

The missing partner in the startup ecosystem

What if I told you there is someone who can help grow your startup?

They can offer a combination of industry know-how, business advisement, connection to consumers and maybe even investment. Better yet, they are looking for companies just like yours.

The people I'm referring to are brand communicators who work at large corporations.

They are responsible for connecting their brands and products with end consumers and regularly spend millions or tens of millions of dollars on advertising to achieve this.

They work with public relations agencies like our company [MEC](#) to advise on the best ways to invest their communication dollars. By keeping our fingers on the pulse of consumers and the ways to communicate, agencies offer an important link between brands and people.

Marketing methods

In the past, brand communicators could use mass-reach channels such as TV and radio or more direct communication like on-ground events and social media.

Advertising supply is decreasing as paid ad-free services increase such as Netflix, YouTube Red and Anghami, and ad-blocking is on the rise.

So brand communicators have to think again about how they connect with people; brands must provide real value in people's lives and innovate to do so.

Luckily in MENA there are a growing number of companies who are doing just that, innovating to provide value in a new way: startups.

While over 20-35 percent of startups receive investment from angel investors or incubators, only 15 percent work with large corporations, typically the least-used source of funding.

Corporations are the missing partner in the startup ecosystem.

Why is this the case?

The startup ecosystem is decentralized. Even with community builders, industry events and incubators, it takes significant manpower from companies to find the right startups to work with and develop these relationships.

Rarely do they have people with time dedicated to such tasks.

Startups have not been thought of as a way to solve marketing challenges in communicating with consumers.

When communications briefs are created, the solutions are thought of in the traditional sense of TV, radio, events and digital media.

Few startups have been able to correctly approach large corporations.

Their to-do list is long and time is short. Their time is invested in framing their solution for the end user, not necessarily large advertisers.

Although connections between companies can be started by either side, startups can better position themselves to fill their needs by proactively building these relationships.

What can startups do to connect with large corporations?

Understand the challenges. Understand the challenges of the corporation. These can be connecting with a niche audience, acquiring a new data set or making their product available in new places, to name a few. These can be discovered from industry events, leadership messages, research reports or most of all speaking with people at the company.

Reframe the solution. Demonstrate how your solution can be their solution to communications' challenges. With an innovative product, there is likely a unique way which you can help the marketer. Bring the brand closer to their desired audience and elevate it from competition.

Leverage the power of networks. Be available through connecting organizations and programs. More companies are launching startup challenges to take part in which challenges are already identified. Ecosystem builders and agencies are building these relationships and will soon develop them at scale. At MEC, we are connecting more of our clients with startups to support the needs of both types of organizations – innovation for clients and growth support for startups.

Take advantage of these opportunities to build your business.



ANTHONY GIORDANO

Anthony Giordano is group account director at MEC MENA handling media strategy, planning and implementation. He also spearheads MEC's Corporate Entrepreneurship Services initiative, which connects advertisers with startups to drive innovation and support the entrepreneurial community in the Middle East. He has been a startup mentor at events in the UAE and Kuwait and is interested in meeting the companies and people who are innovating across the region. You can reach him by email at Anthony.Giordano@mecglobal.com or via [LinkedIn](#).

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