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Stanford eCorner

Sandbox: A Distributed Alliance

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How could you connect young entrepreneurs across cities and continents, and empower them to energize change around the world? For Sandbox, the answer was to combine the power and intimacy of local bonds with the reach of network effects and decentralized interactions. The organization built individual micro-communities in major cities, then created communication channels to link each hub with all the others. According to Christian Busch, one of the founding members of the global collective, the key to their growth was activating "the power of proxy-trust." A Sandbox member from Nairobi could connect with a Sandbox member (and stranger) from Beijing directly and deeply, and gain crucial insight into the Beijing ecosystem without going through any central node. Such a collective, he argues, can be more powerful than any individual incubator.

Sandbox is collective effort that represents the work of many individuals from around the world for over a decade. For the purposes of this video, only two members were interviewed.

Educators: Activate a discussion about scaling and purpose in your classroom with a Sandbox case study that delves deeper into the organization's motives and unique hub structure.

Transcript

- [Speaker] What does it take to energize change globally? We're looking at an organization called Sandbox to explore the power of communities to bring meaningful action to scale.. - Yeah the idea behind Sandbox is to create a family for young change makers in their twenties.. - [Christian] This is a space where you feel safe.. There is a tribe of people who come together and help each other make it happen.. This kind of collective so much more powerful than any incubator that could help you with one problem or two problems.. (peaceful music) It's almost like a shift in mindset where you say... when you come in with a transactional mindset yes you try to quantify, you try to delicately measure it, but when you think about how in a knowledge economy, how new startups, how the new world works, it's based on relationships and I think if you can help facilitate these relationships, that's where the magic happens.. We actually looked a lot at these types of global organizations, movements, religions, in terms of trying to understand, what is it about them that allows them to be global, and I feel the one thing that was interesting to us was to say, if you try to create this from scratch, which normally happens over decades, centuries, what if you could do that within a couple of years, but based on an interest or based on similar passions? (upbeat music) - [Fabian] Our hot model had few assumptions, that in order, for someone to feel really part of the community, they had to have a home.. That they needed to feel the community somewhere.. It can't just be digital, and it can't just be global..

Let's do it city by city, and in every city, we can have a micro community that meets and exchanges on a regular basis, you then cross pollinate the different cities and you create a bigger global network of all these different local clubs.. - [Christian] We've realized that over time that the power of proxy trusts.. How do you make sure that when I am a member in Nairobi, and I go to Beijing, that I actually now can connect directly with a member there, without having to go through the ambassador, without having to go through that node? - [Fabian] I could plug straight into an existing ecosystem, where people knew... how to get around, what to do, who are the right decision makers, how can I build things here, and so that allowed us both to have an intimacy, and a feeling of intimacy, but also a feeling of reach.. - [Christian] Our problem was all about saying, how do you get people who are in a certain locality, involved in something that is much bigger than that local place where they are? - Is that a model that could really help communities grow and kind of, not just communities all kinds of organizations grow?..