

Porsche joins “Startup Autobahn” platform

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09/02/2017 Next step in the digital campaign: Porsche has become the latest partner of the Startup Autobahn innovation platform in Stuttgart, where newly established companies from around the world are developing ideas for the mobility of the future.

The platform focuses on developing technologies right up to project maturity. Porsche is supporting the company founders by providing an experienced team of mentors. “This gives our culture of innovation an extra boost”, says Oliver Blume, Chairman of the Executive Board at Porsche. “Digitalisation, electrification and connectivity are revolutionising the automotive industry. We see this as an opportunity, and we want to make the most of it. These top talents from the international start-up scene give us external inspiration that accelerates the progress we are making. To make this happen, we provide the start-ups with an environment in which they can reach their full potential and focus on their work. As one of the world’s leading automotive and high-tech regions, Stuttgart is an ideal place

for this project".

Under the motto "The spirit of Silicon Valley. In the hub of mobility engineering", Porsche will collaborate will other corporate partners Daimler, Hewlett Packard Enterprise, ZF Friedrichshafen, BASF and Murata in the Startup Autobahn innovation platform. The ultimate goal is to develop Stuttgart as a technology hub. The project was launched in 2016 by the American accelerator Plug and Play, together with Daimler, the University of Stuttgart and Arena2036. Plug and Play is one of the largest tech-focused investors and venture capitals in Silicon Valley, Berlin, Spain, Singapore and Brazil. Since 2006, the accelerator has supported more than 2,000 start-ups and has a global network of around 300 corporate partners. Every year, Plug and Play organises about 400 events around the world to bring start-ups and investors together. It also acts as an investor itself.

Rigorous selection process culminates in "Expo Day"

Applicants have to go through a rigorous selection process. After an initial preselection, the first major hurdle is the "Selection Day". If an applicant submits an idea that wins over the jury, they will receive special coaching sessions from mentors and partner companies over a period of three months, including focus weeks and monthly network meetings. The start-ups are able to use the co-working space and hardware lab at Arena2036 during this time. They are also given access to Plug and Play's global network. The name "Arena" stands for "Active Research Environment for the Next Generation of Automobiles"; in 2036, the automobile will be 150 years old. The extensive, high-tech workshop houses technology worth millions, including tools, production machinery, 3D printers, robots and software for prototype construction and small-scale series production.

The service includes contact with the spheres of business, research and politics, as well as with investors, potential customers and mentors. The development process is supported by a range of additional services, from legal and tax advice to professional help in financial planning and project management. The aim of this process is for the applicants to inspire potential investors at the final "Expo Day". The type of start-up funding provided is based on the company's degree of maturity. It is possible that funding may involve taking shares in the company or reaching individual agreements. Out of the 300 applicants in the first wave, 13 made it through to the final on February 9 in Stuttgart. Around 1,000 guests were also in attendance.

The Startup Autobahn Expo Day in Stuttgart

Startup Autobahn focuses on finding and supporting "hard tech start-ups" that offer intelligent solutions at the interface between hardware and software. A start-up community from Germany and Canada presented solutions in the field of machine learning. One start-up in Tel Aviv has developed a form of glass projection technology that turns car windscreens into advertising space. The finalists also included the Cologne-based founders of Evopark. This start-up has created an app that shows drivers which car parks have spaces available, and then guides them to the space. The electronic parking ticket

removes the need for paper tickets, and drivers receive a bill at the end of the month.

Turning visions into reality

Porsche holds a stake in Evopark through the new Porsche Digital GmbH, which represents the interface between Porsche and innovators worldwide. It identifies and enhances digital customer experiences, products, business areas and processes. The Porsche subsidiary tests and implements new value creation models and innovative product offerings in close cooperation with all company departments.

The Digital Lab in Berlin represents another step that Porsche has made towards digital transformation. Its purpose is to identify and test innovative information technology solutions. Several teams focus on the question of how Porsche can take innovations from the fields of big data and machine learning, micro services and cloud technologies, Industry 4.0 and the Internet of Things, and turn them into practical commercial solutions at Porsche.

Startup Autobahn is a continuation of the innovation campaign at Porsche. “It’s the fantastic ideas, the network and the partnerships that are the lifeblood of this competition”, says Oliver Blume. “We bring together forward-thinking technologies and innovative business models. The pilot projects give rise to prototypes for use in specific applications. The goal of our campaign is to develop Porsche into a leading provider of digital mobility solutions in the premium automotive segment”.

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Dr. Ing. h.c. F. Porsche Aktiengesellschaft
Porscheplatz 1
70435 Stuttgart