

The rise of the super connectors

Networks continue to be the lifeblood of many startups and scaleups across the globe and there is a rising number of companies making the job of forming these networks their sole mission. Meet, the super connectors.

Temps de lecture : minute

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There's a well-worn trope in business that it's not what you know, it's who you know. While the term isn't entirely accurate - it significantly plays down just how hard it is to grow a business, for one - there is an element of truth to the idea that the right networks and connections can help increase your chances of success.

In fact, a more accurate phrase these days would be that it's not just what you know or who you know, but it's who knows *you*. It's how visible you are. This is what helps you attract more opportunities.

Nowhere is this more relevant than in the world of startups.

Globally, more than 350 million startups are launched every year. That's 350 million potentially life-changing ideas that will, at some point, need to seek funding, need to hire, need to expand into new markets, and need to onboard clients. At least 350 million founders who will look to their existing networks for support, guidance, advice and who will look to new connections to see their ideas through to the next stage.

Competition is so fierce that stats suggest only 10% of these startups will survive, and almost every VC nowadays leans on just how far and wide their network spreads when looking to attract the next generation of

entrepreneurs.

Yet there is a select group of startup champions taking the importance of building relationships a step further. A group known as super connectors, of which *Empact Ventures* is leading the charge.

Beyond introductions

Founded in 2016, Empact Ventures was set up by Kosta Mavroulakis to go beyond the standard networking role that many companies take. Instead of simply making introductions between various stakeholders, Empact's mission is to support all parties - from startups to scaleups, investors, corporates, universities, non-profits, associations and business support organisations - to forge effective, long-term and mutually beneficial relationships.

Within this, Empact scouts the right startups, curates the guest lists, carefully match-makes people, facilitates warm email introductions after the events, and supports both sides to begin collaborating. The team only ever connect people based on mutual need and interest to reduce any awkwardness, and to allow conversations to move forward quickly.

Through a number of key partnerships with people and organisations across the private, public and third sectors, Mavroulakis and his Empact team create - or as Mavroulakis describes it, "co-design" - unique initiatives, events, and ventures that are designed and delivered using their collective networks, resources, and time.

Each partner brings something new or different to the table for each event, and each is brought on to complement the networks, skills, and expertise of all the other supporting partners who get involved in the initiative themselves.

Impact Ventures and OVHcloud

One of Impact Ventures most important, and long-term partners has been OVHcloud. For the past two years, Impact has co-designed a number of initiatives with OVHcloud, namely the latter's OVHcloud Startup Program Showcase.

Founded in 1999 by Polish entrepreneur, Octave Klaba, OVHcloud has grown rapidly in the last 20 years as providers of a smart, accessible cloud. Today, it has more than 400,000 servers housed within over 30 data centres across four continents. By taking an integrated approach, OVHcloud has supported 1.6M customers in more than 140 countries.

In 2015, the firm launched the OVHcloud Startup Program in line with its startup culture, by providing founders with the opportunity to expand on the cloud. For startups, particularly, a trusted cloud is key to growth yet the costs of such services can typically be beyond the reach of early-stage firms. Through the OVHcloud Startup Program, founders from a selected group of startups receive credits over a 12-month period to enable them to experience the full power of its products.

Since its inception, this programme has now hosted over 2,600 startups, selected from more than 8,500 applicants.

“We scout innovative startups and scaleups globally for the OVHcloud Startup Program on an ongoing basis,” continues Mavrourakis, “We are always scouting companies that need a resilient, scalable, and secure cloud infrastructure to support their work, and who would benefit from the support the program provides... making super connections for companies that register and attend our events to the global team of cluster

managers after the events themselves.”

This tends to be seed stage startups to Series A scaleups across most verticals including AI, FinTech, AR/VR, gaming, MedTech, and more anywhere in the world.

A promotional banner for the OVHcloud Startup Program. The background is dark blue. In the top left, the OVHcloud logo (a white stylized 'V' with a lightning bolt) is followed by the text 'OVHcloud' in white and 'Startup Program' in a smaller white font. Below this, the text 'START UP OR SCALE UP' is written in white, followed by 'Accelerate your growth with up to €100k of OVHcloud free credits' in a larger, bold white font. At the bottom left, there is a bright cyan rounded rectangle containing the text 'Start Today' in white. On the right side of the banner, there is a graphic of several overlapping triangles in white, yellow, orange, and light blue, creating a geometric pattern.

[Sign up to OVHcloud](#)

The real-world impact of super connections

Since 2020, Empact Ventures and OVHcloud have co-designed four virtual pitching events for startups and scaleups across the UK, Ireland, and Europe. These firms are invited to pitch and be connected with funders, and decision-makers through the pair’s Super Connect Series initiative. The firms also co-designed the OVHcloud Startup Program Showcase in June 2022. This is the first of a series of events that will be run for different verticals and which offer access to market and funding opportunities for participants including pitch opportunities, like the OVHcloud Startup Program’s annual pitching event.

In addition, Empact Ventures has received support from the OVHcloud Startup Program for its Global Tech for Good competition, Super Connect for Good with Hays, for the past three years as one of its Innovation Partners.

“We’re very selective about who we work with as it is our job to make great super connections for tech startups and scaleups who trust us to help them connect with the right partners who can help to address their business challenges,” says Mavrourakis.

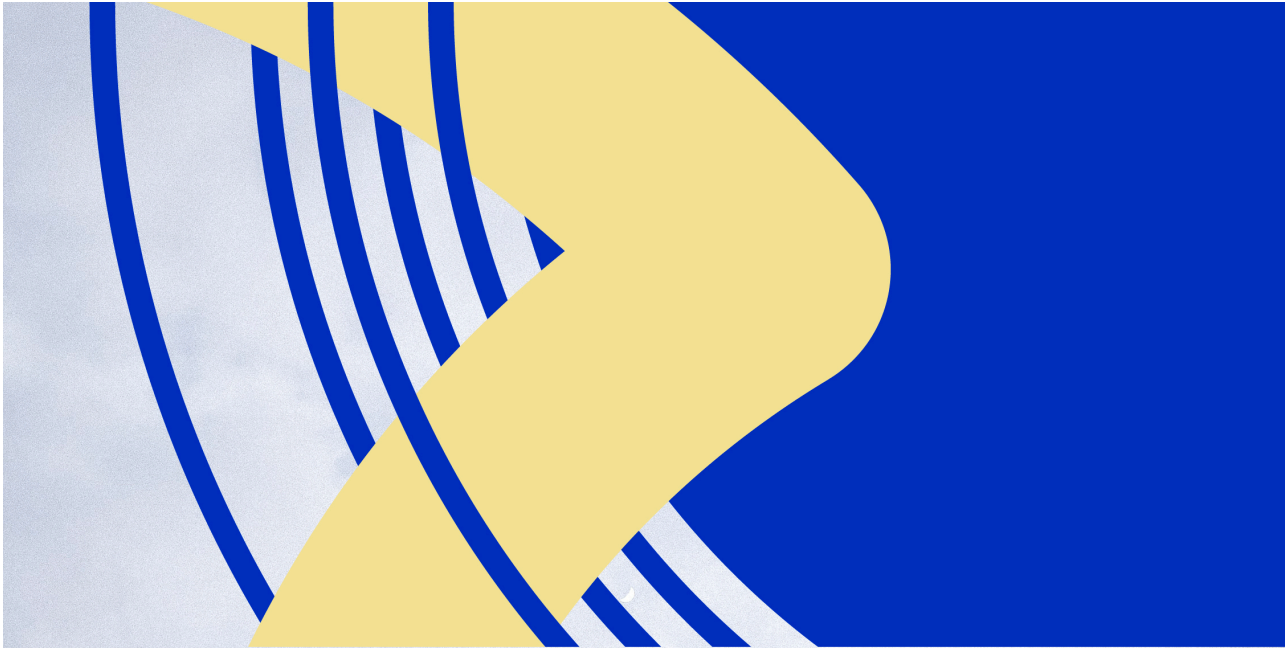
“As a result, we look for partners who really understand what founders need to scale while making an active effort to be embedded within the global startup ecosystem with a support offering that can help these companies at all stages. The OVHcloud Startup Program led by Philip Marais fits that mold perfectly.”

Instead of just directing companies to a website to be onboarded, Mavrourakis praises OVHcloud for “genuinely taking the time to understand the technical challenges [the startups and scaleups face].” All while seeing the relationships through by making a proactive effort to better connect them to potential partners, funders, or opportunities. And by regularly plugging them in as speakers, pitchers, or exhibitors in their events, which Empact and OVHcloud co-design together.

The super connected startups and scaleups

Two such standout firms to have emerged from the Startup Program, as well as the ongoing partnership between Empact and OVHcloud, have been YepicAI, and AlgoDX. YepicAI was recently awarded the title of Best Scaleup of the Year 2021, at the recent Startup Program Awards, while AlgoDX scored the Best Startup of the Year 2021. Both were lauded for their use of cloud spend and good program participation. Empact Ventures won Partner of the Year at the same event.

YepicAI, and its founder Aaron Jones, was introduced to OVHcloud in 2021 and pitched in the pair's co-designed Super Connect Series Showcase in June the same year. YepicAI went on to receive over €100,000 worth of cloud hosting credits on the program to support the work the team is doing as part of its text-to-speech and text-to-video platform.



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OVHcloud now handles every stage of Yepic AI's data lifecycle, from storage to transfer, intensive use and deletion, while guaranteeing confidentiality, sovereignty and security. This allows Aaron, and founders like him, to concentrate on what matters most - building the services and applications that make a real difference to customers, and wider society.

AlgoDX similarly received 12-months of OVHcloud credits after successfully applying for the OVHcloud Startup Program, and has since taken part in a number of access to market and funding events, hosted by OVHcloud with Empact Ventures.



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Founded in 2018, AlgoDX uses artificial intelligence, machine learning and predictive analytics to determine a patient's chances of developing disease. Through its Navoy platform, AlgoDX is currently able to spot the early-warning signs and predictors of sepsis.

OVHcloud has proved critical in AlgoDX's expansion plans, having enabled the firm to partner with US healthcare providers and services. "OVHcloud has a reputation as the largest, most reliable and trusted cloud system in Europe, with a strong performance and long history of working with companies globally," says the company's CIO, Calle Österlind. AlgoDX has continued to partner with OVHcloud following the end of its 12-month project and, after aiming for one pilot, it was since started two other large-scale projects, both on a commercial basis.

"For the companies we introduce throughout the year, we actively make an effort to provide them with more pitching, exhibiting, and speaking opportunities in our other initiatives co-designed with the OVHcloud

Startup Program,” adds Mavrourakis. “We focus as much on what they know and who they know, as we do on who knows them. This is at the heart of our ethos; we plug OVHcloud and its startups into other opportunities that get them exposure, PR and increases their opportunities. We facilitate and support the companies to move the conversation along towards a collaboration which is a key part of measuring and communicating the impact of the super connections we make.”

As Mavrourakis concludes: “The team at Empact Ventures is driven by the need to connect people and organisations to create the right mutual outcomes, and thus an aggregate social/economic impact in the process that positively helps society.

“We benefit by getting the opportunity to work together with fantastic people and organisations from all sectors, industries, and countries beyond our own networks, and I personally benefit by doing the work I love on a daily basis.”

Ready to be Super Connected? You can keep track of the new 2023 OVHcloud Startup Program Showcase events powered by Empact Ventures taking place from January to June 2023 by visiting <https://empact.ventures> in the coming months to register to pitch or exhibit.

You can also learn more about the OVHcloud Startup Program and apply [here](#).