

Teaching start-ups the tricks of the trade

Startup Leadership conducts sessions for entrepreneurs to help jump start their firm

MEERA SIVA

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Start-up founders may be domain experts in their product/service segment, but running a business needs a whole lot more. Startup Leadership, a global networking and education organisation, conducts focused sessions for entrepreneurs to help jump start their company.

Operational in 27 cities spanning 13 countries, the initiative has so far reached 1,300 start-ups. The 2,200 founders who graduated have raised \$500 million and have witnessed 45 exits. Its graduates have been accepted into accelerators including 500 Startups and Techstars; funded by venture capital funds such as Tiger, Blume Ventures and Khosla Ventures; and acquired by companies such Groupm.

The successful graduates include ixigo, Innoz, Shareaholic, Ubersense,

PiQube, GUVI, Online Prasad, Grabhouse and Voicetap. Start-up founders are trained on legal, financial and technical aspects, and offered coaching in soft skills, business and fund-raising. The effort is run by volunteers who are founders themselves, and no equity stake is taken for training the start-ups.

"The idea of the programme is for the founders to use the network and get answers for any challenges faced. That way, there is no need to repeat the mistakes made by others," says Praveen M, Programme Leader for the Chennai chapter of Startup Leadership.

A peer network

Building a peer network is important for start-ups, says Krish Subramanian, co-founder of Chargebee, a SaaS subscription billing solution provider. "It helps to understand that everyone has fears

and uncertainties just like yourself; you just need to pull through," he says. The mentors help provide relevant information and additional help.

Shanmugavel Sankaran, founder and CEO, FixNix, a Chennai-based compliance solution provider, says he gained a new view on building a business. "Getting mentored by Sridhar Vembu of Zoho changed my perspective on product, technology and automation." Sankaran is now a mentor for the new batch of start-ups in Chennai. Arul Murugan, co-founder, SnackExperts, says besides the learning he also received investment from a fellow entrepreneur who liked his business idea.

The programme runs for six months on alternate Saturdays. For the next batch starting this September, start-ups can apply online till August 15. About 20 will be short-listed based on factors such as commitment, leadership and stage of start-up, evaluated by a panel.