Prompts and predictions Part 2: Startup founders share their insights and ambitions for 2025

As 2024 draws to a close, the startup ecosystem instead of winding down, buzzes with anticipation for what lies ahead. In this article, Maddyness has gathered insights from founders, investors, and industry thought leaders to uncover their predictions for 2025.

Temps de lecture : minute

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AI will continue to dominate the European tech ecosystem in 2025, according to the Partners at Antler, the most active early-stage VC firm in Europe. In 2024, AI companies raised record levels of funding. Antler is set to back more than 40 new AI startups in Europe alone this year - the equivalent of one every nine days. This is set to continue into 2025 as AI companies start integrating with, and disrupting, some of the world's biggest industries.

Alan Poensgen, Partner, Berlin, *Antler*

"There are early indicators that we might have reached the peak of the first first AI hype cycle, so I expect to see lots of consolidation in 2025 as founders and investors supply now outstrips demand for new AI technologies. Looking beyond AI, we are seeing some exciting fundraising activity in our portfolio in hardware and healthcare. Investors will be looking for real companies building real products generating real revenue."

Tobias Bengtsdahl, Partner, Stockholm, *Antler*

"In 2025, I expect to see the first true European breakthrough in Consumer GenAI. Founders will continue to face challenges around fundraising and talent, although I hope the markets will have more liquidity next year. The two other big problems I expect founders to grapple with will be EU regulations, especially around AI, and the ongoing exodus of talent and great companies to the US."

Adam French, Partner, London, *Antler*

"Alongside AI I am excited about the growing strength of European deeptech companies, and the continued success of fintech and healthtech in the UK. This year, I have spent lots of time working with founders on building strong teams and fundraising. Next year, I expect to focus on AI integration across all business models, scaling in a sustainable way and helping founders navigate the economic and regulatory uncertainty that we see around the world."

RJ Schuurs, Partner, Amsterdam, *Antler*

"2025 is all about AI front, right and center. It is also easier to build a startup than it ever has been. These components make it easier to start, but harder to stand out. So you need an amazing vision backed up by capabilities and a product velocity that is off the charts. Besides that, traction is even more crucial now as getting to customers has also become easier for everyone, not just for you."

Aline Miller, Professor at The University of Manchester, CSO of Unit M and Academic Innovation Lead, _Sister_

"As the UK positions itself as a global tech superpower, startups in technology and research-driven sectors can expect to receive stronger support in both funding and talent to enhance growth.

New businesses in life sciences, clean energy, biotechnology and AI in particular will benefit from targeted initiatives such as new infrastructure projects which will demand more types of green energy and the new Regulatory Innovation Office which will reduce red tape for businesses looking to bring new products and services to market. Distributed investment will also be made into cutting-edge sectors, with the British Business Bank expanding its scope to provide financing options tailored to early-stage companies, closing funding gaps in regional and underserved markets.

The Budget's £100B into infrastructure projects - namely for data centres and quantum computing - will open plenty of opportunities for startups operating in these sectors. However, without clear guidance on how and where to allocate investment and seek support, many will fail to capitalise on them.

Business incubators, accelerators and place-based ecosystems like innovation districts, will play a critical role in bridging these gaps, connecting entrepreneurs with a broad network of both local and global innovators, industry experts, investors, and professional services needed to propel ready-for-growth businesses. As startups seek to scale - whether by tapping into new facilities or emerging technologies like AI - business-first ecosystems will provide the support needed to turn ideas into successful ventures and boost wider economic growth."

Jonathan Barrett, CEO, _Kallikor_

"Next year, SMEs will experiment more with AI and automation tools to address the productivity crisis. When it comes to logistics and planning, they'll need to swap out outdated systems for ones that are better equipped to deal with sudden changes in consumer demands, geopolitical changes in the ecosystem and general uncertainty that defines today's modern, complex supply chains.

While SMEs are rich in data that can help them make better, smarter decisions, they often lack the time and resources to turn this information into actionable insight. To make better use of this data for efficiency, traditional planning methods, often reliant on manual tools like Excel, will be swapped out for AI and automation tools - such as digital twins - that replicate ecosystems virtually and use multiple data sources to provide deeper insights, greater visibility and more confident decision making automatically.

By adopting these technologies, SMEs can unlock new strategic opportunities, better anticipate shifts in the market, and unlock productivity by improving efficiency. The UK government's new AI Action Plan forecasts potential productivity gains of up to 1.5% annually by integrating AI into our economy and small businesses should be at the forefront of experimenting with this technology - using their agility to find new ways of doing business easier, faster, and better."

Dr Graeme Malcolm OBE, CEO and founder, _M Squared Lasers_

"As we approach 2025, global scientific and technological collaboration stands at a tipping point. The resurgence of geopolitical tensions—likely brought on by the new US administration, increasingly strained relations

with China and Europe focused on its own internal economic changes, threatens the spirit of international cooperation that has driven innovation for decades.

However, the UK can play a leading role in reinforcing and expanding these connections. As a nation with world-class universities, a thriving tech sector, and a legacy of driving global initiatives, the UK is well-positioned to act as the leader needed to take the next step. By creating an ecosystem that rewards global collaboration, the UK can demonstrate the power of collective progress.

For example, breakthroughs in quantum technologies rely on expertise and resources from across the world. No single nation or company can develop and nurture its complexities alone. Stronger ties with European partners, coupled with new collaborations in Asia and North America, will ensure continued developments.

The path ahead requires bold leadership, but also humility—acknowledging that true innovation thrives in an open, inclusive, and collaborative environment. Now is the moment for the UK to cement its role as a champion of global scientific unity, setting the stage for a brighter, more collaborative future."

Dominik Angerer, CEO and founder, _Storyblok_

"2025 is shaping up to be an important year for martech with a clear shift towards making tools more accessible and impactful for marketers. The focus now is on how well technology can enable marketers to take control - without always needing to rely on developers. Seamless integrations and platforms that simplify complex workflows are becoming essential, helping teams move faster and focus on creating real value.

There's no doubt generative AI will continue to be a hot topic, but the real game changer lies in how tools like this are integrated into wider systems. AI isn't the solution to everything, but when it's used to streamline workflows or enhance creativity, it becomes a powerful enabler. The key is finding the balance - using technology to eliminate friction while still leaving room for the human touch.

Finally, one of the biggest challenges - and opportunities - for 2025 will be building martech stacks that actually work together. Marketers don't need more isolated tools; they need systems that connect and enhance the customer journey across every touchpoint. At Storyblok, we're constantly looking at how we can help marketers and their businesses cut through the noise, simplify the complex and focus on what matters most: engaging their audiences in fresh and meaningful ways."

John Hughes, SVP and Head of Network Security Business Group, _Enea_

"Cybersecurity will become even more integrated into broader organisational strategies in 2025, especially as cybersecurity becomes a boardroom priority. With cyber threats growing more sophisticated – fuelled by the rise of accessible AI-powered techniques – the risks now extend beyond data breaches to include advanced forms of fraud. Our research revealed that 61% of enterprises still face significant losses from mobile fraud, with smishing (SMS phishing) and vishing (voice phishing) among the most damaging. These threats are only set to escalate in the year ahead.

For the telecom sector, the stakes are particularly high. Safeguarding critical national infrastructure and subscriber data amid rising geopolitical tensions and tightening regulations demands proactive strategies. Compliance mandates, such as those addressing CLI spoofing, will shape

priorities, while growing fraud and customer trust concerns will call for innovative solutions.

Security budgets are expected to increase as businesses recognise the financial and reputational costs of underinvesting in cybersecurity. In telecoms, this funding will go beyond addressing immediate threats to enhance network security, ensure regulatory compliance, and protect customer confidence – an essential factor in retention.

Across industries, the focus is shifting from reactive defences to building proactive resilience. This means ensuring continuity, mitigating fraud, and strengthening trust in an era of escalating risks. Cybersecurity is no longer just an operational issue; it's now a core pillar of business success."

Zuzanna Stamirowska, CEO and Cofounder, _Pathway_

"The AI market is changing quickly, which presents both a challenge and an opportunity for founders. Those who can predict where AI is going can catch early opportunities and outsmart the market. The rise of o1 from OpenAI, for example, is going to catalyse one of the biggest shifts in AI since its inception. The deeper reasoning capacity of the model is exciting, especially as competitors don't have anything that compares at present. It will be interesting to see how the startup scene grasps this opportunity.

Concurrently, we will see companies disappear. Investors have made it clear that they are not looking for more of the same and need to see proposals which are strongly differentiated and defensible."

Dr Andrea Cullen, CEO and Cofounder, _CAPSLOCK_

"After a challenging 2024, leaders and their cyber teams will need to retain optimism, resilience and flexibility in 2025 to take on a complex threat landscape that continues to evolve and keep their businesses secure.

2025 is set to bring in The Cybersecurity and Resilience Bill, one of the biggest legislative changes for cyber since the introduction of GDPR. This will demand increased reporting and infrastructure in the battle against rising cyber threats, adding further intricacies and hurdles for managing cyber defences.

Alongside investing in new technology, such as AI-powered tools to help with threat detection and response, leaders will need to build resilience by focusing on the makeup of the teams using them. They'll need to ensure teams are comprised of diverse thinking and skillsets to ensure they are equipped to think like the threat actors working against them.
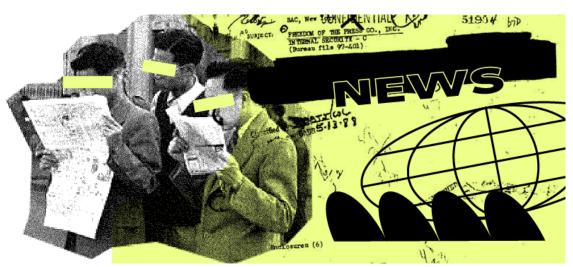
To achieve this, leaders must open up the hiring process beyond candidates with traditional cyber CVs and consider career changers, reskillers and those without STEM degrees across their career journeys. Their unique skills and backgrounds will help to avoid blind spots within the function and give teams the best chance of tackling new threats.

Volatile economic conditions are likely to continue into 2025 and no doubt budgets will be tight. But founders shouldn't cut corners in cybersecurity. They will need to ensure they put aside adequate investment for cybersecurity skills, alongside cyber tools, to protect their business infrastructure, data and reputation."

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