

# 4 ways to thrive as an entrepreneur outside the valley

[Business](#), [Entrepreneurship](#)



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Startup communities around the world are leveling up. The opportunities once found only in prominent startup ecosystems can now be seen everywhere, and savvy entrepreneurs are taking advantage.

I've experienced this shift first hand. Having moved to Lincoln, Neb., from stints in Hong Kong and Silicon Valley over a decade ago, I can attest that the opportunities for entrepreneurs have dramatically grown in "fly-over country."

Cities like Lincoln (and Omaha and Cincinnati and Kansas City and on and on), have begun to pull together the tools, resources, networks, and foundational support needed for the next wave of technology entrepreneurs -- what Steve Case refers to as . This "rise" is real in Nebraska and other places.

Here are four ways entrepreneurs can take advantage of the growing resources of their startup community.

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## 1. Find founders

A strong startup community starts with strong entrepreneurs. Unlike the Valley where it seems like everyone in line for coffee works at a startup, finding fellow founders can be more challenging in other markets. However, finding a tribe of fellow founders is easier with meet-ups and networking events like to regular showcases like , or local activities.

Finding this density of founders has been a cornerstone of growth for our community, enabling new founders to share experiences and make connections with peers. While some of these activities come with national support and exposure through organizations like or , many of them have come from grassroot efforts. If you're not seeing these type of events in your community, start something today to find your tribe.

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## 2. Expand your backyard

Smaller hubs need to work together to expand their opportunities. One way to do this is to look beyond traditional borders. The more collaboration we've seen within the community, as well as with neighboring cities, the more success we've seen from our startups. Within Lincoln, we've grown our collisions between our startups and a variety of entities including universities, city government and the traditional corporate business community. Whether it's connecting students to intern opportunities or working with partners to leverage new infrastructure like Lincoln's new gigabit fiber providers, startups are active players in the conversation. Our

local entrepreneurs regularly make trips between Lincoln, Omaha, Kansas City, Chicago and Denver to attend each other's events, pitch to neighboring angel groups, interact with mentors, or participate in regional programs like . Leverage these resources beyond your backyard.

### **3. Tap into talent**

Regardless of where you live, finding talent to build your startup can be a challenge. Conquering this challenge in smaller cities requires thinking differently about where to find it. In addition to the traditional talent sources like the local universities, our startups have looked to recruit from other similar but less startup-friendly communities. Tapping into the University of Nebraska's Big10 affiliation has also been a major opportunity for our startups to leverage.

Another way startups have approached talent is to find it early and train their own. It's not uncommon for our startups to target and recruit promising talent during high school. This " catch-em early" strategy has paid dividends in finding talent before they can be poached away by more traditional employers. On a similar note, the rise in remote working capabilities has enabled some startups to recruit where the talent currently resides (be it the Valley or other places).

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### **4. Bang the drum**

One of the biggest advantages smaller-city entrepreneurs should capitalize on is to " Bang The Drum" strategy. Tell your story. Leverage the fact that

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you're not in a media epicenter to your advantage. While you may be one of a hundred companies vying for attention in a bigger city, you could be the go-to story in a smaller one. The fact that our startups are building things outside the core has in fact been a major part of their stories and reasons for some of the national press and exposure that they've received. Being an entrepreneur is rare enough, being one who's doing amazing things in places unexpected is even rarer.

It's never been a better time to be an entrepreneur. Tap into your startup community, find your tribe, expand your backyard, and bang the drum. Time to make it happen.