain conditions will lead every field — from biotech to business.

Every school should be a lab. Every campus, a studio. Because the future won't be handed to us — we'll have to build it.

Related: Why We Shouldn't Fear AI in Education (and How to Use It Effectively)

The Great Rethink begins now

That's why I'm launching a new four-part series here on Entrepreneur.com called "The Great Rethink: How AI Is Forcing the Reinvention of Education."

In the weeks ahead, I'll explore:

1. Why the current model is losing relevance — and what replaces it
2. Why change won't come from inside the system alone
3. What AI makes possible that education never could

4. How to rebuild education like a startup — agile, scalable and learner-centered

We are not here to preserve what was. We are here to reimagine what's next.

If you're a founder, educator, policymaker or learning and development professional, this is your moment. If you're building, exploring, experimenting — reach out. Share your vision. Ask your big questions.

Because who but us will reinvent education?

Not with wishful thinking. Not with course catalogs. And certainly not with the kind of funding we once assumed would always be there.

The future won't wait. And neither should we.

https://www.entrepreneur.com/science-technology/how-ai-is-redefining-education-and-the-future-of-work/489575

How to Lead Effectively When Everything Feels Fragile and Nothing Feels Certain

Opinions expressed by Entrepreneur contributors are their own.

Whether you're a seasoned investor or budding entrepreneur, it is clear that in today's turbulent world, instability is not

an exception — it's the norm, and we must have the tools and mindset to navigate this certain uncertainty.

Embrace adaptive decision-making

Market volatility, supply chain disruptions, team turnover and regulatory shifts are happening at a rapid pace in every industry, and these stressors can feel overwhelming, even existential.

But when we learn from leaders who have operated in some of the world's most fragile environments — conflict zones, post-crisis governments and unstable political systems — we find that such conditions are manageable, and from their experiences, we can draw profound lessons. The leaders who succeed in these environments are the ones who embrace uncertainty, build trust and adapt quickly to rapidly evolving circumstances.

Related: 4 Secrets to Unwavering Leadership Amidst Turbulent Times

Build trust to weather crises

Fragile business ecosystems require sensitive adaptability and fluidity. Rigid leadership styles often crack under pressure. Leaders who cling to certainty are quickly outpaced by complexity, while those who embrace adaptive leadership — rooted in learning, iteration and responsiveness — are better equipped for uncertainty. For entrepreneurs, this means moving away from static business plans and embracing agility. Set short-term priorities that allow for learning cycles. Use weekly retrospectives to evaluate what's working. Build feedback loops into your decision-making processes.

The ability to pivot quickly, while staying grounded in core values, is what sets resilient leaders apart. In high-risk

environments, trust is the foundation for rapid, effective collaboration.

Collaborative leadership thrives on mutual respect, psychological safety and open communication. As evidenced in modern approaches to “soft and hard” workplace leadership skills, do not wait for a crisis to start building trust. Create a culture of transparency today. Invite dissenting opinions. Share the “why” behind hard decisions. Across turbulent business, social and political landscapes, what I have seen time and time again is that when people feel heard and respected, they are far more likely to rally in difficult times. Trust, once established, becomes the invisible glue holding your organization together when external pressures mount.

Leverage diverse ideas to build resilience

In transitional governments and post-crisis rebuilding, effective leaders often rely on broad coalitions — civil society, the private sector, and diaspora communities — not just for representation, but as a strategic advantage. Diverse teams bring fresh perspectives, challenge assumptions and innovate under pressure. Entrepreneurs can apply this by hiring for cognitive and experiential diversity, building cross-functional teams and fostering a culture of ownership, reflection and shared purpose. The most resilient teams I’ve seen weren’t just skilled — they were united by something bigger than their job titles.

In my work with the World Bank’s Collaborative Leadership for Development program, we saw time and again that moments of acute crisis often opened up space for bold reforms — reforms that would have been politically impossible in calmer times. One example that demonstrates how adaptive leadership and collaborative trust can unlock progress under pressure comes

from one of our projects in Nigeria.

Related: The 4 Things Leaders Need to Do First When Faced With Uncertainty

Case study: Nigeria’s water reform

In Nigeria, easy access to groundwater and informal water markets made it hard for the government to collect tariffs and maintain infrastructure. We ran a workshop in Obudu with 50+ engineers, water commissioners, business and civil society leaders from six states to shift focus from technical fixes — like tariffs and meters — to adaptive challenges: ensuring payment and preventing water theft by addressing behavior change and stakeholder engagement. By the end of the program, teams had set 11-month goals, built action plans and crafted customized stakeholder messages. The success of these cross-functional teams contributed to national legislation reform on stakeholder engagement.

This example underscores how cross-sector collaboration, local buy-in and a shared sense of purpose can unlock large-scale systems change. The lessons here are just as relevant for startup founders as they are for policymakers: Deep listening, shared accountability and stakeholder trust are not optional in today’s fractured landscape — they’re essential.

See crisis as a catalyst

When old systems break down, new ideas can finally take root. Entrepreneurs should view crises not only as threats but as invitations to rethink outdated assumptions. Which processes can be streamlined? What technologies could you adopt now that seemed risky before? Who else needs to be involved in strengthening your team? Crisis forces clarity. Use it to your advantage.

It begins with me

One of the core components of what I teach global leaders is the importance of self-mastery. Leaders working in fragile environments often carry the emotional weight of their teams, communities and constituents. They must find ways to center themselves amid chaos. Similarly, entrepreneurs need practices that build inner resilience. Whether it's breathwork, meditation or structured time for reflection, grounding yourself enables you to find calm and focus – both of which are essential during times of stress.

Related: How to Stay Calm Under Pressure

Remember: As a leader, your team takes emotional cues from you. The steadier you are, the more stable your organization becomes.

A resilient team begins with each member cultivating self-mastery. Individual transformation is the foundation for systemic change. To foster true collaboration, leaders must empower their teams with the tools to find inner strength and hone leadership skills needed to navigate uncertainty.

Leading under pressure isn't about having all the answers. It's about having the humility to learn, the courage to act and the wisdom to bring others along. The entrepreneurs who can master these skills will not only weather the storm – they will reshape the landscape in its aftermath.

https://www.entrepreneur.com/leadership/how-to-lead-through-chaos-and-uncertainty/489925

Why Your Communication Flaws Are Quietly Costing You More Than You Think

Opinions expressed by Entrepreneur contributors are their own.

Business communication is changing faster than most people realize. It's not just evolving — it's being reinvented. And while some businesses are adapting in real time, others are stuck in systems that quietly bleed time, money and credibility.

If you're still dealing with missed calls from leads, scattered messages across platforms or a team that has to text each other to track who followed up with whom, you're already behind. And if you're spending time working around your tools instead of through them, your systems aren't just outdated — they're actively costing you.

Related: **The 3 Modes Needed for Good Communication**

What "Modern" communication actually means

You don't need to be technical to understand what a modern setup looks like. It means your calls, messages, meetings and files all live in one system that works wherever you do — on a laptop at home, a phone on the go or a desktop in the office.

This isn't about flashy features. It's about eliminating friction: no more chasing voicemails, waiting on IT or juggling six different apps just to get through the day.

Modern systems are also built to grow with you. You add new team members without rewiring anything. You open new locations without spinning up a separate tech stack. And if someone leaves, you don’t spend three days recovering their contacts and messages.

It’s flexible, it’s portable, and it works the way business actually works now.

The best part? You don’t need to overhaul everything in one day. You just need to start replacing the bottlenecks. Small upgrades compound fast when your team stops wasting time and your customers start getting what they need without jumping through hoops.

Why older tools hold you back

Picture this: a customer calls your office with a simple billing question. The person who picks up doesn’t have access to the information, so they transfer the call twice. Eventually, the customer gives up. Later, someone finally responds with the right answer, but the damage is done. That customer is already checking out a competitor.

Or imagine onboarding a new employee. You’ve ordered hardware, coordinated IT to configure their desk phone and sent a PDF of internal contacts. Their first few days are spent untangling who to call for what, while your competitors bring on new hires in hours with click-and-go systems and shared team directories.

Outdated systems don’t break all at once — they quietly slow everything down. Maybe your phone system can’t forward calls properly. Maybe a new hire waits a week to get set up. Maybe customers keep repeating themselves because no one can pull up their last conversation.

It’s the kind of dysfunction you only notice when you’ve

already lost the deal — or the employee.

And while these systems get more fragile with age, they also get more expensive to maintain. You're paying to be slower.

Worse, you're making it harder to pivot. Want to offer hybrid work? Want to expand customer service hours? Want to centralize team communications? Good luck with a setup that can't flex to match your goals.

Related: 3 Effective Communication Strategies That Will Transform Your Team

How automation and AI are quietly changing the game

Today's tools don't just connect people — they help manage the work between them. Automation handles things like routing calls, logging notes and sending follow-ups. AI can transcribe meetings, pull out action items, and even flag patterns in customer issues.

It's not about replacing people. It's about making sure your best people aren't buried in busywork.

This is especially important for founders and lean teams. You don't need to hire five more people to create a more responsive business. You need tools that reduce the noise so you can focus on what matters — like solving problems and closing deals.

What this looks like in practice

Let's say you run a boutique law firm. One of your paralegals works from home twice a week. A client calls with an urgent question about a case. With a modern system, the call routes directly to the right person's mobile app — no forwarding, no voicemail limbo. The paralegal picks up, answers immediately

and updates the case notes on the spot.

Or maybe you own a growing logistics business. You're opening a second location and need phone and messaging tools set up for five new team members. Instead of installing hardware, waiting on wiring or dealing with a vendor, you add users in your dashboard and they're live in minutes – no interruptions, no stress.

Imagine your team is spread across five cities. Everyone uses the same number. Calls and messages go to the right person instantly, wherever they are. A customer calls support, and instead of being bounced around, they get answers right away – because the system already knows who they talked to last week.

That's what modern communication looks like. It's not about bells and whistles. It's about less chaos.

And less chaos means more time, more trust and more growth.

Related: Think You're Talking Too Much? Read These 6 Brevity Hacks

How to start (even if you're not "techy")

You don't need a big rollout or a new department. Start with your most obvious pain point: slow response times, clunky tools, dropped calls. Find a platform that fixes that.

Then build from there.

This isn't about the latest software or the newest buzzword. It's about clarity. Control. The ability to move fast and communicate clearly, without tech slowing you down.

Modern communication gives you that. It makes things simpler when everything else is getting more complex. And it keeps you sharp when everyone else is stuck in catch-up mode.

The future is already here. The question is: are you still waiting to catch up to it?

https://www.entrepreneur.com/growing-a-business/why-communication-flaws-are-costing-you-more-than-you-think/489362

Today’s Biggest Companies Are Acting Like VCs. Here’s Why Startup Founders Need to Pay Attention.

Opinions expressed by Entrepreneur contributors are their own.

A few years ago, if you asked a founder what they thought about corporate capital, the answer would’ve been simple: *slow, bureaucratic and not worth the effort unless they’re trying to acquire you.* But that’s not how it works anymore.

We’re now seeing a shift that, frankly, would’ve seemed strange a decade ago — large corporations acting like VCs. They’re not just launching “innovation labs” for show, but building full-blown venture arms, growth studios and capital teams that operate with the same urgency and risk appetite you’d find inside a fund.

The reason?

Growth pressure. Traditional business units aren’t delivering returns the way they used to. Meanwhile, startups are moving

fast, taking market share and rewriting what “scale” looks like. So the big players are borrowing a page — or several — from the VC playbook.

Related: **5 Ways to Take Advantage of Corporate Venture Capital**

The shift starts with how capital is used inside

A lot of companies used to treat internal innovation as a budgeting exercise. You’d get a yearly plan, a fixed line item and a few people running experiments with no clear ownership.

Now?

Some of the smarter firms are setting up internal “venture funds” — actual capital pools, managed like a portfolio. Projects have to pitch for funding. Milestones matter. If a team doesn’t hit targets, the money dries up. If they do, they get more.

This model changes how internal teams behave. When you fund ideas like a VC, the people behind those ideas start acting like founders. They think about efficiency, traction and customer validation. It’s no longer about checking boxes on a slide — it’s about showing something that works.

Some of these teams even get equity-like upside. If the initiative scales or gets spun out, there’s real skin in the game. That’s not innovation theater — that’s alignment.

Corporate venture is getting sharper, faster and more disciplined

Outside the building, corporates are rethinking how they

invest in startups, too. Corporate VC isn't new, but it used to be slow-moving and focused mostly on strategic tie-ins.

That's changed. Now, you've got corporates participating in secondaries, co-leading rounds with top-tier funds and following through in later stages. They're building out full investment teams with former operators and ex-VCs running point.

And they're not just writing checks — they're helping companies grow. They come with distribution channels, brand power and domain knowledge. When aligned properly, that support can be worth more than the capital itself.

A CB Insights report showed that corporate VC activity rebounded after a dip, with more of these groups stepping into later-stage rounds and structuring deals like growth investors. They're not chasing shiny trends. They're playing the long game — and doing it with more sophistication than ever.

Related: Separating Fact From Fiction in Corporate Venture Capital

Founders need to adjust their expectations

If you're building a company right now, you might be overlooking corporate capital entirely or assuming it's too rigid. That's a miss.

Today's best corporates are moving faster than some traditional VCs. They've got dry powder, they're not tied to LP pressure, and they're actively looking for ways to partner with startups that can move the needle. They care about financial returns, not just strategic "synergies."

But here's the flip side: They're expecting more, too.

Founders need to be prepared to speak the same language. That means understanding your financials. Be clear about your customer economics. Know your roadmap, and be honest about what you still haven’t figured out.

Corporate investors aren’t giving you a pass because you’re early-stage. They’re looking at your business like any smart growth investor would.

Internal startups, spinouts and venture studios are changing the game

Some companies aren’t just backing startups — they’re building them. Venture studios are becoming a powerful tool for corporates to launch new companies from within, using internal talent, capital and IP.

These studios operate like fast-track startups. They test ideas, validate quickly and spin out the ones with traction. And because they sit inside a larger company, they often get early access to distribution, data or infrastructure that an outside founder would have to fight for.

In some cases, those spinouts go on to raise outside capital, and the corporation that seeded it holds meaningful equity. It’s a way to innovate without betting the entire company on a single idea.

This is not about replacing traditional product development, but a smarter and faster way of complementing it with speed, accountability and upside.

This is about survival, not trend-

following

Let’s be clear: This isn’t a “tech trend.” It’s a survival tactic.

The companies adopting VC-style growth aren’t doing it for headlines. They’re doing it because their existing engines aren’t delivering what they used to — and waiting around isn’t an option.

They’ve seen how fast a startup can eat into their market. They know that five-year strategy decks don’t hold up when customer expectations shift overnight because of transformational startups.

By doing this, they’re taking the tools startups use, like capital agility, portfolio thinking and milestone discipline, and embedding them into expediting their growth.

That’s not just smart. It’s necessary in today’s ever-changing world.

Related: Why Raising Corporate Venture Capital Benefits Startups

For founders and startups, this shift opens new doors. The next strategic investor in your round might not be a VC — it might be a corporate that understands your space, believes in your model and is ready to back it like a venture partner would.

But you have to show up ready. The bar is high. The questions will be sharp. And the expectations are different from what you might be used to.

This is a new kind of partner. One that wants real growth, not just exposure.

And if you understand how they’re thinking? You might find

they move faster than anyone else at the table.

https://www.entrepreneur.com/starting-a-business/why-founders-should-take-corporate-venture-capital-seriously/489268

Why Gen Z is Ditching Old Online Platforms for More Control

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Six months ago, if you asked any Gen Z creator what platforms they used most often, they would point to Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, Discord and Tumblr.

These platforms have been the go-to spaces for creators to share content and monetize their personal brands. It's where they've shared favorite recipes, dating drama and DIY home renovation tips — where they've built their niche and connected with their audiences.

For many creators, this remains true. But with TikTok's uncertain future after its temporary ban in the U.S., many are questioning the stability of mainstream platforms and exploring alternatives. This shift presents a significant opportunity for emerging social media platforms to step up, many of which are already racing to attract these creators.

The big question remains: How can these platforms attract Gen Z — a critical segment of the creator economy — and once they

do, how can they retain them?

Here’s why emerging social media platforms need to prioritize agency and discoverability if they want to engage and retain Gen Z creators.

Related: How Gen Z is Impacting Business and Marketing Decisions

Winning over Gen Z creators with agency and discoverability

As social media platforms become more unpredictable — whether due to policy changes, bans or shifting monetization models — creators are recognizing the need to secure their audience and income beyond the control of any single platform.

Otherwise, frequent platform changes perpetuate the constant grind of creators having to re-introduce themselves, master new algorithms, and adapt their content, all of which contribute to burnout and hinder long-term growth. This can erode audience trust, as repeated shifts weaken loyalty and confidence. Additionally, these disruptions lead to costly rebuilds that drain time and resources while fragmenting audience reach. Not to mention sudden income loss, difficulty securing brand deals, and the emotional toll of rebuilding an audience from scratch.

This shift is especially critical to Gen Z creators, who value agency and transparency in owning their own brand and the discoverability of their work. Unlike previous generations who were more likely to adapt to platform constraints, Gen Z creators have grown up in an era of digital empowerment. This generation is looking for a more stable alternative where they can own their audience and brand identity instead of relying on ever-shifting algorithms. Creators can better adapt to platform shifts by diversifying their presence and investing

in their own online identity to maintain visibility and control.

As a result, the next wave of the creator economy is establishing personalized domains as a one-stop shop for their links, platforms and content. Personalized domains are the cornerstone of a consistent, cohesive digital presence, offering creators flexibility and longevity beyond social platforms. Owning one can help safeguard content, audience connections, and monetization against platform disruptions.

It is critical that emerging social media platforms keep this in mind as they try to attract and retain Gen Z creators. Platforms that enable easy discovery of content and the ability for creators to own their personal brand through unique domain names will come out on top.

Related: **How Gen Z Managers Are Doing Things Very Differently**

Platforms that are getting it right

One platform that is moving in this direction is Substack. In January, the company announced a $20 million creator fund, hoping to entice users with a more stable alternative where creators own their audience instead of relying on opaque algorithms. Beehiiv also recently launched a similar “Creator Accelerator,” with the goal of offering more stability for newsletter creators.

But even as the number of options for Gen Z creators proliferates, ultimately, these offerings are just stepping stones. The real autonomy and power are in owning your audience outright. If TikTok disappears tomorrow or Substack shifts its strategy, where do your followers go? The answer should be your own domain, where you control your reach, your business, and your future. Platforms will always be part of the equation, but discovery should serve creators, not trap them in someone else’s ecosystem.

Bluesky is adopting this approach by allowing users to integrate personal domains as handles. The platform provides a unique decentralized approach that prioritizes user autonomy. On decentralized platforms like Bluesky, owning a domain that directly connects to your social profile helps create a unified online identity and boost visibility.

The road ahead

As the social media landscape continues to shift, the power is shifting too, towards creators who take ownership of their online presence. With platforms like Bluesky already taking this approach, there’s a clear opportunity for emerging social networks to create new and improved ecosystems.

By prioritizing agency, discoverability, and creator autonomy, emerging platforms can offer the stability and ownership that Gen Z creators crave. Together, platforms and creators can build sustainable, creator-first ecosystems centered around online identity where audiences can follow, engage, and thrive.

https://www.entrepreneur.com/science-technology/why-gen-zs-demand-for-ownership-is-reshaping-social-media/490075

This Is the Perfect Number of In-Office Days Needed to Keep Employees Engaged and

Productive, According to a New Study

Do you even have a return-to-office mandate, bro?

Most companies (about 87%) do, according to a recent study. In the last year or so, there has been a lot of news about companies and the federal government mandating returns to the office. Sometimes it's full-time (like JPMorgan), sometimes it's hybrid. The reasoning behind the RTO mandates is typically that in-office workers will engage with one another more, feel more connected to the big picture, and, well, not be sunbathing in the backyard when they are supposed to be working.

Related: Verizon Tries to Steal 'Top Talent' From Rival AT&T With Email Promoting Its Hybrid and Remote Roles

So, questions arise: Does being in the office really boost productivity? And what is the perfect amount of in-office/WFH time that gives workers that balance we've all grown accustomed to?

PwC, one of the "Big Four" accounting and consulting firms, claims to have found the answer, reports Business Insider. Phillippa O'Connor, PwC's chief people officer, told a U.K. government committee on home-based working that the company has been monitoring employees' work habits since it began requiring that its 23,000 U.K. employees go into the office three days a week at a minimum.

O'Connor told the committee, "The initial data there shows us that where we have people in the office three days a week, they are more engaged," adding, "Where they're in the office

five days a week, they're less engaged."

Related: Return-to-Office Push Meets Employee Pushback — What's Next?

She said that three days is best for PwC's business and clients and is "absolutely critical" when it comes to properly training their pipelines of 1,000 graduates who join every year.

Are you on team RTO or WFH?

Earlier this year, Entrepreneur reported a study published in *Nature* that found there were "no differences in productivity, performance review grade, or promotion" between remote workers and in-office workers. And that hybrid workers reported many benefits. "We found that hybrid working improved job satisfaction and reduced quit rates by one-third," researchers wrote. "The reduction in quit rates was significant for non-managers, female employees, and those with long commutes."

Related: Remote Walmart Employees Question Return-to-Office Policy, Some Opt to Quit Instead of Relocating

https://www.entrepreneur.com/business-news/the-perfect-amount-of-in-office-days-for-productivity-study/490802

UPS Is Laying Off 20,000 Employees and Closing Over 70 Locations: 'Reduce Cost'

UPS plans to reduce its workforce by 20,000 positions this year and close 73 facilities by the end of June, the company announced with its first-quarter earnings report on Tuesday.

The job cuts will impact about 4% of UPS's 490,000-person global workforce. UPS noted in the report that it expects to save $3.5 billion this year from the layoffs and facility closures. It projects spending between $400 million and $600 million in expenses this year.

UPS is cutting its workforce after announcing in January that it would be doing less business with Amazon, a company that accounted for nearly 12%, or about $1.07 billion, of its total revenue in 2024. UPS plans to slash more than half of the business it does with Amazon by June 2026, resulting in a substantial loss of revenue that UPS seeks to counter by shrinking its operations, per *The Wall Street Journal*.

Related: UPS Inked a Major Deal With the U.S. Postal Service — And Ended a 20-Year Relationship With FedEx

UPS CEO Carol Tomé stated in the earnings report that the layoffs position UPS to become "even stronger" and "more nimble" despite a challenging macroeconomic environment. According to *Reuters*, UPS faces a decline in volume from goods shipped by China-based sellers Shein and Temu after the U.S. implemented an up to 145% tariff on Chinese goods earlier this month. Shein has already raised prices as much as 377%.

"The actions we are taking to reconfigure our network and reduce cost across our business could not be timelier," Tomé stated in the earnings report.

UPS last conducted layoffs in January 2024, when the company eliminated 12,000 roles and mandated that workers return to the office five days per week.

The shipping giant reported its first-quarter results on Tuesday. Revenue for the quarter was $21.5 billion, down 0.7% from the same time last year but higher than Wall Street's expectations of $21 billion. UPS's revenue in the U.S. increased by 1.4% in the first quarter to $14.46 billion. The growth was mainly driven by increases in air cargo, which offset a decline in the volume of shipments.

UPS had a market capitalization of over $82 billion at the time of writing. The company says it delivers 22.4 million packages every day.

Related: FedEx and UPS Are Slashing Prices to Win Your Business: 'No Customer Is Too Small'

https://www.entrepreneur.com/business-news/ups-plans-to-lay-off-20000-employees-by-the-end-of-2025/490804