

DMZ BACKGROUNDER

The DMZ at Ryerson University is the leading business incubator for technology startups in North America, fuelling the success of emerging entrepreneurs.

The DMZ is one of our country's largest business incubators for emerging technology startups. The top-ranked university-based incubator in North America and third in the world, it fuels entrepreneurs with the resources to grow their startups into successful companies. The DMZ connects them with customers, advisors, influencers and other entrepreneurs as part of a community that supports and fosters disruptive technologies that transform businesses and lives.

The DMZ is based at Ryerson, but it's not just for students; this unique ecosystem is home to entrepreneurs and innovators of all ages from across Toronto, Canada and the world. Overlooking the heart of downtown Toronto at Yonge-Dundas Square, the DMZ is a hub of innovation and collaboration. All companies making innovative use of technology may apply to the DMZ, as long as they have at least a strong business plan and working prototype.

Six years after launching, 276 startups have incubated at the DMZ. They've raised over \$280 million in seed funding and have fostered the creation of nearly 2,629 jobs.

THE DMZ'S HISTORY AND LEGACY

In his March 2009 address to the Empire Club of Canada, Ryerson University President Sheldon Levy announced his intention to make digital innovation a top priority for the university. He saw the value in creating a space on campus that would encourage students, alumni and entrepreneurs from the wider community to collaborate, innovate and create. The goal was to forge a home for innovation and entrepreneurship in Toronto, and keep talent in Canada. The DMZ opened its doors in April 2010.

A CATALYST FOR CHANGE WITHIN RYERSON, ACROSS THE COUNTRY AND AROUND THE WORLD

The success of the DMZ has inspired a thriving multidisciplinary ecosystem for innovation at Ryerson University. Zone learning — Ryerson’s pioneering approach to entrepreneurial education — goes beyond the classroom and makes it possible for students to walk the path that entrepreneurs travel. About 13 per cent of all Ryerson students are engaged in entrepreneurial education and/or activities.

Ryerson University has created a network of other zones on campus, each specializing in sectors poised for growth and transformation. These zones are supporting the next wave of entrepreneurs from Ryerson and beyond, helping them develop their ideas through education, ideation and prototyping. When ready, members from these zones can apply to the DMZ to rapidly grow their businesses and acquire customers.

The ripple effect of the DMZ extends far beyond the university. Ryerson Futures Inc. (RFI), a seed funding and accelerator program affiliated with the DMZ, launched in September 2013 to invest in and support more mature and highly scalable startups. In 2014, the DMZ and RFI brought this model to Mumbai, where Zone Startups India helps Indian entrepreneurs fast-track their businesses, and offers DMZ companies unprecedented opportunities to access the Indian market. In 2015, Scale Up Ventures was formed by Ryerson board member and CEO-in-residence Nadir Mohamed to deliver \$50 million in pre-series A funding to growth-stage startups. The DMZ has likewise formed partnerships with groups and institutions from around the world, including the Bombay Stock Exchange Institute, C100, Stellenbosch University, Communications University of China, and Ashoka, and has hosted dozens of international entrepreneurs to develop their companies in Toronto.

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