



The lasting impact of Step Conference on promising start-ups in MENA

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Dubai has an 84-billion-dirham (approximately \$23 billion) start-up ecosystem, with a spirited and incentivising business environment across high-performing industries. Young companies in sectors such as AI, healthtech, fintech, and proptech, have benefitted from significant strategic and financial support available in the emirate, propelling their innovation and expansion forward. The strategic advantages and extensive network, therefore, make starting a business in Dubai an increasingly appealing prospect for entrepreneurs worldwide. Without a doubt, major start-up and technology festivals like Step Conference are key in connecting businesses with venture capitalists.

This document is part of a series exploring Step Conference, one of the Middle East's premier tech and start-up events. In this edition, we highlight its influence on Dubai's entrepreneurial field and present real-life accounts of unicorns that have been part of this dynamic platform.



Why Step Conference is a prime platform for start-ups and investors

The recently wrapped-up Step Dubai 2025, held at Dubai Internet City — the region's leading tech hub and part of TECOM Group — attracted over 8,000 attendees, 200 speakers, offering start-ups access to an impressive \$9 billion in funding. The event also welcomed distinguished investors from companies such as e& capital, Techstars, Flat6Labs, and BY Venture Partners. Particularly, their involvement allowed start-ups and entrepreneurs to pre-arrange one-on-one sessions across various stages, from pre-seed to growth. Hence, there is no doubt that for over 13 years, Step Dubai has served as a launchpad for numerous start-ups in MENA and from across the world.



Major entities participating in Step Conference

Drowzy, an Egyptian e-commerce brand that participated in Step 2020, secured a six-figure seed investment after connecting with UAE-based investors at the conference. This funding enabled Drowzy to expand its product line and enter new markets, exemplifying the impact of Step Dubai on start-up success. Additionally, such opportunities highlight how to start a business in Dubai successfully through effective leveraging of investor connections and company set-up support.

The emirate has a strong start-up scene, further supported by renowned incubator platforms like in5, which have consistently showcased promising ventures at Step Conference through the years. The entrepreneurs and start-ups within the in5 ecosystem benefit from training sessions, funding support, and strategic partnerships, enabling them to bring their innovations to market successfully. Importantly, since its launch in 2013, the business incubator has supported 1,000 start-ups, helping them raise AED 7.8 billion in funding. Among the notable alumni of in5 are the buy-now-pay-later platform Tabby and the eyewear retailer eyewa.





Takeaways for entrepreneurs looking to start a business in Dubai

Traversing through Dubai's business field requires effective planning and encompasses different strategies for various situations. If you've engaged with a potential investor and want to deepen that relationship and secure their commitment, keep these key points in mind:

- Send a well-structured follow-up email with a concise yet compelling proposal that outlines your startup's value proposition, market potential, and financial projections;
- Strengthen trust by showcasing past successes, partnerships, or traction metrics;
- Address any concerns they raised to demonstrate your adaptability and strategic foresight;
- Schedule a follow-up meeting to solidify interest and discuss the next steps; and
- Investors may take time to decide, so maintain communication and reinforce confidence in your venture.



Become a Royalty Partner

Working with a local partner like the Seed Group opens doors to key stakeholders in both the public and private sectors, enabling accelerated business development through strategic alliances. With the Royal Family Office fostering relationships at the highest level, our partners gain access to otherwise inaccessible decision-makers.

A screenshot of a web application form titled "Become a Royalty Partner". The form is white and centered on a background of desert dunes. It contains several input fields and a dropdown menu. The fields are arranged in a grid-like fashion. The form includes a small SEED logo at the top center. The fields are: "Company Name", "Type of Business (B2B/B2C/B2G)", "Company Website", "Company Location", "Company Industry", "Product/Service", "Company Phone No.", and "Year of Establishment". There is a small note below the website and location fields: "If not applicable, please type N/A".

Company Name *	Type of Business (B2B/B2C/B2G) *
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Company Website *	Company Location *
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<small>If not applicable, please type N/A</small>	
Company Industry *	Product/Service *
<input type="text" value="Please Select"/>	<input type="text"/>
Company Phone No.	Year of Establishment

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Dubai's outstanding achievements in 2024 undoubtedly amplify its voice in the global investment and innovation expanse. These milestones, along with its pro-business policies and strategic vision, enhance the ease of starting a business in the emirate. Entrepreneurs and investors worldwide arguably benefit from Dubai's forward-thinking approach, making it a top place for company success.

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