

## **Audi Denkwerkstatt and Techstars search for and support startups for Audi's ecosystem**

- **New Founder Innovation Lab in Berlin as important contribution to Audi's strategy "Vorsprung 2030"**
- **Innovation driver Audi Denkwerkstatt and startup accelerator Techstars as partners**
- **Founders and early-stage startups to be supported in the development of business ideas in the context of mobility**
- **Founders may apply from August 1, startups from September 26, 2022**

**Berlin, July 25, 2022 – Startups to contribute to the success of Audi's strategy: In collaboration with the internationally renowned startup accelerator Techstars, Audi Denkwerkstatt is launching a new program for early-stage startups and future founders. The innovation unit of Audi is thereby tying into one of the key fields of action in the corporate strategy "Vorsprung 2030": building a customer-centric digital ecosystem centered around the car. It focusses on business ideas that aim to improve the mobility experience and offer users tangible added value in their everyday lives. Innovative products, services and technologies in the digital realm will therefore play a particularly important role. The goal of the program is to support and nurture founders as well as startups while getting digital, mobility-related business models ready for the market more quickly in a highly competitive environment.**

Through "Vorsprung 2030" Audi has presented a clear strategy for the electric and digital transformation of the company. It includes building a digital ecosystem in the context of electric and automated driving. This encompasses the charging experience for electric cars, holistic mobility concepts, connecting users with each other as well as digital services both inside and outside the vehicle. The goal is to improve users' mobility experiences. Accordingly, ideas that promote Audi's new strategic business areas and that offer additional customer value will be given priority in the new "Founder Innovation Lab". Another goal of the program is to connect participants with a variety of Audi departments for potential access to resources and mutual knowledge transfer.

Startups and founders who wish to devote their entrepreneurial talent to the search for promising solutions in the fields of digitalization and mobility can apply for two programs. Those who would like to know more can find the details on the application and selection process for the pre-accelerator program starting August 1, 2022, as well as for the accelerator program starting September 26, 2022, on [Techstars' website](#). The program consists of two three-month phases, that build on each other: the pre-accelerator program, which is targeted at individual founders, and the accelerator program, which is tailored to early-stage startups.

In the pre-accelerator phase, [Audi Denkwerkstatt](#) and Techstars jointly support the participants in developing a promising idea and building up a suitable team.

This program also entails a series of master classes, mentorships, and pitch coaching for the founders who will gain access to a global network of entrepreneurs, investors and mentors by joining. The participants will be connected to each other, so they can assemble their ideal teams of founders.

Successful graduates of the pre-accelerator program, who have passed the final pitch of this phase, are eligible to participate in the three-month accelerator phase. Established early-stage startups can skip the pre-accelerator program and apply directly for the accelerator program, without the need to complete the pre-accelerator beforehand. Successful completion of the accelerator program offers the chance of long-term collaboration with Audi.

In order to guarantee they focus on the development of their business ideas, the individual participants and startup teams receive financial support. The accelerator program gives startups access to a vast global network of mentors, investors, founders, and partners. The first month of the program is dedicated to assessing product-market-fit. It includes extensive hands-on training with mentors to help founders refine their products into a solid proof-of-concept. This is followed by the execution stage in the second month. The final phase is focused on helping startups refine their financial business models with additional strategies around fundraising.

Diversity is a key component of the program as to promote the greatest possible potential for innovation. The entire program is therefore aimed at founders and startup teams of all nationalities with different skill sets as well as those from all professional and academic backgrounds. When evaluating founders for the program, technical expertise, and an outstanding entrepreneurial spirit as well as a high level of intrinsic motivation and creativity all play an equal role. Assertiveness and team spirit are also required. Being a melting pot for the European startup community, Berlin offers optimal conditions for the implementation of the program.

“Audi Denkwerkstatt is driving innovation for digital business models at Audi. Our goal is to develop customer-focused innovations quickly, efficiently, and then get them ready for the market. Having Techstars on our side as a strong partner, we’re opening ourselves up to an outside innovator community and to even more exciting business ideas. At the same time, we’re optimizing the interface between our corporation and the startup community,” says Tim Miksche, Head of Audi Denkwerkstatt.

Martin Schilling, Managing Director of Techstars Berlin Accelerator, highlights: “Shorter and shorter product and innovation cycles and new digital lines of business – all of these are influencing the current transformation of the automotive industry. Together with Audi Denkwerkstatt, Techstars will support ambitious founders and ensure that the speed of innovation increases. We are looking forward to creating new opportunities for founders through Techstars’ proven model that combines capital, programs and connections.”

## **Audi Denkwerkstatt can look back on six years of experience in the startup ecosystem**

Since its founding in 2016, Audi Denkwerkstatt has already received the award “Best Innovation Lab in Germany” (awarded in the joint study “Corporations on the heels of startups” by Infront Consulting and the magazine Capital, [2019](#) and [2020](#)) – twice. The experience gained through this very successful intrapreneurship program forms the foundation of the new strategic realignment. A result of this continual advancement: Under the open-innovation approach, the intention is for collaboration with external founders and startups to be intensified in the future. This draws on the innovation potential at the interface between Audi and the startup ecosystem.

### **About Techstars**

[Techstars'](#) worldwide network helps entrepreneurs succeed. Founded in 2006, Techstars began with three simple ideas—entrepreneurs create a better future for everyone, collaboration drives innovation, and great ideas can come from anywhere. Now Techstars is on a mission to enable every person on the planet to contribute to and benefit from the success of entrepreneurs. In addition to operating accelerator programs and venture capital funds, Techstars does this by connecting startups, investors, corporations, and cities to help build thriving startup communities. Techstars has invested in more than 3,000 companies with a combined market cap of more than \$140 Billion.

**Please note:** *The application period for the pre-accelerator program opens on August 1, 2022, and the application period for the accelerator program starts on September 26, 2022. Anyone interested can apply on [Techstars'](#) website beginning then.*

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The Audi Group is one of the most successful manufacturers of automobiles and motorcycles in the premium and luxury segments. The brands Audi, Ducati, Lamborghini and Bentley produce at 21 locations in 13 countries. Audi and its partners are present in more than 100 markets worldwide.

In 2021, the Audi Group delivered around 1.681 million cars from the Audi brand, 8,405 sports cars from the Lamborghini brand and 59,447 motorcycles from the Ducati brand to customers. In the 2021 fiscal year, AUDI AG achieved a total revenue of €53.1 billion and an operating profit before special items of €5.5 billion. More than 89,000 people all over the world work for the Audi Group, around 58,000 of them in Germany. With its attractive brands, new models, innovative mobility offerings and groundbreaking services, the group is systematically pursuing its path toward becoming a provider of sustainable, individual, premium mobility.

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