

STATE OF TECH TALENT DUBAI 2023

A guide for technology companies, investors, and policy makers

INTEGRA SEVEN



✦ wamda

A portrait of Natalia Sycheva, a woman with long dark hair, smiling slightly. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey. A purple geometric shape overlaps the bottom right of the portrait.

FOREWORD

Natalia Sycheva

Managing Director, Integra Seven

I am pleased to present the "State of Tech Talent in Dubai 2023" report, a collaboration between Integra Seven and Wamda. This comprehensive guide not only reveals strategies for attracting and retaining tech talent within Dubai's burgeoning tech ecosystem, but it also provides crucial insights for policy-makers to boost the digital economy.

In Dubai's tech landscape, the recurring challenge of specialized talent scarcity is all too familiar. After months of research, we've deconstructed this challenge into manageable components. Some aspects can be addressed through founder mentorship and training, others through innovative HR approaches, and more still through government-led initiatives and policy adjustments.

Our study focuses on successful Dubai tech companies that have moved beyond the early stages of development, secured over \$1 million in funding, and now employ an average of 250 professionals across various sectors, including Fintech, E-commerce, SaaS, Foodtech, and HR tech.

We've engaged with engineers, both in Dubai and abroad, working in the Emirate's tech sector to understand their perspectives on Dubai's employment market. In a fiercely competitive global tech arena, talent is the ultimate currency. Dubai's progressive economic policies and business-friendly environment have solidified its status as the preferred destination for technology innovators. Recent government initiatives aimed at easing talent access and retention have garnered acclaim from the tech community.

The "State of Tech Talent in Dubai 2023" report is an invaluable resource for entrepreneurs, investors, and policy-makers navigating Dubai's dynamic tech landscape. It offers actionable insights to help you thrive in this competitive ecosystem and shape policies that will propel the city's tech sector to new heights.

A portrait of Fadi Ghandour, Executive Chairman of Wamda, smiling and wearing a light blue button-down shirt. The background is a blurred office setting with framed artwork.

FOREWORD

Fadi Ghandour

Executive Chairman, Wamda

In today's fast-paced global economy, Dubai has emerged as a thriving hub of technological innovation, attracting an array of tech companies eager to harness its potential. The "State of Tech Talent in Dubai" report offers a glimpse into the intricate landscape of the city's tech sector. With a particular focus on strategies for attracting and retaining tech talent within Dubai's competitive and dynamic tech ecosystem, this report also sheds light on policy improvements that could further bolster the growth of the technology sector.

In an age where countries worldwide are navigating an increasingly digitized landscape, the significance of tech talent cannot be overstated. The nurturing, education, and attraction of tech-capable individuals have become central pillars of a country's competitive advantage in the 21st-century digital economy. Dubai stands at the forefront of this transformative journey, seeking not only to participate but to lead in the global race for tech talent.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE), of which Dubai is the bustling tech startup center, has demonstrated remarkable prowess on the global stage. The UAE recently claimed the top spot globally in macroeconomic stability and second place in ICT adoption, emphasizing the nation's commitment to harnessing the power of technology for societal progress.

However, as this report underscores, even burgeoning ecosystems come with their own unique challenges. The increasing demand for specialised tech talent, cost of living pressures, and a pervasive freelance and "side hustle" culture, especially among engineers are a few challenges companies in the region grapple with. Yet, it's heartening to observe the agility and resourcefulness with which Dubai-based tech companies are circumventing these challenges, adopting a globalised approach, dispersing teams across multiple countries, and creatively aligning benefits to retain top-tier talent.

This report offers more than just insights; it encapsulates the hopes, challenges, strategies, and aspirations of a tech ecosystem that is both vibrant and resilient. It provides both a mirror to reflect on the current state and a window into the immense potential that the future holds. For budding entrepreneurs, established tech giants, policy makers, and talent, this report is an invaluable guide to understanding the pulse of Dubai's tech ecosystem.



TECH TALENT OASIS: UAE's Innovative Approach to Talent Attraction and Retention

Conversation with H.E. Dr. Thani Al Zeyoudi
Minister of State for International Trade

Technology founders participating in the State of Tech Talent report unanimously praised the UAE as an entrepreneurial nation. How can the country sustain momentum in attracting investment into its technology sectors?

The UAE government has put forward an agenda designed to position the country as a destination where the brightest minds and boldest ideas can flourish, and where the technologies of the future can be used as a means of driving economic opportunity and growth.

We have implemented a number of forward-looking initiatives such as NextGen FDI, a program designed to welcome digitally-enabled companies to the UAE and foster innovation and knowledge-sharing. The program includes measures such as streamlined processes for business setup, banking facilitation, and bulk visa issuance of skilled professionals.

By actively encouraging foreign investments in digital sectors, such as fintech, artificial intelligence, and blockchain, the UAE aims to create a conducive environment that attracts all forms of capital – human, financial and technological. This initiative, alongside other ecosystem-building efforts, positions the UAE as a global leader in technology and innovation, ensuring continued growth in its technology sectors.

Could you share some results of the new initiatives that support the inflow of skilled talent to the UAE, including green visas and golden visas?

The UAE's talent attraction and retention strategy is a multifaceted approach that extends beyond visas and residency programs. The introduction of green visas and golden visas, while significant components, is part of a broader vision to create a sustainable ecosystem for talent from around the world.

To enhance the attractiveness of the UAE for long-term residency, social security measures are being improved to provide a safety net for employees. In September, the UAE cabinet announced an alternative end-of-service benefits system for private-sector employees and free-zone workers in the country, which involves the establishment of savings and investment funds.

On 15 September 2022, the UAE also implemented a new unemployment insurance program for federal government and private-sector employees, thereby enhancing our efforts to retain talent and ensuring the availability of talent across all strategic sectors. This will further cement the UAE as a destination of choice, a status highlighted by the Global Talent Competitiveness Index, which ranked the UAE as the 4th top market in attracting talent globally.

Table of Contents

1

Dubai Founders' Superscale Journey

From 4 to 400: Magnitude of Workforce Growth	7
A Quarter of Founder's Time Invested in Talent	8

2

Demand of Skilled Talent Exceeds Supply

Sourcing — LinkedIn and Employee Referrals Take Center Stage	9
Stronger Bonds with Academia: A Growing Imperative	9
Internal Recruitment Units: A Strategic Edge	9
Challenges in Leveraging LinkedIn: Filtering	10
Luring the Best Tech Talent to Dubai	10
Dispersing Tech Talent Across Countries	12
Interview with Amadou Daffe, CEO and Co-Founder of Gebeya Inc.	13

3

Dubai is Fantastic from a Policy Perspective!

UAE Entrepreneurial Culture	15
Family Relocation and Accessibility	15
"From a policy perspective, Dubai is fantastic!"	15

4	Founders' Biggest Challenges	
	The Talent Challenge	17
	The City Challenge	18
	The Startup Business Challenge	20
	Interview with Nadine Imad, CEO and Co-Founder of Lexyom	21
5	Retain Tech Talent	
	Reasonable Attrition Rates	23
	When an Employee Wants to Leave	25
6	Lifestyle vs. Money Motivation	26
7	Dubai Tech Talent's Point of View	
	Overwhelmingly Positive Image of Dubai	28
	First Impressions of Dubai Employers	28
	Things to Appreciate When Working for a Dubai Tech Company	29
	Interview with Ameer Jawad, CEO and Co-Founder of TalPods	30
	4 Reasons for Change	32
	More Remote Work or Housing Subsidy	33
	Tech Talent Pay in Dubai in 2023	33
	Interview with Mohamed Fayed, CEO and Co-Founder of Grubtech	34
8	The Best Talent Advice to a Founder in Dubai	36

Dubai Founders' Superscale Journey

Dubai is a leading technology hub in the MENA region. Year after year, it is Dubai-based companies that raise the most funding throughout the region. Yet, the journey of a local tech company is not like any other. "Talent is a huge challenge" is a phrase that is commonly heard among tech founders. In our study, we examine the key strategies used by successful Dubai entrepreneurs to overcome the pitfalls on the path of building a fast-growing innovative enterprise, we gather their advice given to peers and policy-makers, and we debunk myths around talent attraction by introducing the perspective of tech developers and engineers working for Dubai-based companies.

The founders who are the focus of our study are superscalars when it comes to talent — the trajectory of their tech companies has been nothing short of remarkable, marked by a journey of unparalleled workforce expansion. Commencing with modest beginnings, on average, these companies comprised a mere five employees in their inaugural year. Fast forward to 2023, and the landscape has been dramatically transformed, with these very companies now boasting an impressive average workforce of around 150 employees. This evolution underscores not only their robust expansion but also their maturity as an organization.

From 4 to 400: Magnitude of Workforce Growth

There is an impressive spectrum within the scale of tech workforce growth, ranging from an inspiring **250% to an astonishing 2,575% since the companies' inception**. This extraordinary ascent serves as a testament to the founders' adeptness at not only conceiving novel solutions but also in their capacity to **discern and harness the right talent**, all while firmly rooted in Dubai's dynamic ecosystem.

In essence, this unparalleled growth affirms Dubai tech founders' prowess in identifying and seizing opportunities for expansion while simultaneously propelling Dubai's status as a fertile ground for cultivating talent and fostering industry-wide growth.

250%
TO
2,575%
Tech workforce growth
since inception

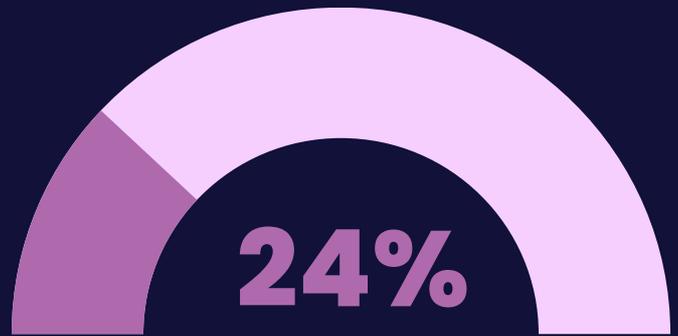
A quarter of Founder's Time Invested in Talent

The fact that, on average, Dubai tech founders allocate **approximately 24% of their monthly time** to talent-related matters elucidates the critical role human resources (HR) and talent management play in the success of tech companies within the city's entrepreneurial ecosystem.

The statement "There is an HR problem almost every single day." resonates with the reality that managing a workforce, particularly in the dynamic tech industry, is a multifaceted challenge. The need for constant attention to HR matters emphasizes the complexity of talent management, which ranges from recruitment and team dynamics to performance evaluations and employee development.

The assertion that "My belief is that for the first 200 people we hire, I should be involved" highlights the critical phase of initial hiring and the founder's hands-on approach during this pivotal period. The active involvement of the founders underscores their commitment to ensuring the right cultural fit and skill alignment when hiring for positions within their companies.

The awareness that "Even one destructive hire could be detrimental to what we are trying to do" showcases the high stakes of talent management. Dubai tech founders are keenly aware that a single hiring mistake could not only disrupt team dynamics but also impede progress and damage the company's reputation and growth trajectory.



Founder's allocated time in a month



There is an HR problem almost every single day.



My belief is that for the first 200 people we hire I should be involved.



Even one destructive hire could be detrimental to what we are trying to do.

Demand of Skilled Talent Exceeds Supply

The prevailing sentiment among Dubai's entrepreneurs is steadfast anticipation that the following prevailing trend of 2023 will persist: **the demand for skilled tech talent will continue to outpace the available supply in the Emirate**. This prospect drives entrepreneurs to adopt a heightened level of creativity in their pursuit of suitable talent, compelling them to refine their headhunting strategies and make substantial reinvestments in training existing personnel, as well as automation, by using diverse AI tools.

Sourcing — LinkedIn and Employee Referrals Take Center Stage

Among the diverse channels available for talent acquisition, paid LinkedIn posts and employee referrals emerge as the most dominant sources of talent hunting for Dubai-based founders. This trend is not only indicative of the platform's efficacy in attracting potential candidates but also underscores the power of personal recommendations within the close-knit tech community.

Stronger Bonds with Academia: A Growing Imperative

A notable consensus among founders is the imperative to establish stronger ties with local universities. This sentiment stems from the

recognition that these institutions harbor a pool of emerging talent that can contribute to the city's burgeoning tech landscape. In particular, companies operating within deep tech domains have underscored the MENA region's universities as a primary source of junior talent.

Internal Recruitment Units: A Strategic Edge

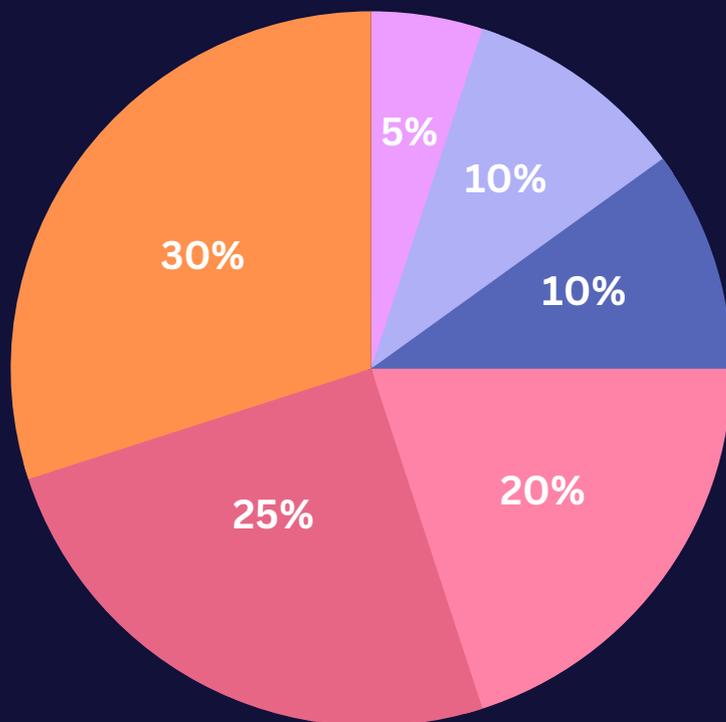
Some of the most successful tech companies within Dubai have taken a proactive approach by instituting internal recruitment functions (typically, one full-time equivalent position). The primary role of these "units" is to **pre-emptively identify potential candidates who are currently employed by other organizations**. By doing so, these companies are poised to meet their future talent needs with precision and agility, showcasing a forward-thinking approach to human resource planning.

Challenges in Leveraging LinkedIn: Filtering

While paid LinkedIn posts reign as the most popular talent acquisition avenue for tech founders in Dubai, a cautionary note emerges. Many founders highlight the challenges that can arise when using the platform without a **robust filtering mechanism**. Therefore, the need for a more refined selection process is emphasized to ensure that the inundation of interested candidates is met with quality matches that align with the company's specific requirements.

Tech talent source

- Specialized Tech Platforms
- Universities
- In-House Recruiter
- Outsource Recruiter
- Employee Referrals
- Paid LinkedIn Posts



Luring the Best Tech Talent to Dubai

Dubai's tech founders employ a range of strategies to attract exceptional tech talent. These strategies resonate with the city's dynamic business environment and underscore the unique challenges and opportunities within the tech sector.

Communicating a Compelling Value Proposition

Dubai tech founders understand the importance of clearly articulating their company's value proposition and the purpose behind their projects. By consistently communicating this throughout the hiring and retaining process, they create a strong sense of alignment between the company's mission and the aspirations of potential and existing employees.

Flat Structure and Micro Teams

The concept of a flat organizational structure, accompanied by micro teams, is a popular feature among Dubai tech companies. This strategy empowers employees by fostering a collaborative environment where contributions are valued, ideas flow freely, and decision-making processes are streamlined, leading to a more agile and innovative work culture.

Leveraging Expectations From the Get-Go

By providing a transparent glimpse into the nature of the work within the company right from the initial interaction between the employee and the company founder, Dubai tech founders set realistic expectations for potential employees. This upfront communication ensures that candidates have a clear understanding of the challenges, responsibilities, and opportunities they will encounter within their job position, contributing to a higher level of job satisfaction and long-term commitment. This encompasses not only the job responsibilities but also living in Dubai and the associated costs for prospective employees and their families.

Standardized Performance Metrics

The incorporation of standardized performance metrics aligns with Dubai tech founders' commitment to measure success objectively. This strategy not only provides employees with clear performance benchmarks but also enables founders to evaluate and reward contributions consistently, thereby fostering a culture of fairness and meritocracy.

Offering Unique Deep Tech Opportunities

Dubai tech founders recognize the allure of offering employees the chance to engage with cutting-edge, deep tech projects. By presenting unique opportunities to work on advanced technologies, these companies attract individuals who seek to push boundaries, innovate, and contribute to groundbreaking solutions.

Global Mobility: Opportunity to Move to Dubai

A distinct advantage Dubai offers is its status as a global hub that attracts talent from around the world. The strategy of offering tech talent the opportunity to relocate to Dubai is an enticing prospect that not only enriches the talent pool but also introduces diverse perspectives, contributing to a culturally vibrant and innovative work environment.

Clear Exit Strategy Fostering Enthusiasm

According to the founders, the presence of a clear exit strategy within a company ignites enthusiasm among tech talent. Entrepreneurs state that this strategy provides employees with a sense of direction and purpose, motivating them to contribute to the company's journey with renewed dedication.

Other Perks Commonly Offered by Tech Companies to Employees:

- Employee guidance and support in regard to relocation to Dubai
- Guiding prospective employees with the cost estimates of living in Dubai for them and their families
- Maintaining an open and friendly culture within the company
- Bringing remote teams to Dubai HQ regularly
- Offering health insurance for employees and their families
- Remote work arrangement
- Stock options for employees

These strategies reflect a keen awareness of the values, expectations, and aspirations of tech talent and the companies themselves, contributing to the cultivation of successful enterprises that thrive within Dubai's burgeoning tech landscape.

In Chapter 7, we explore the perspective of the talent themselves (including software engineers and developers working for Dubai-based companies) and compare their views on things that matter with those expressed by business owners.

Dispersing Tech Talent Across Countries

Our research identifies specific geographies that Dubai founders tend to rely on when sourcing and basing their tech teams. **Less than 10%** of tech companies keep all tech teams in the UAE only, **while 90%** have tech talent dispersed across **2–4 countries**.

We are talking about a diverse range of countries that are popular destinations for tech team deployment. These include regional players, such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, India, and Pakistan, and faraway hubs, such as Russia, Türkiye, and the Balkans.

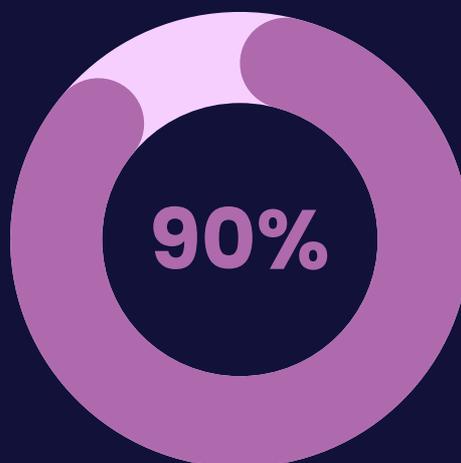


We can speak of the increasingly interconnected nature of the tech industry, where geographical boundaries are transcended in pursuit of assembling high-quality and diverse tech teams. The trend of dispersing tech talent across multiple countries aligns with the global nature of the digital landscape and serves as a strategic choice by Dubai founders to tap into a broader pool of skills and expertise.

Tech companies that keep their team in the UAE



Tech companies that have talent across 2–4 countries



New Horizons of the UAE Talent Market — the Power of Africa

Interview with Amadou Daffe, CEO and Co-founder of Gebeya Inc.



How was your vision of bridging Africa and the international tech hubs formed?

During my time working in software back in corporate America, I noticed that the majority of tech talent being outsourced was coming from the rest of the world, and even then, there was still an international shortage. Surprisingly, the second-largest continent on Earth was left overlooked. I started this business because I saw an *immense amount of untapped potential in Africa*. My vision was clear: I believed in African tech professionals, and I wanted to create a platform that would up-skill and connect them with global opportunities, thereby contributing to their success and fostering a more inclusive industry.

From \$48 million partnerships with the Mastercard Foundation to stimulate the entrepreneurial ecosystem to working with Microsoft on a project to train 300,000 software engineers within the next 3 years, we have proven the power of investing in the African tech ecosystem. Our entry into the Dubai market is only a testament to the global impact of African tech talent, and we're excited to be part of this journey.

Why did Gebeya choose the Dubai market as its next frontier for global expansion?

In the past 7 years, as our business was rapidly expanding over 30 African countries, we have been watching closely the dynamic of the UAE's Digital Economy and its tremendous progress. Prior to entering the Middle Eastern market, I came across founders from all around the world launching their businesses there, with inspiring success stories: Anghami going public on Nasdaq, Souq acquired by Amazon, Careem acquired by Uber, to name a few. But, really, Gebeya's entry into Dubai is more than just a business expansion — *it is a shared commitment to building a future where innovation and talent flourish*, and we strongly believe in the public-private partnership model when it comes to advancing technology and human potential.

In your opinion, why is access to Africa's tech talent vital for the UAE's digital economy development in the near future?

Africa holds the potential to be a game changer for the UAE's demand for talent due to its thriving tech ecosystem and a young, skilled workforce. As the African tech industry continues to expand, with cities like Nairobi, Johannesburg, Lagos, Cairo, Dakar, and Addis Ababa now full of champions, the continent has been producing a growing number of software developers, cyber security experts, data scientists, A.I./machine learning specialists, and more. By tapping into Africa's pool of skilled workers, the UAE would not only address its own talent needs but position both regions at the forefront of the global tech landscape. It is important for the Dubai ecosystem to not only ensure founders are able to fill the in-demand jobs of today, but also attract the skills and business talent to create the jobs of tomorrow.

About Gebeya Inc.

Gebeya is a talent marketplace on a mission to solve Africa's biggest challenge, access to employment. We provide technological solutions that overcome geographical barriers to accessing these opportunities. With its inception in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia Gebeya operates across Africa with offices in Kenya, Senegal, and the USA.

Gebeya offers, on one side, a network of highly skilled, certified, and multilingual African talent on digital platform services clients across the globe. On the other side, it offers a SaaS, which offers software features to other marketplace owners.



Dubai is Fantastic from a Policy Perspective!

The perceptions of tech founders in Dubai regarding government efforts to facilitate talent acquisition and entrepreneurship shed light on the city's enabling environment and its implications for the tech ecosystem's growth. The following are three areas that Dubai founders praise the local and federal government for:



UAE is an entrepreneurial country.



Relocating family is easy.



Now it is easy to get a license, to get visas.

UAE Entrepreneurial Culture

The perception that "UAE is an entrepreneurial country" speaks to the overall mindset that encourages innovation and startups. The viewpoint that "You can attract talent easier to Dubai than to any other MENA country" underscores the city's strategic positioning within the MENA region. Dubai's international outlook, coupled with its infrastructure and business-friendly policies, creates an environment where tech talent can be attracted more readily.

Family Relocation and Accessibility

The recognition that "Relocating family is easy" highlights the importance of family considerations for tech professionals. Dubai's comprehensive amenities, diverse cultural offerings, and modern infrastructure make it an appealing destination for both individuals and their families.

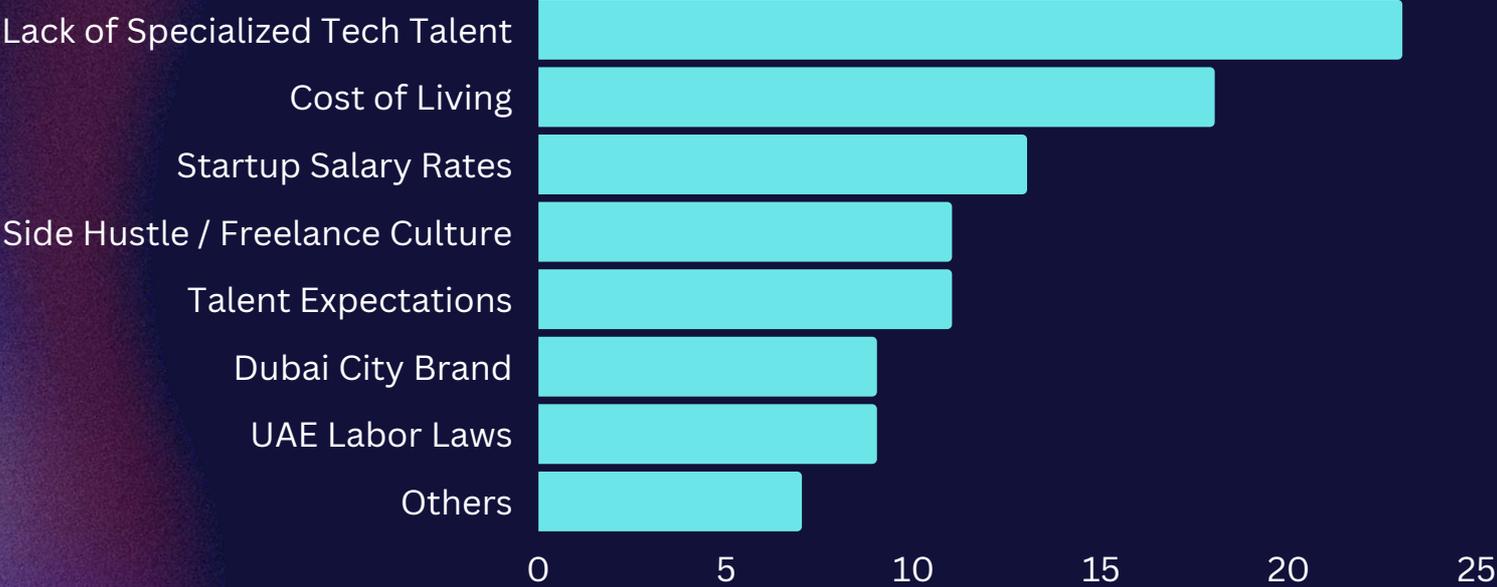
"From a policy perspective, Dubai is fantastic!"

The sentiment that "Now it is easy to get a license, to get visas" highlights Dubai's commitment to simplifying regulatory hurdles for startups and businesses; it underscores the significance of clear and transparent policies in fostering a conducive environment for tech talent and entrepreneurs. This transparency reduces uncertainty and encourages both local and international venture builders and investors to contribute to the city's tech ecosystem.

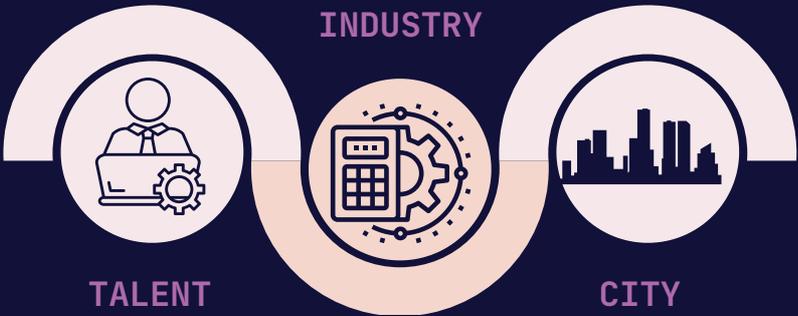
Founders' Biggest Challenges

Within the list of top challenges faced by Dubai entrepreneurs in their pursuit of finding the best tech talent, the following were identified:

■ Top challenges faced by Dubai's tech founders (%)



Those can be categorized into three distinct categories:



The Talent Challenge

Side Hustle, or so-called Freelance Culture

Dubai's tech entrepreneurs grapple with a range of challenges that center on the dynamics of remote work, talent management, and the evolving nature of employment in the tech industry. The **prevalence of remote work culture presents both an opportunity and a challenge**: while some companies seamlessly embrace remote work, others struggle to navigate its nuances effectively, leading to disparities in productivity and collaboration. Additionally, the balance between remote and in-person work becomes crucial for certain developmental tasks where face-to-face interaction fosters innovation and teamwork, underscoring the need to strike a flexible equilibrium.

The **rise of freelancing and the emergence of the "2nd gig" work trend post-COVID present a dichotomy for tech entrepreneurs**. On one hand, the growing interest in freelancing diversifies the talent pool, offering a range of specialized skills. However, a challenge arises when developers engage in multiple jobs simultaneously, potentially compromising their performance due to divided commitments. This challenge poses questions about workforce dedication and the importance of fostering a work environment that values dedication, rest, and optimal performance.

Entrepreneurs also confront difficulties **in finding individuals with long-term company experience** given the prevalence of short-term engagements through agencies. This discrepancy between the demand for autonomous, dedicated individuals and the transient nature of many tech professionals' engagements necessitates a tailored approach to recruitment and talent management. Striking a balance between

autonomy and commitment becomes essential to nurture a workforce required for sustained growth and innovation in Dubai's tech landscape.

Dubai Talent Expectations vs. Reality

The transient nature of the market poses a notable hurdle for tech founders, as professionals often come to Dubai only for short periods, impacting workforce stability and continuity. This transience could contribute to a lack of long-term commitment from talent, affecting founders' ability to build cohesive and sustained teams.

The competitive market environment further compounds these challenges. As Dubai's tech scene grows, more companies vie for the same pool of skilled individuals, intensifying the struggle of tech companies to attract and retain top talent. The desire for a romanticized lifestyle in Dubai serves as a double-edged sword, attracting individuals for the lifestyle benefits the city offers but potentially leading to diverse motivations that may not always align with business goals.

The prevalence of talent already working for large organizations while aspiring to start their own businesses presents an interesting dynamic. Entrepreneurs may find that these individuals, while possessing valuable experience, might come with differing expectations and approaches that may not fully align with the startup culture.

Furthermore, the **higher expectations of talent working in the UAE**, potentially due to the perceived allure of Dubai's market, can create challenges in meeting those expectations while balancing the realities of startup operations. Striking a balance between attracting motivated talent and ensuring alignment with entrepreneurial endeavors becomes a pivotal aspect of Dubai's tech landscape.

The City Challenge

Entrepreneurs recognize it is imperative to craft a more compelling brand image of Dubai to attract top-tier tech talent. The observation that media coverage tends to focus on fundraising rather than Dubai being the place where new technologies are being developed accentuates this challenge. It is the belief of the founders that **shifting this narrative to highlight tech innovation and success stories could reshape perceptions and reinforce Dubai's status as a dynamic tech hub.**

The endeavor to introduce high-quality talent, particularly developers from Europe, underscores the significance of bridging the perception gap. Entrepreneurs recognize the **need to establish Dubai's reputation as an attractive destination for tech professionals.**

Contract-based Employment

While all founders commended the policy environment in Dubai and the UAE to build companies and attract talent, there are several areas named within existing law that could be further enhanced.

The issue of contract-based employment in the UAE brings to light the notable challenge of fostering loyalty and commitment among employees. Entrepreneurs respond by employing individuals through legal entities overseas and subcontracting them to Dubai, revealing a workaround to the limitations of local labor laws. There is potential for labor laws to evolve in ways that incentivize companies to establish direct and lasting relationships with their workforce to create a more conducive environment for tech entrepreneurship. By streamlining contract-based employment regulations and fostering a sense of stability and security, Dubai's tech ecosystem could bolster loyalty and engagement among employees, leading to sustained business growth and a more favorable entrepreneurial landscape.

Disputes with employees emerge as a concern, underlining the need for clearer regulations and mechanisms to address conflicts effectively.

Ambiguities in internships also pose challenges, with entrepreneurs navigating a gray area due to unclear laws governing internships. Addressing this ambiguity and establishing well-defined regulations for internships could foster a more structured approach to talent development and recruitment.

Among other challenges related to the local market, there is a lack of market data on tech talent rates and salaries that would guide founders coming to Dubai from overseas and relocating companies to the Emirate.

Lack of specialized tech talent

A recurring theme is the scarcity of high-quality, specialized tech talent, particularly among women, which poses a substantial hurdle to building a diverse and skilled workforce.

Despite the apparent availability of data scientists on platforms like LinkedIn, entrepreneurs emphasize the disparity between online presence and real-world skillsets, raising concerns about the accuracy of talent assessments and recruitment strategies.

The challenge of "buying talent" instead of domestically cultivating it reflects the **limited local supply of tech expertise**, underscoring the need for concerted efforts to bridge the talent gap through targeted education and training programs.

Additionally, the lack of specialized talent in fields like AI and Machine Learning poses significant obstacles, highlighting the demand for experts in cutting-edge technologies.

Not surprisingly, earlier in 2023, the Government announced multiple initiatives within **UAE's "National Program for Coders"**, aiming among other things, to attract and train 100,000 coders. Launched earlier, The National Program to Transform Technology has focused on specifically nurturing Emirati talent, which will further diversify the tech talent pool in the country.

Rising Cost of Living

Dubai's tech entrepreneurs confront substantial challenges associated with the cost of living that significantly impact their ability to attract, retain, and support their talent pool. Some founders reported an inability to obtain golden visas for their skilled team members due to golden visa allocation to larger companies, which naturally creates a competitive disadvantage for entrepreneurs seeking to hire international talent. The high cost of health insurance in Dubai further exacerbates financial pressures on both employers and employees, potentially hindering the ability of startups to offer comprehensive benefits packages.

The overarching high cost of living in Dubai is a prevailing challenge that extends to multiple aspects. It poses a dual dilemma, compelling employees of startups to consider more stable corporate roles due to financial pressures and potentially driving entrepreneurs to seek alternative locations to retain their tech teams (see Chapter 2). The exorbitant expenses associated with various necessities, such as office rent, phone lines, and schooling, place additional strain on startups, leading to potential compromises in talent quality and overall operations. Some entrepreneurs advocate for national programs that offer subsidies to offset the burdensome costs of living and schooling, which could alleviate financial constraints and encourage a more sustainable environment for tech entrepreneurship in Dubai.

The Startup Business Challenge

The struggle of startup founders to offer competitive salaries highlights the financial constraints they encounter during the early stages of business operation, often rendering it difficult to secure the desired talent. The subsequent issue of professionals joining young Dubai tech companies from abroad only to realize they can earn a higher salary at established companies and subsequently departing underscores the fierce competition for talent and the need for competitive compensation to retain skilled individuals.

The lack of sufficient capital makes it challenging for company founders to offer competitive salaries, potentially leading to difficulties in attracting top talent. The mid-2021 surge in hiring activity by tech giants like Google and Microsoft triggered a demand-driven rise in developer salaries, indicating the sensitivity of the market to external factors.

Moreover, the attractiveness of foreign opportunities, driven by factors such as higher salaries and the path to citizenship, further fuels the challenge of retaining talent in Dubai.

The preference for stability and risk aversion among local talent also poses a challenge, potentially causing some talent to opt for more established organizations instead of startups. Dubai's tech ecosystem could explore strategies to balance equity and salary offerings to address these challenges and focus on creating an environment where talented professionals are enticed to remain engaged and contribute to the city's tech growth.

A Fair Game – Making Legal Services Accessible for Tech Founders and Tech Talent in the UAE

Interview with Nadine Imad, CEO and Co-founder of Lexyom



How did you solve the tech talent puzzle for Lexyom?

Building Lexyom, a pioneering legal technology platform in the UAE, has been an exhilarating journey. Lexyom started from our rooted belief in democratizing the legal industry and making legal technology accessible to everyone. After conducting several studies, we found that those most impacted by the lack of accessibility to legal solutions were Startups, SMEs, and freelancers. While working on solving this problem, we came across a different challenge internally: finding and retaining top tech talent, which is instrumental to bringing Lexyom's vision to life and ensuring it keeps improving to rise to the challenge of our constantly evolving industry.

To address this problem, we've resorted to several strategies. The most useful we came across coincidentally as a result of our deep connections within the UAE Startup ecosystem. Through different networks, we've managed to connect with extremely distinguished founders and tech talent who have played a significant role in helping us grow our product. We've also *made the most of the post-covid hybrid working model to source out the best talent from everywhere else around the world.*

In your experience working with founders, what are the biggest misconceptions about the UAE Labor Law and employee relationship that exists today?

As a legal professional, I've come across quite a few misconceptions about the UAE Labor Law and employee relationships. This includes everything from a lack of understanding of probation periods to employer visa obligations. The most striking one remains *the lack of proper understanding of the applicable Labor law*. Employees in ADGM and DIFC are an explicit illustration of this, as they are governed by distinct sets of laws distinct from Federal Decree Law No. 33 of 2021 and Cabinet Resolution No. 1 of 2022. This can sometimes lead to confusion for both the employer and employee regarding their rights and obligations, and when needed, the appropriate channels for dispute resolution may become unclear.

Your piece of advice to the tech founders in the UAE who are thinking of expanding their teams?

The UAE is increasingly emerging as an attractive hub for exceptionally talented individuals. This presents founders with unique and excellent opportunities, as they now have access to an expanded and diverse talent pool. Over time, there has been a noticeable shift with individuals placing greater emphasis on their well-being. The conventional notions of what renders a job attractive are becoming less and less significant. *My advice to founders is to develop an in-depth understanding of their legal obligations under the applicable labor law and tailor an employee package that is attractive, including benefits like ESOP and hybrid work arrangements, to improve their accessibility to top talent even when on a limited budget.*

About Lexyom

Lexyom is a digital law firm that provides legal services across various industries, with a special focus on financial services, tokenization, securitization, and Web3. Our clients gain access to international legal support, enhanced by artificial intelligence embedded in a proprietary dashboard. Our Lexyom Go dashboard facilitates seamless contract creation, management, and review, while also making lawyer-client communication much more structured and efficient.



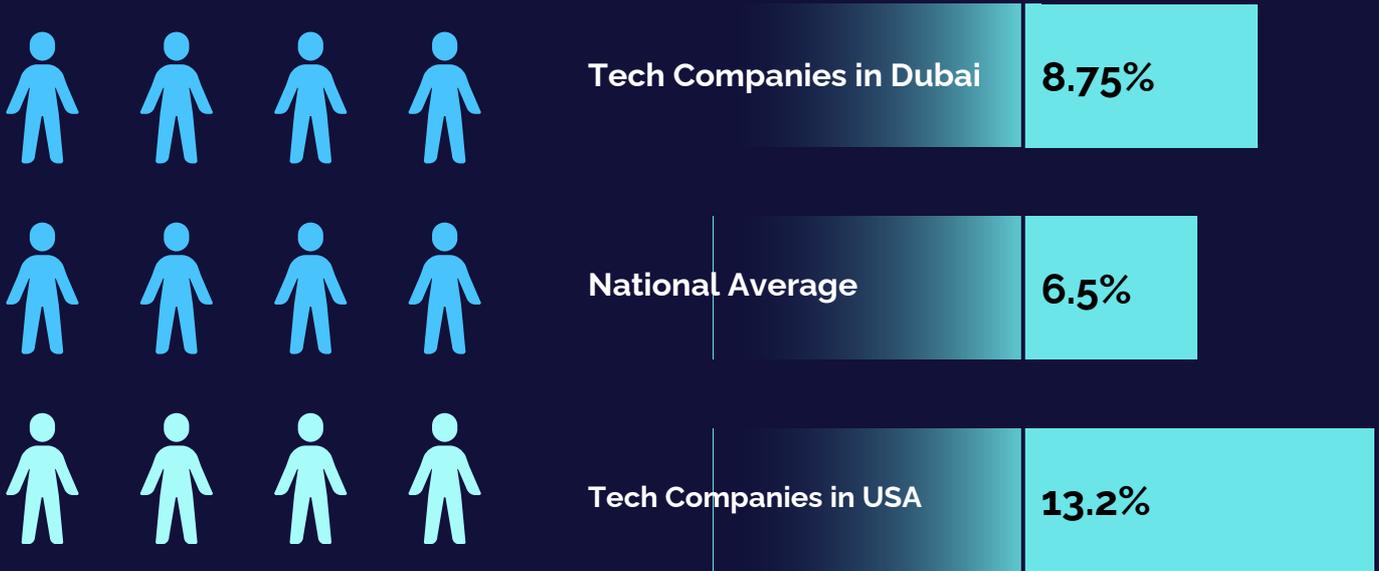
A photograph of the Dubai skyline at sunset, with numerous skyscrapers illuminated and their lights reflecting in the water. The sky is a mix of orange, pink, and purple. The title 'Retain Tech Talent' is overlaid in white text at the top.

Retain Tech Talent

Reasonable Attrition Rates

By comparing the attrition rates among tech companies in Dubai with both the national average and mature tech ecosystems like the USA, we can draw meaningful conclusions about the challenges and opportunities faced by Dubai's tech sector.

Attrition Rate (%)



The reported **attrition rate of 8.75% among tech companies in Dubai is higher than the national average (6.5%)**. This notable difference suggests that the technology industry in Dubai experiences a higher degree of talent turnover compared to other sectors within the UAE. This phenomenon might be attributed to the rapidly evolving nature of the tech sector, where employees are often drawn by opportunities for innovation, skill enhancement, and career growth.

Interestingly, the reported **attrition rate of 8.75% in Dubai's tech sector pales in comparison to the attrition rate of 13.2% observed in a mature tech ecosystem like the USA**. This juxtaposition reveals an intriguing narrative: while Dubai's tech industry experiences higher attrition compared to the national average, it remains a significantly more stable environment than more established tech hubs like the USA.



You need to think out of the box to retain talent.

Overall, while Dubai's tech industry fares favorably in comparison to mature ecosystems like the USA, the higher attrition rate within the tech sector indicates that there is room for improvement in talent retention strategies. Companies in Dubai should continue to innovate their approaches to retaining talent by focusing on factors such as professional development, work-life balance, and meaningful incentives.



We fire a lot of people. Our goal is to automate the jobs.

At the same time, the fact that Dubai's tech sector maintains lower attrition rates than established tech hubs, like the USA, positions the city as an attractive destination for tech talent on a global scale. This demonstrates the city's ability to provide a balance between career growth opportunities and stable work environments.

When an Employee Wants to Leave

We have identified a range of strategic approaches that Dubai founders employ to retain their valuable tech workforce. In particular, when faced with the prospect of an employee desiring to leave, these entrepreneurs have proven adept at utilizing a combination of methods to encourage their talented teams to stay on board.

Rotational Opportunities on Projects

The dynamic nature of the tech industry often means that professionals seek new challenges and varied experiences. Dubai tech founders have recognized this by offering rotational opportunities on different projects. This strategy not only retains employees by providing fresh challenges and skill development but also fosters a culture of continuous learning and innovation within the organization.

Compensation Raise and Retention Bonus

Recognizing the significance of financial incentives, many Dubai founders employ the strategy of offering compensation raises or retention bonuses to persuade tech talent to remain within their organizations. This practice aligns with the notion that competitive salaries and financial rewards play a pivotal role in retaining high-performing employees, providing them with a strong incentive to stay and continue contributing to the company's growth.

Part-Time Arrangements

Dubai's tech founders have shown a progressive approach by considering the work-life balance of their tech talent. Offering part-time arrangements to employees who may be seeking a more flexible schedule is a strategy that resonates well with the changing dynamics of the workforce. This approach not only helps retain valuable talent but also showcases the founders' commitment to accommodating employees' evolving needs.

Recognizing the significance of financial incentives, many Dubai founders employ the strategy of offering compensation raises or retention bonuses to persuade tech talent to remain working for their organizations. This practice aligns with the notion that competitive salaries and financial rewards play a pivotal role in retaining high-performing employees, providing them with a strong incentive to remain and continue contributing to the company's growth.

Employee Stock Ownership Plans (ESOP)

Equity ownership has proven to be a powerful retention tool. Many founders offer Employee Stock Ownership Plans (ESOPs) to their tech talent, allowing them to become stakeholders in the company's success. This sense of ownership not only ties employees emotionally to the organization's growth but also aligns their interests with those of the company.

Comprehensive Health Insurance for Family Members

Acknowledging the importance of holistic employee well-being, Dubai tech founders often extend health insurance benefits to cover family members of their tech talent. This comprehensive approach not only offers a sense of security to employees but also demonstrates a commitment to their overall welfare, fostering loyalty and long-term engagement.

Enhanced Packages with Vacation Getaways

Founders in Dubai's tech sector recognize that work-life balance is a significant factor in retaining talent. By enhancing compensation packages with vacation getaways or additional time off, founders incentivize employees to stay and contribute while also providing opportunities for relaxation and rejuvenation.

Lifestyle vs Money Motivation

The differing viewpoints on the motivation of tech talent in Dubai highlights the complexity of factors that influence professionals' decisions to work in the city's tech ecosystem. These conflicting interpretations elucidate the intricate interplay between lifestyle considerations and financial motivations.

The assertion that *"Talent here is for lifestyle, not for the money; we give them lifestyle"* reflects the perspective that Dubai's appeal to tech talent lies beyond financial compensation. This viewpoint underscores the city's allure as a hub for cultural diversity, innovation, and a high quality of life. It suggests that Dubai offers a unique combination of professional growth opportunities and an attractive lifestyle that extends beyond monetary rewards.

On the other hand, the statement *"It is always about money; people think that the country is made of gold"* emphasizes the widely held perception that Dubai is a destination of immense wealth and financial prosperity. This perspective suggests that some tech professionals are drawn to Dubai with the expectation of lucrative compensation and financial benefits.

The contrasting viewpoints reflect the nuanced motivations that drive tech talent to choose to work in Dubai. While some individuals may prioritize a vibrant lifestyle, work-life balance, and career growth opportunities, others may be attracted by the potential for substantial financial gains. The divergence in opinions highlights that motivation among tech talent in Dubai is not a monolithic concept. Instead, it is shaped by a complex blend of individual preferences, career aspirations, cultural factors, and economic considerations. The city's appeal is multifaceted, offering a range of benefits that resonate differently with various individuals based on their personal priorities.

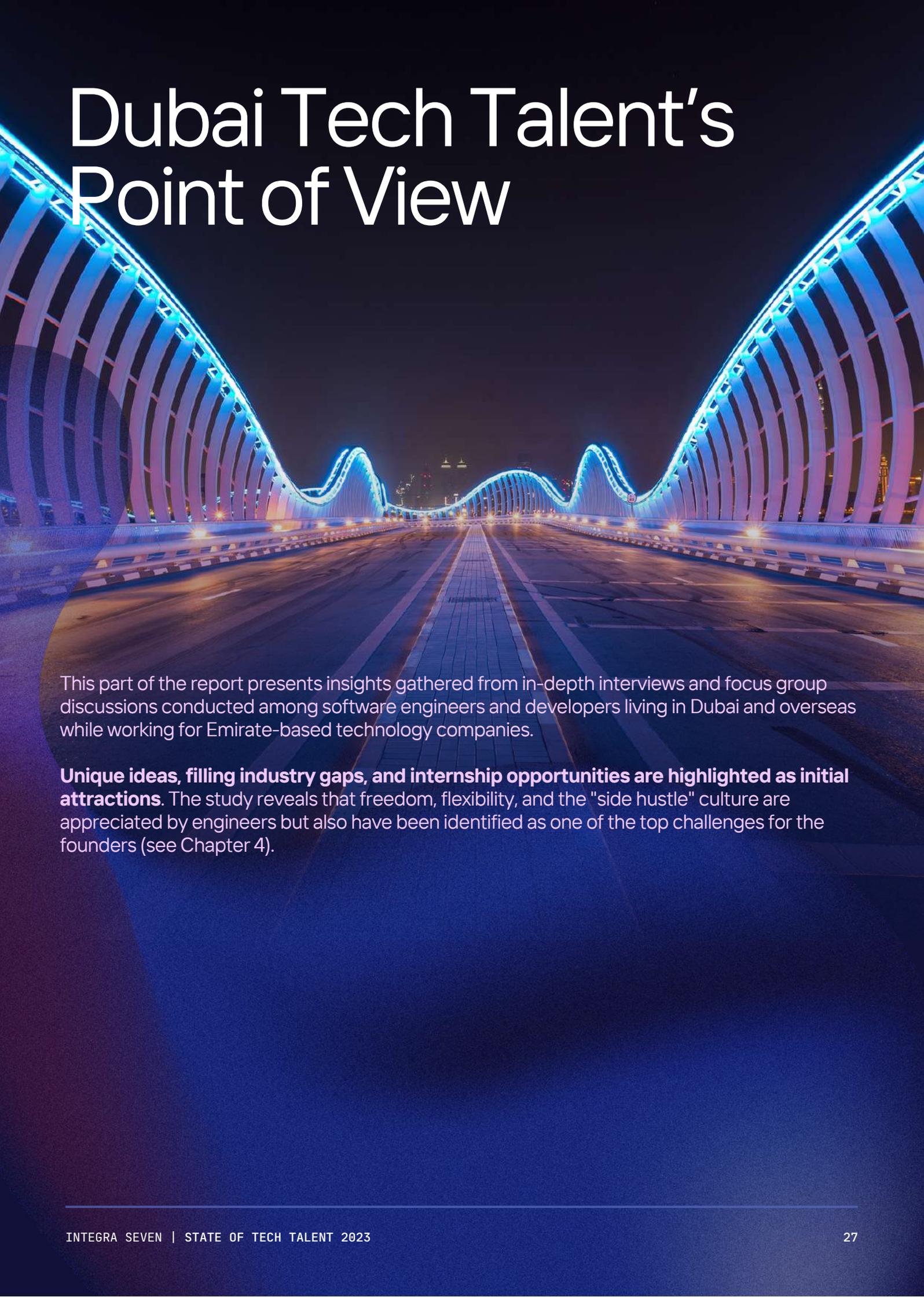


*Talent here is for lifestyle,
not for the money; we
give them lifestyle.*



*It is always about money;
people think that the
country is made of gold.*

Dubai Tech Talent's Point of View

A night view of a modern bridge with blue lighting and a road leading into the distance. The bridge has a series of white, curved arches that are illuminated with blue lights. The road is paved and has a central lane marked with white lines. The background shows a city skyline with some buildings lit up.

This part of the report presents insights gathered from in-depth interviews and focus group discussions conducted among software engineers and developers living in Dubai and overseas while working for Emirate-based technology companies.

Unique ideas, filling industry gaps, and internship opportunities are highlighted as initial attractions. The study reveals that freedom, flexibility, and the "side hustle" culture are appreciated by engineers but also have been identified as one of the top challenges for the founders (see Chapter 4).

Overwhelmingly Positive Image of Dubai

The majority of developers held a positive view of job opportunities for software engineers in Dubai:

"It Is All About Startups Now!"

Respondents acknowledged Dubai's potential as a hotspot for startups, emphasizing the availability of numerous job opportunities. The city's ecosystem is perceived as conducive to innovation and entrepreneurship, attracting tech talent keen on being part of the startup culture.

Government Initiatives Matter

The Government's commitment to promoting technology and innovation was noted by the participants, with several referencing the "One Million Coders" initiative in particular.

Remote Work and Youth

The ability to work remotely and Dubai's appeal to the youth were highlighted as additional factors contributing to the city's attractiveness to tech talent.



The number of opportunities is really good.

First Impressions of Dubai Employers

Among the key considerations that influenced the decision to join their current company, engineers named the following:

Unique Ideas or Concepts

A notable portion of respondents indicated that they were drawn to companies that presented unique and innovative ideas or concepts. This highlights the importance of creativity and novel concepts in attracting tech talent.

Filling Industry Gaps

Several respondents mentioned that they chose their current companies because they saw them as filling gaps in the tech industry. This signifies a desire to be part of solutions that address real-world challenges and contribute to the industry's growth.

Internship as an Entry Point

Among junior talent specifically, the strong notion throughout the discussion was internship possibilities. A significant number of respondents expressed that internship opportunities played a role in their decision-making process. This suggests that many software engineers are attracted to companies that offer avenues for hands-on experience and skill development for young engineers who have not necessarily made up their minds about what specialization they would like to pursue.

Things to Appreciate When Working for a Dubai Tech Company

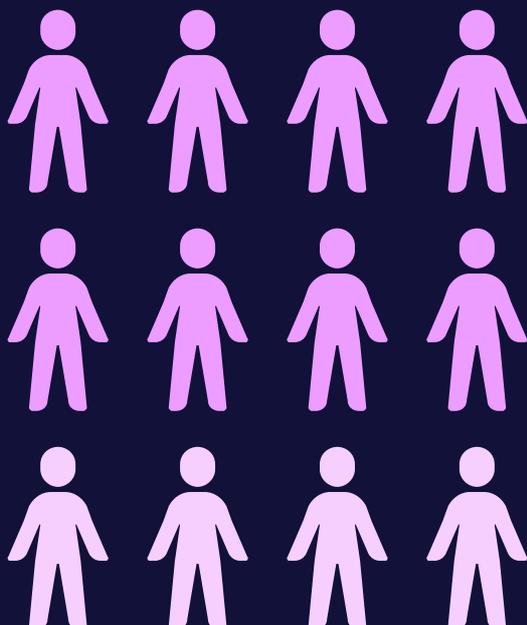
We also inquired about what software engineers appreciate the most about working for their current companies in Dubai. They said:

Access to Medical Insurance

The top-ranked benefit of working in Dubai was medical insurance coverage for respondents and their families based in Dubai. This underscores the importance of comprehensive healthcare offerings in attracting and retaining tech talent.

2/3 Look for New Opportunities

Interestingly, 2/3 of engaged tech professionals are looking and open for new job opportunities while working for Dubai-based technology companies. This suggests a dynamic job market in Dubai's tech sector, where tech talent actively explores their options. It also might be an indicator of the founders' case against remote by default work arrangement, which in the long run deters culture, sense of community, and shared mission.



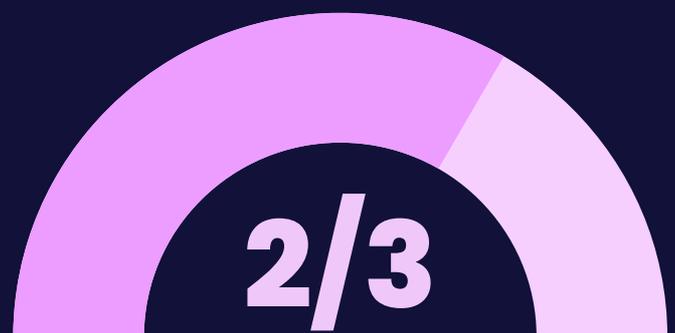
When you do the same work for 2–3 years you get bored.



I don't feel like I am doing the same thing all over again.

Variety of Projects and Problem-Solving

The opportunity to work on different projects emerged as a common motivation for staying with a company. This reflects a preference for dynamic work environments that continuously challenge software engineers' skills. Several respondents expressed a genuine passion for problem-solving, which keeps them engaged with their work.



Employed tech developers are open to new job opportunities

An Apprenticeship Model with a Twist — From Academia to the Real World

Interview with Ameer Jawad, CEO and Co-founder of TalPods



How does TalPods address the challenge of talent access in Dubai?

My co-founder and I have been in the tech scene for years and *experienced firsthand the growing shortage of high-quality engineers*. We've always been passionate about nurturing young talent and knew they had the potential to fill that gap. Through many iterations, we found a way of doing this through the first-of-its-kind apprenticeship model that we introduced as TalPods.

When you spend time with fresh grads, you can't help but notice their level of ambition and drive - they're just hungry to get out there and conquer. That's the kind of energy we are investing in. *We handpick the brightest of those minds and pair them with top lead engineers as their dedicated mentors*. Through intense mentoring and pair-programming on the job, this mentor-apprentice duo deliver the highest standards of engineering for our clients. This makes the talent immediately productive, seamlessly bridging them into industry through a social impact model where everybody wins.

In your experience, what are the blind spots engineers and founders have today?

I believe that *it is crucial for young engineers to get exposure to industry challenges and work on practical solutions as early as possible in their journeys*. This often means that a compromise has to be made, specifically starting with a potentially lower salary as a young developer with limited professional experience. Moreover, early-stage professionals should aim for a well-rounded understanding of their tech stack, not just a single technology, which also means a commitment to learn new things such as the latest technology daily. This requires a dedicated mindset of a lifelong learner.

When we speak of the founders, or, in our case, employers, they sometimes overlook essential factors like soft skills, mindset, and cultural fit while hiring, which can lead to problems down the road. They also tend to focus on years of experience as the key requirement instead of actual technical competence. A successful hire, in our experience, is the result of a comprehensive assessment across all aspects mentioned.

In your opinion, what will it take to make Dubai a thriving tech talent hub?

I will start with the Talent. At TalPods, we've seen that for engineers to be successful, they need to gear up for it right from the start of their careers. Right from university, they need to prioritize hands-on industry experience, which means participating in freelance projects, internships, and bootcamps. Once they join the industry, they should continue their habit of proactive learning cutting-edge technologies to stay ahead of the curve for market demand.

When it comes to enabling the ecosystem - for us it is about seeing more long-term public-private partnerships. There is *a potential for us to have greater engagement from large corporations and public sector institutions in bridging UAE Academia and tech industry* through programs like ours and others, focused on enabling the young generation of engineers, Emirati, and expats alike, to be productive contributors to the local society and economy.

About TalPods

With MENA's tech scene seeing explosive growth, rising demand for software engineers coincides with today's shortage of high-quality regional talent. Solving for this, TalPods, founded by Ameer Jawad and Lijeesh Majeed, expands the talent pool by tapping into the brightest engineers early in their careers and pairing them up with top lead engineers. Together, they coproduce the equivalent of a Mid/Senior-Level Engineer today. Within a year, the talent is fast-tracked to an exceptional Mid-Level Engineer who was tailor-made for your culture and production environment.

The logo for TalPods, featuring the word "talpods" in a lowercase, dark blue, sans-serif font. The "t" is significantly larger and bolder than the other letters, and the "p" has a distinctive shape with a small loop at the bottom.

Freedom and Flexibility

Many engineers remain with their companies due to the freedom and flexibility they enjoy. This brings us to the phenomenon of the side hustle, part of Dubai's tech culture.

The side hustle has emerged as the point of clash and disagreement among founders and team members. Founders have repeatedly named side-hustle culture as one of the key challenges in building strong and efficient teams, while for engineers, it is one of the main reasons for staying with their current company.

In many instances, it appears that working on a side project is considered by team members as one of the benefits of working for a tech startup, while for founders, it is something unacceptable. This highlights a potential lack of communication and setting expectations between the two sides.



All people I met — they have full time jobs and then a side hustle — this is culture in Dubai.

4 Reasons for Change

When asked about the factors that would motivate them to leave their current company, participants provided the following insights:

Latest Technology and Industry Growth

The opportunity to work with the latest technologies and tools emerged as the most compelling factor for considering a job change. The younger and more junior developers also highlighted an interest in working for fast-growing industries and those where disruption is taking place, e.g., healthcare.

Ownership and Company Shares

The prospect of obtaining company shares and becoming a shareholder was emphasized by participants as a significant motivator for seeking new opportunities. This aligns with the desire for a more vested interest in the success of the companies the tech professionals work for.

Becoming a Citizen

Software developers from Asia, the MENA region, and Africa indicated that they would consider an opportunity with a company from a country where they could potentially be granted citizenship.

Lifestyle

Freedom to travel, pleasant weather, and improved management were also cited as motivations to change companies. This suggests that tech professionals in Dubai value holistic job experiences that encompass personal growth and lifestyle benefits.

More Remote Work or Housing Subsidy

There are several factors named by the talent that, in their words, would **foster their loyalty and commitment to stay with their current employer**. More remote work flexibility and housing subsidies/support for those based in Dubai were equally valued by respondents, echoing founders' concern about the rising cost of living.

Company shares and structured learning opportunities were also cited as essential benefits. The desire to obtain ownership in the company they work for and professional growth underlines the multifaceted motivations of Dubai's tech professionals.



Becoming a shareholder in my company is one decisive factor for me! If you feel like a shareholder — it is a motivation on a different level.

Tech Talent Pay in Dubai in 2023

Engineers' perspectives on salaries in Dubai's tech industry were varied, which is common with those expressed by today's founders and business owners:

Company's Timeline Factor

Some participants noted that salary rates in Dubai's tech sector depend on the company rather than individual qualifications or experience. This variability was attributed to factors like company timelines, funding rounds, and product development stages.

X6 Salary Multiple?

There is the recognition of significant salary discrepancies for similar positions in similar companies.



Salary rate depends on the company, not on your qualification or experience.



There is really no basic pay for a particular position in tech in Dubai.

Building a Team of Super Engineers from Dubai

Interview with Mohamed Al Fayed, CEO and Co-Founder of Grubtech



What was it like for you to build a new tech team in 2020?

It was 2019 when my two co-founders and I made a leap into entrepreneurship. We knew we had to act fast with the market opportunity emerging in the F&B space. We promptly hired 7 brilliant engineers and launched Grubtech in October of the same year [2019]. Little did we know that, in about 4 months, we would all be locked up because of COVID. We were *unable to recruit, interview, or interact* in the physical world with customers or employees. To our surprise, the new norm kicked in very soon, and COVID catalyzed the digital transformation of the F&B sector. The need for our product became even more accentuated and imperative to the restaurants' survival. Unable to recruit fast enough, we opted to outsource some coding to cover the gap in the first year.

How does being a Dubai-based company impact the process of hiring engineers?

In just 3 years, we went from a team of 10 to 160 people working for Grubtech today. We grew exponentially; we've been doing about 5x the business, year on year, since launch. We have customers in 20 countries served by our 4 physical offices. With HQ being located in Dubai, we run the development center in Sri Lanka and Istanbul while keeping a shared services office in Cairo.

Throughout our journey, *we went from talent scarcity to abundance*, due to many factors including the impact of COVID on Dubai. Since the pandemic, Dubai has emerged as an amazing city from the perspective of attracting technology talent thanks to its liberal policies, flexible visa regime, and conducive business infrastructure. We benefited from the influx of digital nomads in the past 2 years. On the other hand, the tech space was suffering from the liquidity crunch, and several big tech layoffs happened. This helped startups like ours to find the right talent much easier.

What questions about the talent can a founder expect from a VC when fundraising in Dubai?

The quasi-government VCs or funds with a governmental LP have the mandate to foster the growth of their countries' talent pool; therefore, they would strongly prefer startups' tech teams to be located in a specific geography. While pitching to this group of investors, one can expect questions about where the team members are working from.

The rest of the investors generally don't put much weight on how you distribute teams around the world. Saying that, *what matters a lot – whether you have your engineers on your payroll or outsourced – is when there is attrition within the team, the knowledge transfer between engineers can take up to 3 to 6 months and can lead to an overall development slowdown and, in the worst case scenario, a loss of a vital part of your intellectual property.*

In our experience, VCs would prefer not only to see the engineers on your payroll but also in your pitch deck. The skills of your technical team constitute your intellectual property and competitive advantage.

How will the tech talent scene of the UAE look in the coming years?

I believe we are likely to have an abundance of great talent available for hire. One important factor for this is the adaption of AI-assisted processes, coding, and quality assurance, which allows one individual to do exponentially more work. We have done an experiment at Grubtech where, using A.I., our team member managed to complete 8.5 hours of coding in 5 minutes. *We are likely to see far smaller teams among tech startups in the market. We are talking of the age of super engineers.*

About Grubtech

Grubtech is a cutting-edge technology platform specifically designed to streamline and optimize restaurant operations, enabling owners and operators to focus on what truly matters: delivering exceptional dining experiences. Empowering restaurants with integrated solutions for order handling, food preparation, and delivery, Grubtech provides a robust suite designed to master real-time driver coordination, expedite order dispatch, and optimize behind-the-scenes operations, ensuring that restaurants can effortlessly update menus, track order lifecycles, and gain actionable insights.

Grubtech supports over 750 brands across 18 countries, seamlessly integrating with more than 100 partners. With a commitment to continuous improvement and expert guidance, Grubtech stands as an indispensable ally for modern restaurants eager to thrive in the digital age.

The logo for Grubtech, featuring the word "grubtech" in a lowercase, bold, sans-serif font. The letter 'g' is significantly larger and more stylized than the other letters, with a thick stroke and a rounded bottom.

The Best Talent Advice to a Founder in Dubai

Pieces of advice critical for the successful growth of a tech company given by Dubai founders, in their words:

#	Advices
---	---------

- 1 Support with Relocation:** We collaborate with a network of service providers who assist our employees in transitioning to Dubai, and the most exciting part is that all these service providers are startups themselves!
- 2 Invest in Top Talent:** To attract the best talent in the region, you need to be willing to invest in them.
- 3 Prioritize Experienced Talent:** Considering more mature and higher-cost talent could potentially expedite your business's growth.
- 4 Always Have a Backup Tech Team:** It's wise to maintain a backup team for your tech department to ensure continuity.
- 5 Utilize Automation Tools:** Employ automation tools to manage the influx of applications from candidates who might not be an ideal fit.
- 6 Embrace Learning and Adaptation:** Continuous learning and adaptation are key since the market and employee dynamics are ever-changing.

Pieces of advice critical for the successful growth of a tech company given by Dubai founders, in their words:

#	Advices
7	Maintain Team Presence: It's essential to lead your team actively and be at the forefront of your operations.
8	Early Full-Time CTO: Employ a full-time Chief Technology Officer (CTO) in-house sooner rather than later; it can greatly benefit your business.
9	Rethink Outsourcing: Understand that the notion of outsourcing to countries like India for cost-efficiency may not be a winning formula in Dubai's current landscape.
10	Cultivate Passion for Your Product: Foster a genuine passion for your product within your tech team; it's crucial for success.
11	Founder's Involvement: As a founder, maintain a close relationship with your tech team to ensure alignment with the business's vision.
12	Legal Education for Founders: It's advantageous for founders to gain a legal education about employment regulations in the UAE early on in their entrepreneurial journey.

Methodology and Data Gathering

Participating in our study, entrepreneurs and founders of over two hundred tech companies headquartered in Dubai have come from diverse backgrounds, each driven by a singular vision to create innovative solutions that address real-world challenges. With the oldest of these companies being established in 2016 and the youngest in 2020, these tech disruptors showcase the rapid evolution of Dubai's tech ecosystem over the past half-decade.

These founders hailed from a multitude of sectors, showcasing the diverse landscape of Dubai's entrepreneurial pursuits.

The top sectors represented in our study (listed below) reflect the overall ecosystem diversification,

Tech company sector

1	Fintech
2	E-commerce
3	Software as a service (SaaS)
4	Foodtech & Restaurant
5	HRtech
6	AI and ML

Fintech

20.97% of founders represent the fintech sector. This sector's prominence underlines Dubai's stature as a financial hub that is actively embracing technological innovation to transform traditional financial services.

SaaS

Stands as a significant segment, constituting **12.90%** of the represented companies. This indicates a robust ecosystem of software providers catering to various industries and addressing the increasing demand for scalable and accessible software solutions.

HRtech

Similarly, HRtech encompasses **8.06%** of the represented companies. The presence of HRtech companies underscores the growing emphasis on innovative approaches to human resources management within Dubai's tech ecosystem.

The group of over one hundred software developers and engineers who engaged in the study work full-time for a Dubai-based company. The talent location has been identified as 50/50 residing in Dubai, residing in other markets, and working remotely.

The data has been gathered through a combination of sources: in-depth interviews (in-person and via Zoom), a questionnaire, an online survey, and focus groups.

The data was gathered, processed, and analyzed during the period of May–August 2023.

Other founders' companies operate in the tech segment of transportation, construction & real estate sectors, cleantech, digital health, edtech, legal tech, and TMT.

E-commerce

E-commerce follows closely, representing **16.13%** of the represented companies. The substantial presence of e-commerce ventures is a testament to Dubai's dynamic consumer market and the increasing reliance on digital platforms for commercial transactions.

Food Tech and Restaurant

Dubai's burgeoning food tech and restaurant sector accounts for **8.06%** of the companies. This figure mirrors the city's evolving culinary landscape, where technology-driven innovations are reshaping how food services are delivered and experienced.

AI and ML

Contributes **6.45%** of the represented companies. This demonstrates the city's active engagement with cutting-edge technologies, such as AI and machine learning that have transformative potential across industries.

INTEGRA SEVEN



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WEBSITE

<https://www.integraseven.com/>



EMAIL

info@integraseven.com