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# PROGRAMME PLAN AND DIGITAL RESOURCES FOR EARLY-STAGE ACADEMIC STARTUPS WITH FIRST CUSTOMERS

## 06 - TRAINING SCHEME



PREPARED AND PRESENTED BY



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# About Cogsteps



**Where science and  
research meet business**

Crossing the Gap: Startup education and support for PhD students, researchers and scientists (COGSTEPS) is the **Erasmus+ project** coordinated by the University of Zagreb Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing and implemented together with the University of Ljubljana, TU Graz, Zagreb Innovation Centre, Ljubljana University Incubator and Know-Center. The implementation of this project seeks to “fill the gap” between the academic and the startup world.

Through the COGSTEPS project, a web platform that allows researchers and scientists to transform their research results and innovations into deep-tech startups and connect with relevant experts and stakeholders from the startup ecosystem was developed. Subsequently, researchers and scientists were able to engage in intensive startup bootcamp to master the startup basics and to recognise the opportunity for commercialising their research results. The next step was startup training in three phases, for all research and development teams that already had basic startup knowledge and want to start a startup from their research. Each stage was complementary to the previous one, following a specific period of startup development and implemented by different Cogsteps partners.



## Get to know us

Find more information about the Cogsteps project at <https://cogsteps.com/>

# Challenges, goals and activities

Many scientists work their whole life in a specific field and they are “top-notch” experts. Most PhD students invest many years in their research while preparing doctoral dissertations but this knowledge and experience are rarely applied in the industry. Too few PhD holders in the EU go on to work outside academia and too few startups and spin-off companies are founded by PhD holders. As a result, the EU is in a serious deficit of successful startups and spin-off companies coming from universities. This is a huge problem since innovation is one of the most important drivers of economic growth.

The goal of this project is to create a clear path, educational materials and support programme for every academic startup. The main objectives are:

- positive change in startup perception from the academic and scientific communities,
- starting more university startups and spin-off companies,
- development of an entrepreneurial mindset, transferable and transversal skills by students, researchers, professors and scientists,
- forming a regional hub for innovation, research and science commercialisation,
- crossing the gap between the academic and startup worlds.

## Cogsteps timeline

The Cogsteps web platform aims to connect researchers and experienced startup experts, using a data-driven recommender system that delivers personalized recommendations to platform users. The platform guides users through the step-by-step process of forming a startup, including brainstorming, networking, education, mentoring, and connecting with incubators and venture capitalists. The project also offers live education and support programs, such as a "Startup 101" bootcamp, to help researchers deep dive into the startup world. Additionally, there is a startup incubation program consisting of three phases, providing intensive education and mentorship to academic research teams aiming to start their own startups. Networking and dissemination events like "Brainstorming Tuesday" and "Demo Day" are organized to further immerse participants in the startup ecosystem.



# About startups with first customers

## FROM CUSTOMERS TO PRODUCT

We're thrilled to introduce our "From Customers to Product" incubation program, designed especially for deep-tech researchers transitioning into the startup ecosystem. This program emphasizes understanding customer preferences, honing your product, and carving a unique niche in the market. Dive deep into business growth tactics, master the art of communication, and explore potent marketing strategies and university collaborations. With guidance from seasoned experts from industry and academia, you'll harness your research prowess to craft solutions that truly resonate with your audience.

In the 'from customers to product' phase, startups are at a crucial transition point. Capitalizing on initial momentum is vital, and this requires a robust focus on business growth and clear communication. As the product evolves based on feedback, targeted marketing becomes indispensable, drawing in new customers and strengthening existing relationships. Collaborations with universities can infuse the startup with fresh innovations and research insights. Central to this phase is truly understanding the customer, which not only refines the product but also sets the startup apart in a crowded market. Strategic partnerships further amplify reach and resources.

Participating in a workshop that covers these elements equips startups with the knowledge and tools to navigate this phase successfully, turning initial traction into sustainable growth.

### Business growth

Business expansion is more than just boosting revenues; it's about maturing from a budding idea to a recognized entity. This progression involves deep market insights, product diversification, and brand enhancement.



However, the path to growth is as crucial as growth itself. Sustainable growth emphasizes long-term stability, ethical practices, and environmental responsibility. By prioritizing sustainability, businesses not only ensure resilience against market shifts but also foster enduring trust with their audience. In essence, sustainable growth is a testament to a company's vision and commitment to lasting value.

### Effective communication

Transparent communication is pivotal in the business world. More than just relaying messages, it's about fostering mutual understanding, building trust, and facilitating collaboration. In an environment where details matter, articulating thoughts clearly can be the bridge between a fruitful partnership and a lost chance. Be it team interactions, stakeholder discussions, or customer outreach, a lucid and consistent message ensures everyone is on the same page. As we navigate the digital era, proficiency in diverse communication channels, from traditional meetings to online tools, is essential. Embracing open communication not only fortifies relationships but also helps in averting potential pitfalls, laying the groundwork for enduring success. In our information-rich age, effective communication stands out as a fundamental necessity.

## Marketing strategies

For startups, crafting the right marketing strategy can be the catalyst that propels them from obscurity to the spotlight. Unlike established entities with deep pockets, startups often operate on limited budgets, making every marketing decision crucial. The key lies in understanding their unique value proposition and identifying the most receptive audience segments. Digital marketing, with its cost-effective channels like social media, content marketing, and pay-per-click advertising, offers startups the agility to test, iterate, and optimize campaigns in real-time. Influencer partnerships and grassroots community engagement can further amplify their reach, creating authentic brand advocates. Moreover, leveraging data analytics helps in refining target demographics, understanding consumer behavior, and predicting market trends. Ultimately, a well-executed marketing strategy not only boosts visibility but also establishes brand credibility and trust, setting the stage for sustained growth and customer loyalty.



## Sales strategies and product pricing

In the business arena, sales strategies paired with clever product pricing are game-changers. For startups, a tailored sales approach, centered on understanding customer needs, is essential. It's not just about selling, but building trust and offering genuine solutions. On the pricing front, it's a delicate balance: startups must gauge the market's perceived value of their product, consider competition, and set a price that's both appealing to customers and profitable. In essence, strategic sales and smart pricing are the duo that can propel a startup from initial traction to sustained growth.

## Collaboration with universities

Deep-tech startups emerging from universities have a unique edge, rooted in their academic origins. They benefit from direct access to cutting-edge research and a vast network of expertise. As they transition to the commercial sphere, navigating intellectual property (IP) becomes crucial, ensuring that both the university's and the startup's innovations are safeguarded. Continued collaboration with their academic foundations not only amplifies their research capabilities but also paves the way for mentorship and joint ventures. For deep-tech startups, continued collaboration with these institutions can be a catalyst, propelling them from research-centric origins to market-driven successes.

We've curated a selection of expert lectures on the key topics outlined. These lectures are designed to provide actionable knowledge, propelling your startup towards greater achievements.



# Programme plan

## A LIST OF LECTURES AND WORKSHOPS

TOPIC	DESCRIPTION	KEY WORDS
<b>SUCCESSFUL COMMUNICATION</b> CRAIG MATTHEWS AND PASCALE SCHNEIDER (SCIENCE PARK)	Tackle the challenge of limited attention in today's media landscape. Learn the secrets of effective communication and receive hands-on tools to elevate your corporate communication.	limited attention; media landscape; effective corporate communication; strategy
<b>ONLINE MARKETING FOR STARTUPS</b> MAJA ŠINKOVEC	Guide startups in securing their first online customers. Learn key online marketing strategies, including SEO, social media, and ads, and enhance the online presence for founders.	online customers; online marketing; SEO; social media; ads; online presence;
<b>STARTUP GROWTH</b> FLORIAN SCHLEICHER (FUTURES)	Explore marketing's role in startup growth. Foundational analysis, goal-setting, channel exploration, and offer hands-on exercises for strategizing in groups with collective feedback.	marketing; sustainable startup growth; goals; channels; implementation; strategy; feedback
<b>POSSIBILITIES OF COLLABORATION WITH UNIVERSITIES</b> MARIO FALLAST (TU GRAZ)	How to collaborate with universities? What to consider and expect? Best practices for building partnerships, navigating IP issues, and understanding research interests.	universities; best practices; partnerships; intellectual property; research;
<b>SALES STRATEGY</b> CHRISTOPH ULL (IMS.CON/IACT)	Delve into product pricing, exploring various models and market research techniques. With real-world examples and case studies, craft effective pricing strategies for your offerings.	startups; ecosystem; product pricing; market research; case studies; pricing strategies;

# Successful Communication

## MASTERING THE ART OF ENGAGING COMMUNICATION IN A DIGITAL AGE



<https://cogsteps.com/successful-communication/>



[https://youtu.be/-u-UI\\_Xqiw](https://youtu.be/-u-UI_Xqiw)

In today's fast-paced digital world, where attention is a premium commodity, the ability to communicate effectively is paramount. This workshop is designed to arm participants with a comprehensive toolkit for successful communication, tailored for the challenges and opportunities of the modern age.

Networking emerges as a cornerstone of strategic communication. We'll delve into making impactful entrances and exits in group conversations, delivering compelling value propositions, and strategies to expand professional circles. These insights are crucial for fostering meaningful connections in an increasingly interconnected world.

Crafting messages that are simple, consistent, and repeatable is another focal point.

By targeting the right communication channels, from traditional methods to digital platforms, messages can reach their intended audience with maximum impact. The world of precision targeting offers a deep dive into connecting with hidden audiences, presenting both challenges and rewards.

Cold calling, often seen as a daunting task, is demystified, offering techniques to understand customer needs, overcome objections, and track efforts for continuous improvement. Additionally, the power of storytelling in a business context will be highlighted, emphasizing its role in captivating and inspiring audiences.

Learn how to navigate the complexities of strategic communication in the digital age and enhance your communication strategies.



**Science Park**  
The High Tech Incubator  
Graz

**WORKSHOP**  
**Successful Communication**  
By Craig Matthews & Pascale Schneider

**e esa**  
business  
incubation  
centre  
Austria



# Startup marketing

## GROWTH HACKING AND ONLINE MARKETING



<https://cogsteps.com/online-marketing-for-startups/>



<https://youtu.be/xmfP8NCz6Wk>

Online marketing stands as a transformative tool for startups, offering a pathway to carve out a distinct digital presence and forge meaningful connections with their initial customer base. This workshop delves deep into the multifaceted world of online marketing, tailored specifically for startups eager to make a splash in the digital realm.

The content creation process on platforms like LinkedIn is demystified, highlighting the need to inform, connect, and engage rather than merely promoting products. Key insights include the significance of the first 30 minutes after posting, leveraging LinkedIn's unique features, and the importance of hashtags for visibility.

Beyond LinkedIn, the presentation encompasses the broader online marketing landscape.

Participants are introduced to the iterative and dynamic process of online marketing, which involves continuous cycles of testing, executing, analyzing, learning, and refining strategies. Emphasis is placed on the significance of building genuine and lasting online communities, the essence of authentic communication, and the strategy behind prioritizing specific social media channels to maximize reach and impact.

Woven throughout the presentation are real-world examples, offering tangible illustrations of successful online marketing strategies in action. These case studies, combined with actionable lessons and insights, provide startups with a comprehensive roadmap to navigate the complexities of online marketing and establish a formidable digital footprint.



# Startup growth

## STRATEGIC FOUNDATIONS: BUILDING SUSTAINABLE GROWTH FOR STARTUPS



<https://cogsteps.com/startup-growth/>



<https://youtu.be/bgmEkqk-fus>

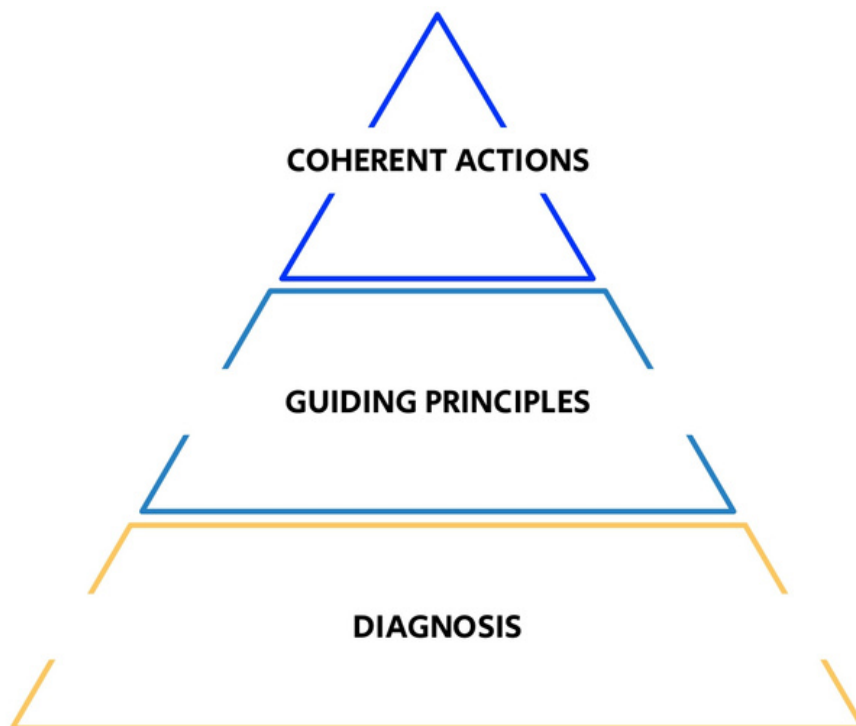
In the dynamic world of startups, growth is the beacon that every entrepreneur chases. However, achieving sustainable growth requires more than just ambition; it demands a well-crafted strategy. This workshop is designed to be a deep dive into the intricate world of startup growth, with a special emphasis on the pivotal role of marketing.

Using 'Too Good To Go' as a case study, we illustrate the transformative power of effective marketing in propelling startups from obscurity to prominence. Participants are introduced to the foundational elements of growth strategy, starting with the importance of thorough analysis. By understanding the current landscape, startups can identify opportunities and challenges, allowing for informed decision-making.

Goal-setting emerges as a central theme. The focus is on setting specific, measurable, and time-bound goals that align with the startup's vision. This alignment ensures that every action taken is a step closer to the overarching vision of the company.

The workshop also delves into the concept of Guiding Principles. Beyond just business objectives, these principles emphasize a commitment to broader societal goals, particularly the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By aligning business actions with these global objectives, startups can position themselves as responsible and forward-thinking entities.

Whether in the early stages of your startup journey or looking to refine your growth strategy, this workshop provides the insights and tools to navigate the path ahead with confidence.



# Cooperation with universities

## USING THE EXAMPLE OF GRAZ UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY



<https://cogsteps.com/cooperation-with-universities/>



<https://youtu.be/VJHDb0slwrw>

Universities, renowned for their deep wells of knowledge and cutting-edge research, present a myriad of collaboration opportunities for businesses. This workshop delves into the vast potential and intricacies of such collaborations, spotlighting the Graz University of Technology as an example.

Central to our exploration is the pivotal role played by university transfer offices. These entities stand as the intermediaries between the academic and corporate worlds, offering guidance on different issues from research funding to patent intricacies. Their expertise ensures that collaborations are not only initiated but also sustained and fruitful.

A successful collaboration hinges on mutual understanding. This entails recognizing mutual objectives, pinpointing the right academic

contacts, and adeptly navigating the often-complex realm of intellectual property. With real-world examples from Graz University of Technology, participants will gain insights into best practices for building and nurturing these partnerships.

The workshop also broadens its scope to introduce a variety of collaboration formats. These range from in-depth expert discussions and student-led projects to hands-on technical consultations. Specialized collaboration events, such as hackathons and innovation marathons, showcase the dynamic ways in which universities and industries can synergize.

In sum, this workshop serves as a comprehensive guide, equipping participants with the knowledge, tools, and strategies to effectively tap into the academic world for business growth and innovation.



# Sales Strategy

## CRAFTING OPTIMAL SALES STRATEGIES FOR STARTUP SUCCESS

 <https://cogsteps.com/sales-workshop/>

 [https://youtu.be/\\_GalnKbHORA](https://youtu.be/_GalnKbHORA)

In the competitive landscape of startups, pricing and sales can be the key of success. This workshop delves into the intricate art and science of product pricing and sales strategies, offering participants a comprehensive understanding of various approaches. From cost-plus pricing to value-based strategies, we explore the spectrum of models that can be tailored to fit diverse startup needs.

But pricing isn't just about picking a number. It's about understanding the market, the competition, and the perceived value of your product or service. To this end, the workshop emphasizes the importance of robust market research. By gauging the market pulse, startups can craft pricing strategies that resonate with their target audience and drive sales.

To ensure practical applicability, the session is enriched with real-world examples and case studies. These tangible illustrations offer insights into the successes and challenges faced by other startups, providing valuable lessons for participants.

In essence, this workshop serves as a comprehensive guide to pricing and sales for startups. Whether you're at the inception of your entrepreneurial journey or seeking to recalibrate your pricing strategy, this lecture offers the insights, tools, and collaborative opportunities to chart a path to optimal pricing, sales strategies and business success.

## Sales Strategy

What to think about?



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Where science and  
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