DMZ BACKGROUNDER

The DMZ at Ryerson University is the leading business incubator for technology startups in North America, fueling 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, 312 startups have incubated at the DMZ. They've raised over $391 million in seed funding and have fostered the creation of nearly 2,962 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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DMZ FACTS AT A GLANCE

The DMZ at Ryerson University is the top-ranked university-based incubator in North America and third in the world, as rated by the University Business Incubator (UBI Global) Index. It is one of the country's largest incubators for technology startups, helping entrepreneurs succeed by connecting them with customers, advisors, influencers and other entrepreneurs.

Since DMZ's opening in 2010, it has achieved:

- 312 startups incubated
- 2,962 jobs fostered and created through newly formed companies and market-driven research, plus 301 new jobs at Ryerson
- $391 million in total funding raised by DMZ companies

As of August 2017, the DMZ houses approximately 325 innovators in 64 startups.

Although based out of Ryerson University, the DMZ is open to any company, not just student-led, that meets the following criteria:

- An innovative business idea, enabled by technology, that brings commercial or social value
- A "lean canvas" business model and a prototype that's in the market or ready-to-launch
- A team that fits with the DMZ's collaborative culture

Startups at the DMZ receive:

- Connections to potential clients, plus a network of investors and industry contacts
- Mentorship from entrepreneurs-in-residence
- Coaching from business leaders and advisors
- Media training and exposure
- Access to a collaborative environment and peer-to-peer knowledge transfer
- Workshops, networking opportunities and panel discussions
- Dedicated workspace, meeting rooms, event space and technology

Startups have access to the DMZ's roster of over 80 industry-leading advisors for one-on-one consultations to leverage their experience and vast networks.

DMZ occupies a total of 32,900 sq. ft. over four floors in 10 Dundas St. E, overlooking Dundas Square in the heart of downtown Toronto. Office highlights include:

- Large event space with standing room for 150 people
- 15 meeting rooms, all of which have access to whiteboards
- A Smart Classroom, which uses camera-tracking technology to live-broadcast workshops and other community-engaging activities
- Ping pong room
- Hammock room
- Five private phone booths

Since its doors opened in April 2010 the DMZ has hosted more than 2,441 tours, including government delegations, captains of industry and international journalists, including:

- Jim Smith, CEO and President, Thompson Reuters
- Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister
- Craig Muhlhauser, President and Chief Executive Officer, Celestica
- Terry Stuart, CIO, Deloitte
- His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales
- Margaret Atwood, Canadian author
- Heather Reisman, CEO, Indigo Books and Music
- Ed Fast, MP
- Rafael Barak, Ambassador of Israel to Canada

The DMZ has partnered with a number of leading national and international organizations, including Accenture, MasterCard and Rogers.

The DMZ fosters international opportunities for its entrepreneurs, including a partnership with the Bombay Stock Exchange Institute to create Zone Startups India, an India-based incubator for entrepreneurs to fast-track their startups and connect with mentors, customers and investors. This collaboration lays the groundwork to help young businesses expand into both the Indian and Canadian markets and supports innovation and prosperity in both countries.

The DMZ has created links to top-tier incubators and accelerators around the world, including establishments in Tunisia, Jordan, India, the U.S., the UK and South Africa. The DMZ has also hosted international fellows from China, South Africa, India, Israel and more.

The DMZ's success has inspired the creation of nine other zones across Ryerson University, which serve as hubs for student entrepreneurship and innovation.

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