

STARTUP COLLABORATION INDEX 2025

TOP 50

MARITIME CORPORATES

ACC
VENTURE
ACCELERATION
ALLIANCE



The benchmark for
startup-minded leaders

OUR MISSION TO SCALE CORPORATE-STARTUP COLLABORATION

We believe the maritime and energy sectors need bold innovation to meet the sector and climate challenges. Startups bring radical solutions, corporates bring scale and impact. With the Venture Acceleration Alliance, we **connect the two worlds**.

By launching the Top 50 Benchmark, we aim to shine a light on how corporates collaborate with startups today, celebrate those who lead the way, share the most relevant learnings, and inspire the entire industry to step up, because only **together can we accelerate** the transition to a sustainable future.

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WHY IT MATTERS

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WE HAVE AN **AMBITION**

Innovation is fundamentally reshaping the maritime and energy industries, and the challenges we face, from decarbonisation to digitalization, cannot be solved by large corporations alone. Startups bring speed, bold ideas, and breakthrough technologies, while corporates provide scale, resources, and access to global markets. Collaboration between the two is no longer a nice-to-have but a strategic necessity for building the future of our industry. In this chapter, we explain the drivers behind this urgency, the opportunities that open up when corporates and startups work together, and the broader mission behind our Top-50 benchmark. Readers will see why this initiative was started and why the timing could not be more critical.

WE ACCELERATE CORPORATE-STARTUP COLLABORATION

Industry challenges demand bold solutions. Startups bring breakthrough technologies, corporates bring scale, resources, and markets.

We bridge the two: scaling corporate-startup collaboration in maritime and energy.

Our research reveals the power of collaboration: when entrepreneurs and industry leaders join forces, ideas become impact.

**MALOU KROEZEN
MD, ECET**



"This alliance is not just a program, it's a movement - driving the next generation of sustainable solutions."

CLEAR **NEED** FOR CORPORATE-STARTUP COLLABORATION

Neither startups nor corporates can solve today's challenges alone—collaboration makes transformation possible.

Our climate and economy needs scaled solutions

Innovation is the only way to meet urgent global challenges and develop the economy of the future.

Startups need corporate clients

Without corporate customers, breakthrough technologies struggle to scale.

Corporates need technologies and speed

Startups inject agility and future-proof innovation into corporate businesses.

Corporate-startup collaboration is a skill

Learning to work together turns ideas into real impact, faster.

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HOW WE MEASURED

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OUR METHODOLOGY

To compare 50 of the world's largest and most influential companies in a fair way, we needed a research process that is both transparent and rigorous. In this chapter, we set out the approach we followed: how the companies were selected, the sources of information we relied on, and the five themes we used as a scoring framework.

These themes, execution, ecosystem engagement, strategy, communication, and accessibility, reflect what matters most in corporate-startup collaboration. By understanding our methodology, readers will see how the benchmark provides not just rankings, but also a robust picture of where each company stands and how they compare to their peers.

OUR METHODOLOGY

Independent data
analysis, and expert
review based on **publicly
available information**
only.

Startup survey on
corporate collaboration
experiences.

Pro-active **outreach to
all 50 corporates** on
accessibility for
startups.

HOW WE BENCHMARKED

SELECT

We selected 50 globally operating corporates for the benchmark. These companies represent numerous areas of the shipping industry.*

FRAMEWORK

We built a framework for scoring on 5 themes:
Execution, Ecosystem engagement, Strategy, Thought Leadership and Accessibility.

WEIGH

We allocated weights to each theme's, to reflect the relevance for startups and corporate collaboration.

ANALYSE

We analyzed every company, scoring them on a scale from 1 to 5 on each theme with the support of AI and smart human brains.

• WE BASED THE SELECTION OF CORPORATES ON THE RESEARCH DONE BY INNOVATIVE RESEARCH FIRM THETIUS ([HTTPS://THETIUS.COM/](https://thetius.com/)), ADDED WITH THE TOP SHIPPERS FROM THE SECTOR.

THE FRAMEWORK

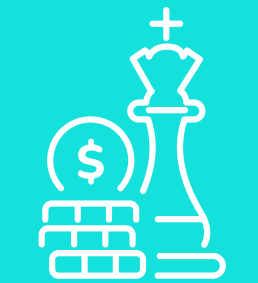
Five themes benchmark corporates, with a focus on actual work done as well as contributions to the ecosystem.



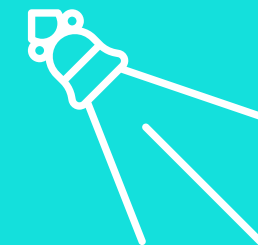
EXECUTING PILOTS



ECOSYSTEM ENGAGEMENT



STARTUP STRATEGY



THOUGHT LEADERSHIP



EASY ACCESS

THE THEMES **EXPLAINED**

Execution

Execution reflects how actively and effectively corporates work with startups in practice. It looks at the number and quality of pilots, and more importantly, whether those pilots lead to real commercial roll-outs. A high score signals that collaboration is not just for show, but actually delivering business value and scaling solutions.

Ecosystem Engagement

This theme measures how a company participates in the wider startup ecosystem beyond equity investment. It includes accelerators, sandboxes, partnerships, and industry challenges. Strong engagement means corporates are building bridges across multiple channels, making themselves visible and accessible to innovators.

Strategy

Strategy assesses how clearly startups are prioritized in the company's long-term plans. It looks for governance, leadership sponsorship, and measurable goals. When startups are explicitly embedded in corporate strategy, collaboration moves from ad-hoc initiatives to sustained, board-level commitment.

Thought Leadership

Here we capture how openly a company shares lessons and impact from working with startups. From case studies to reports, strong thought leadership means corporates provide transparency, inspire others, and show accountability by linking startup collaboration to results.

Accessibility

Accessibility looks at how easy it is for startups to reach the right people inside a corporate. It considers response speed, clarity of contact, and openness of process. High accessibility signals that a company is ready to listen and act quickly when startups knock on the door.

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THE OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE

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The ranking of the Top-50 corporates offers the clearest picture to date of how major players in the maritime and energy sectors approach collaboration with startups. In this section, readers will find the full list, broken down by leaders, strong performers, and those with visible gaps. The results allow us to celebrate those who are leading the way, while also shining a light on companies that have yet to fully engage with the startup ecosystem. By presenting the scores alongside the positions, we provide a comparative snapshot of the current state of corporate-startup collaboration across the industry.

1



Wärtsilä
Finland

2



Shell
UK

3



DNV
Norway

TOP THREE

1



Demonstrating commitment to the startup ecosystem by running multiple partner programs (Rainmaking T&TI, Next Business Lab), combined with consistent messaging and partner calls and also clear strategy framing, has put Wartsila on the top of this list.

Examples of programs and partners:

-Sustainable technology hub - <https://www.wartsila.com/sth>

-Next business lab -

<https://www.wartsila.com/energy/nextbusinesslab>

-Wide and Intelligent Sustainable Energy (WISE) Ecosystem -

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

2



Shell's GameChanger and GCxN programs consistently pilot and scale startups, supported by clear strategy, strong communication, and ecosystem leadership, while also financially supporting the emerging players.

3



DNV's Veracity platform scales across thousands of vessels, fostering ecosystem growth, supported by strong digitalization agenda and frequent industry explainers.

SCORE

1	Wärtsilä	3.85
2	Shell	3.55
3	DNV	3.40
4	Kongsberg	3.15
5	Maersk	3.15
6	Siemens Energy	3.00
7	CMA CGM	2.95
8	MOL	2.90
9	Port of Rotterdam	2.85
10	ABB	2.85

TOP 10

		SCORE
11	Engie Energy	2.70
12	Lloyd's Register	2.70
13	NYK Line	2.55
14	Ericsson	2.25
15	MPA Singapore	2.25
16	Bureau Veritas	2.15
17	DP World	2.15
18	Eastern Pacific Shipping	2.15
19	Hitachi Energy	2.10
20	Norden	1.90

11-20

		SCORE
21	Cargill	1.85
22	GTT	1.85
23	Hapag-Lloyd	1.85
24	Everllence	1.85
25	ONE	1.85
26	Port of Los Angeles	1.85
27	ZIM	1.85
28	Trafigura	1.70
29	Radio Holland	1.45
30	MISC Berhad	1.45

21-30

		SCORE
31	K-Line	1.30
32	ClassNK	1.25
33	ABS	1.00
34	APL	1.00
35	CCS	1.00
36	Euronav	1.00
37	Evergreen Marine	1.00
38	Golden Ocean	1.00
39	HMM	1.00
40	KMTC Line	1.00

31-40

		SCORE
41	Maran Gas	1.00
42	Matson	1.00
43	PIL	1.00
44	Port of Santos	1.00
45	Seaspan	1.00
46	Star Bulk	1.00
47	Wan Hai Lines	1.00
48	Yang Ming	1.00
49	Tanger Med PA	1.00
50	Who should we add next year?	

41-50

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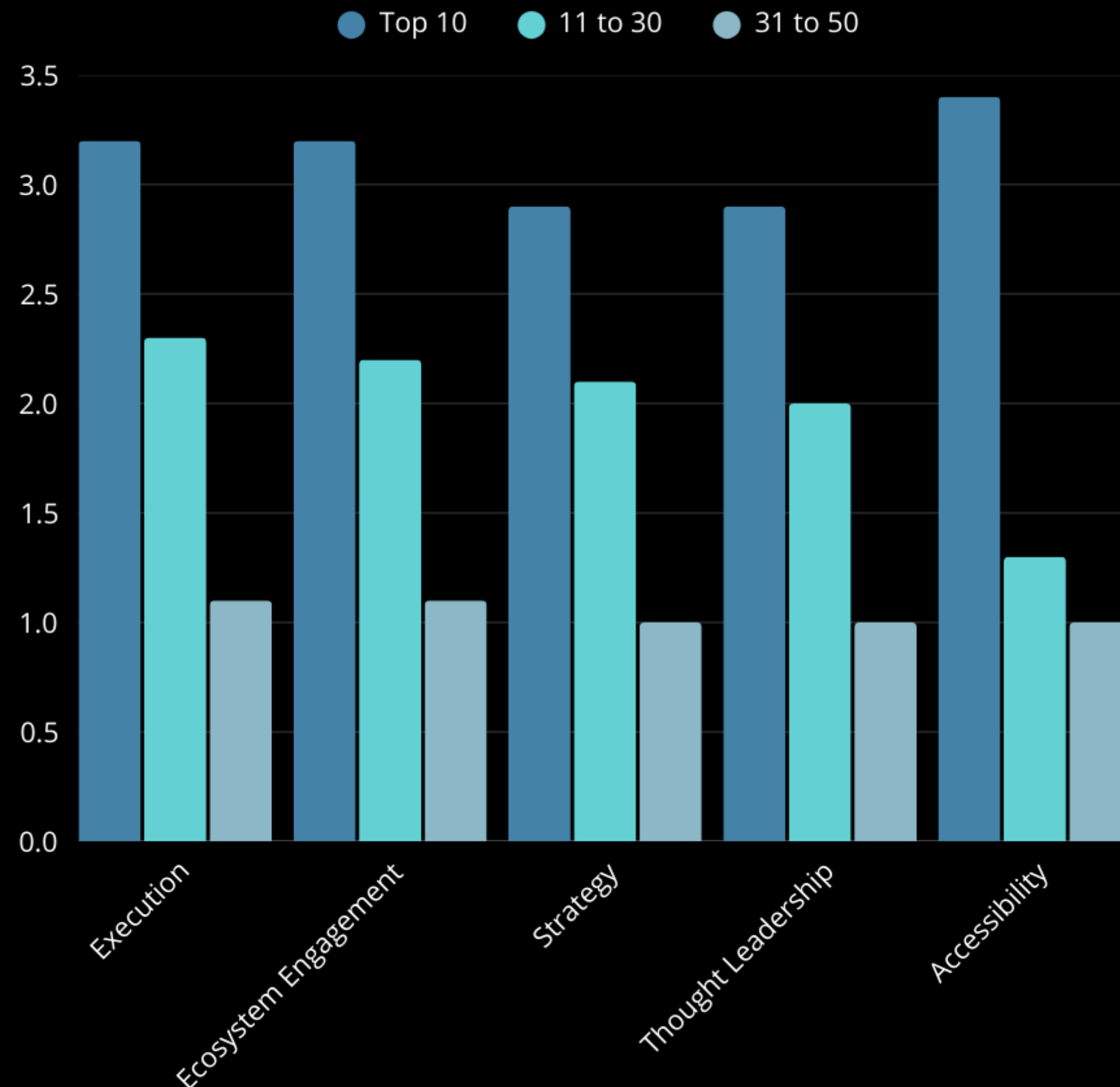
THE FINDINGS

STARTUP COLLABORATION INDEX 2025



THE MAIN CONCLUSION FROM THE RESEARCH

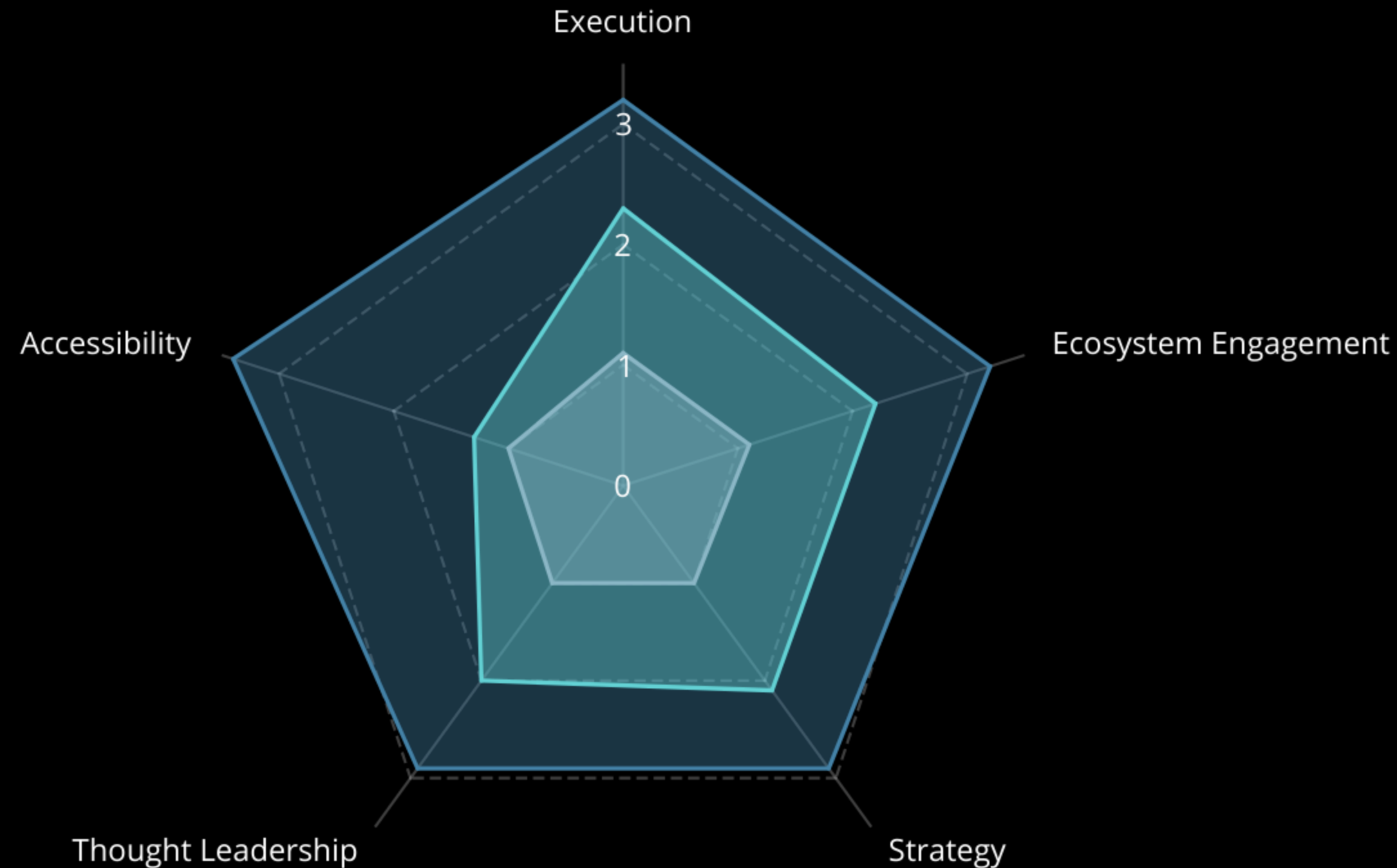
Beyond the rankings, the benchmark also reveals deeper trends and conclusions that are essential for understanding where the industry is heading. Here we highlight the common patterns that emerged across the research, from the behaviors of top performers to the recurring weaknesses shared by many companies. We explore how corporates are balancing ambition with execution, and where structural challenges, such as slow decision-making or siloed organisations, still hold them back. This section is not just about data, but about meaning: it helps readers grasp what the results tell us about the state of collaboration today and what lessons can be drawn for the future.



MAIN FINDINGS

**TOP 10 OUTSCORES
SIGNIFICANTLY ON ALL
THEMES**

● Top 10 ● 11 to 30 ● 31 to 50



MAIN FINDINGS

**1 POINT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN
TOP 10 AND MIDDLE
PERFORMERS — AND 2 POINTS
WITH LOWEST CATEGORY**

THE PERCENTAGE OF CORPORATES THAT **RESPONDED** TO OUR STARTUP EMAIL **WITHIN 30 DAYS?**

17% OF THE CORPORATES RESPONDED!



CORPORATE PERSPECTIVE

Wide variety across corporates, some don't work with startups at all.

General lack of KPI's and long-term partnerships.

Main partnership type: Accelerators.

No real evidence of startups embedding in operations.

Startup collaboration not (seen) as a growth lever.

MOST COMMON BOTTLENECKS

1

Lack of Dedicated Resources

Many corporates lack dedicated teams, budgets, and processes to effectively engage with startups, leading to missed opportunities.

MOST COMMON BOTTLENECKS

2

Siloed Approach

Corporate innovation is siloed in individual business units or functions, preventing a cohesive and coordinated approach to startup collaboration.

MOST COMMON BOTTLENECKS

3

Risk-Averse Culture

Corporate cultures that are overly risk-averse and slow to adapt can hinder the agility and experimentation required for successful startup partnerships.

MOST COMMON BOTTLENECKS

4

Misaligned Incentives

Misaligned incentives and KPIs between corporate innovation teams and the core business can limit the impact and sustainability of startup engagements.

MOST COMMON BOTTLENECKS

5

Startup Ecosystem Knowledge

Corporates lack a deep understanding of the startup ecosystem, making it difficult to identify the right partners and design effective collaboration models.

THE STARTUP PERSPECTIVE

While our benchmark primarily evaluates corporates, it was equally important to capture how startups themselves experience collaboration with large companies. We therefore ran a survey among entrepreneurs active in the maritime and energy ecosystem. Although the response base was modest, their feedback adds an essential layer of perspective. Startups are often the ones who feel the barriers most directly, from slow decision-making to unclear points of entry, and their voices highlight where expectations diverge from reality. The results underline why the startup perspective is crucial: it reminds us that collaboration is not measured only by corporate intent, but by the day-to-day experiences of those trying to work with them.

ALL SCORES BELOW 6.5 OUT OF 10

On average corporations scored no higher than 6.5 out of 10 on ANY collaboration aspect, according to startups. This is a strong signal from startups that they struggle to build meaningful partnerships with corporates.



STARTUP QUOTE

**“DECISION MAKING PROCESS WAS SLOW AND NEVER
PROVIDED A CLEAR GO/NO-GO ANSWER.”**

STARTUP QUOTE

**“TOP MANAGEMENT DECIDED TO STOP THE PROJECT DUE
TO TOO HIGH RISK. PILOT WAS IN PRINCIPLE ALREADY
GRANTED.”**

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ABOUT US

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WE'VE JOINED FORCES



Platform Zero
Rotterdam, NL



Lloyd's Register
London, UK



Safetytech Accelerator
London, UK



Erasmus University
Rotterdam, NL

THE VENTURE ACCELERATION ALLIANCE

This benchmark was created through a unique collaboration between organizations that share a commitment to accelerating innovation in the maritime and energy sectors. [Platform Zero](#) is an innovation platform and venture studio dedicated to scaling radical climate-tech startups and building ecosystems where the new economy can thrive. [Lloyd's Register](#) brings deep maritime expertise and a global reputation for safety and quality, ensuring that the insights from this benchmark are rooted in the realities of the industry. [Safetytech Accelerator](#), launched by Lloyd's Register Foundation and Lloyd's Register, contributes its proven experience in fostering collaboration between corporates and startups to address safety and sustainability challenges. Finally, the [Erasmus Centre for Energy Transition \(ECET\)](#) at Erasmus University Rotterdam provides academic rigor, independent research expertise, and a strong foundation in understanding the dynamics of energy transition. Together, these partners combine entrepreneurial drive, industry authority, innovation practice, and academic research to create the first truly independent benchmark of corporate–startup collaboration in the maritime sector.

MALOU KROEZEN

MANAGING DIRECTOR, ECET

“

Learning is essential for driving the energy transition. That is why we collect and share best practices & insights.

”

x x x x
x x x x
x x x x
x x x x



x x x x
x x x x
x x x x
x x x x

MARE STRAETMANS

FOUNDER, PLATFORM ZERO

“

Working with startups is about *scaling value* for your corporate, this understanding changes the game for everybody.

”



MARIUS SUTEU

MD, SAFETY TECH ACCELERATOR
BY LLOYDS REGISTER

“

When corporates start to share the results of pilots/projects with the ecosystem, it increases accountability and speeds up learning of the whole industry.

”



MEET THE TEAM!



Mare Straetmans
Entrepreneur



Marius Suteu
Managing Director



Mark Hannan
Partner



Jessica Mulvihill
Principal



Sebastian Medloff
Venture Analyst



Phillip Bucknell
Manager



Malou Kroezen
Managing Director



Julia Byrd
Partner

It's been a real and great team effort to launch this first edition of the benchmark. Although it has not been easy for everybody during the process, because our worlds offer great challenges every day, we are proud that we have all contributed to this inspirational, impactful and innovative new (ad)venture!

WANT TO JOIN?

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WANT TO CONTRIBUTE?

STARTUPS

We need your input, because this is only the first run of our benchmark.

Please share insights how it is to work with any of these 50 companies:

[Startup survey](#)

CORPORATES

Are you looking for learnings? Do you want to partner with the alliance? Or do you have input for the research?

Connect with us

[Mare Straetmans](#)

[Marius Suteu](#)

[Malou Kroezen](#)

WEBSITE

Find out more about what we do and who we are.

VentureAccelerationAlliance.com

SOCIAL MEDIA

Follow our future releases and more on our socials.

LinkedIn.com/company/venture-acceleration-alliance

GLOBAL BENCHMARK OF 50 COMPANIES & PORTS

Scaling startup innovation for
climate impact through stronger
corporate engagement.



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THANK YOU

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