

# Of big boys and gig drivers

AT one time, a career path was simple – you studied hard, got a job and stayed there until a gold watch or pension marked your retirement. Or, to the younger millennials, scoring a position in the corporate world translated into building a good life to take you into the future.

But fast forward to today, and the script has flipped. The job landscape isn't just about needing a job anymore, it's about creating them.

Entrepreneurs and freelancers are rewriting the rules. The days of relying on established markets and traditional business models are gone.

It is replaced by a dynamic environment of a digitalised world. Through digital platforms, the market opens up, and one can access online payment systems, banking, global addresses and virtual offices.

With all the new "entries" into the job market triggered by the advent of artificial intelligence (AI), I wonder how the big boys of businesses view these newbies.

Are they competition, taking away opportunities? Or, is it possible that today's startups can become collaborators, giving corporates an even bigger slice of the fast-evolving cake?

Maybe it's time to think innovatively about business models.

## Thriving in the age of disruption

Entrepreneurs should not be viewed as a threat, no, not at all. Rather, they could be the augmentation needed for corporations' existing capabilities to scale up faster and innovate.

But why should corporations welcome startups into their fold?

Being a startup comes with its own challenges. Seed funding for instance.

Most will turn to government grants, burying their dreams in the sand if it falters.

Could this be why our entrepreneurial ecosystem is not thriving as much as expected?

When we flip to the other side



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of the coin, corporations also come with their own share of problems.

Companies are often hindered by their size and structure, which can lead to slower decision-making and reluctance to take risks.

But give an entrepreneur leeway, and chances are they are ready to dive head-in first, accustomed to the hard knocks of pioneering ideas.

Another reason to consider is costs. Simply put, the costs of trying out a new system or coming up with a new product for a corporation can be way too high.

Should the plan fail, it is not just lost of money at stake but damage to the corporate brand.

Is it realistic for employees to accept such risks, which can get personal? Most likely not.

If a corporation has the expertise, tools, mentorship and resources to take an entrepreneur under its wing, nurture and grow it, to what heights can the corporation go?

Once the nurtured startup hits its first hundred million in the top line, corporates can take equity of an enterprise ready to scale.

## How great companies broke the mould

Nvidia Corp, a company on every techie's dream list, played



■ **Let's face it: In a pace this fast, you're either innovating, or you're obsolete**

an important role in creating "stickiness" of a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem attached to the use of its GPUs (graphics processing units), particularly through its CUDA (compute unified device architecture) platform.

Nvidia opened up immense computational power for tasks beyond graphics, especially in areas like AI, deep learning and scientific computing, which led to a boom in startups and researchers using GPUs to solve complex problems.

For example, organisations like OpenAI are said to have used around 10,000 Nvidia GPUs to train its ChatGPT model.

This proved that Nvidia's technology could handle extensive training tasks.

In fact, apps like DALL-E 2 also used Nvidia's GPU's, its hardware became essential for the development and deployment.

The next big name I want to mention is Apple Inc's online store, which significantly widened opportunities for entrepre-

neurs all over the world.

The App Store provides developers with access to a vast global audience, allowing them to distribute their apps in over 175 markets.

This also means that someone developing a gaming app in a room in Balakong could have five gamers gather in a basement in San Francisco to test it out.

In the spirit of guiding and mentoring, the App Store encourages innovation by providing more tools and resources that help developers create new applications.

A win-win situation, for successful applications only stand to garner more users each day. And a case of entrepreneurs sticking to your platform, and optimising its capabilities so you can scale and further commercialise.

Nurturing these startups does not need to begin post-graduation. It can very well start in schools and universities.

If the education sector doesn't step up, we're preparing students for jobs that might not even exist by the time they graduate!

That's why education needs to stop being a conveyor belt for employees. We need students who can spot opportunities where others see obstacles, who can innovate instead of just memorise.

A good example would be an initiative we've taken here at TM Research & Development (R&D) – the OIP Smart Campus Design Challenge, organised in 2018 with students from Multimedia University.

It was all about encouraging students to develop digital solu-

tions using TM R&D's Open Innovation Platform (OIP), a three-in-one platform enabling solution development and deployment four times faster than before.

Initially launched as a project, OIP has since evolved into a digital development platform for digital enthusiasts, creating over 50 applications built on the platform, more than 700 data sets and over 800 services to support rapid app development – and these numbers continue to grow.

What it translates to is that entrepreneurs can launch new applications on the fly like the AppStore!

We leveraged the OIP to develop a Data Exchange Platform in collaboration with Malaysia Digital Economy Corp within three weeks to bolster research efforts in combating the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution is turning the world on its head, and progress cannot happen in a silo.

Corporates and entrepreneurs joining forces could mean each bringing their own, unique superpower to the table.

The big boys have the resources and reach; the startups have the agility and inventive thinking.

Together, we can navigate this new world, driving innovation at a pace neither could achieve alone.

Collaboration isn't just a good idea – it's the weapon to survive in a world that's always steps ahead.

Let's face it: In a pace this fast, you're either innovating, or you're obsolete.