



# STARTOUT CON

#StartOutCon

# **Welcome to StartOut Con 2025:** **Where Innovation Meets Inclusion**

Get ready to experience the future of LGBTQ+ entrepreneurship and innovation at StartOut Con 2025—a high-energy, game-changing 2-day event that’s redefining what it means to disrupt industries and build a more equitable entrepreneurial ecosystem. Join us in San Francisco this Pride Month in person and connect with the trailblazers, dreamers, and doers driving progress at the intersection of innovation and inclusion.

## **What is StartOut Con?**

StartOut Con is a movement with a bold mission: To equip LGBTQ+ entrepreneurs to break barriers and scale their visions into impactful ventures. From intimate breakout sessions to bold main-stage discussions, the convention is designed to foster the kind of environment where ideas spark, connections flourish, and solutions emerge.

At StartOut Con, every voice matters. This isn’t about sitting on the sidelines; it’s about collaborating, challenging norms, and creating opportunities for LGBTQ+ founders and allies to thrive together.

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J.P.Morgan



T Mobile

VISA

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# Day 1 | Wednesday, June 4th

## Schedule At-a-Glance

LinkedIn HQ | 222 2nd St, San Francisco, CA 94105

- 2:30 PM - 3:00 PM
  - Registration Open for Investors
- 3:00 PM - 3:45 PM
  - Investor Circle
- 3:00 PM - 3:45 PM
  - Registration Open for Founders
- 3:45 PM - 4:20 PM
  - Founder & Investor Matching
- 4:00 PM - 4:30 PM
  - Registration Open for All Attendees
- 4:30 PM - 4:40 PM
  - Welcome to StartOut Con by Trailblazer Sponsor - VISA
- 4:45 PM - 5:30 PM
  - State of Venture Capital and Fundraising Panel
- 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM
  - Opening Reception presented by J.P. Morgan  
at Southside Spirit House (a block away)



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## LinkedIn - 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor



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# State of Venture Capital and Fundraising



All eyes are on the state of the economy right now. If there is anything that remains true now more than ever, it is that we must remain resilient. Step into a candid conversation on the current state of venture capital and fundraising, told through the real success stories of founders and investors who've made it work. This dynamic panel brings together voices from both sides of the table to share firsthand insights, lessons learned, and what it takes to raise and deploy capital in today's climate. Whether you're a founder, investor, or simply curious about the evolving VC landscape, this session is open to all and built to inspire. Come for the real stories, leave with real perspective.

**Moderator:**

Amy Meadows | SmarHer Ventures

**Panelist:**

Christina Whatley, BEA Venture Fund | Traci Keen, Onto Health  
Vasudev Bailey, Stealth Company | Brian Backus, Hello Wonder  
Hannah Wastyk, Interface Biosciences

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# Day 2 | Wednesday, June 5th

## Schedule At-a-Glance

Werqwise | 149 New Montgomery St 4th Floor, San Francisco, CA 94105

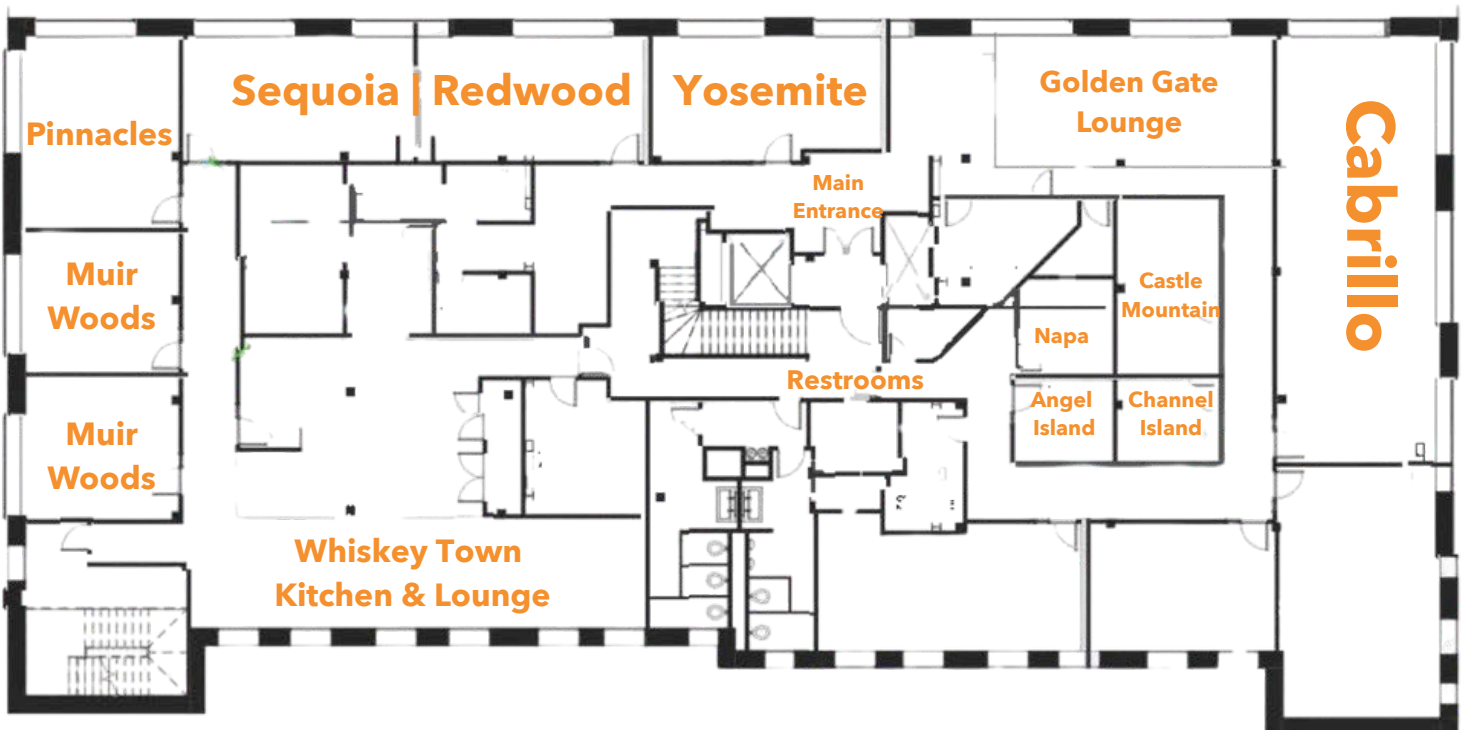
- 10:00 AM - 10:30 AM
  - Doors Open & Registration
- 10:30 AM - 10:40 AM
  - Welcome on 4<sup>th</sup> Floor
- 10:40 AM - 11:00 AM
  - Fireside Chat with Bhavik Shah
- 11:00 am - 11:30 am
  - Transition to 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor
- 11:30 AM - 12:20 PM
  - Ed Session Block 1
  - Expert Office Hours LIVE
  - Pitch Practice Lounge
- 12:30 PM - 1:20 PM
  - Ed Session Block 2
  - Expert Office Hours LIVE
  - Pitch Practice Lounge
- 1:30 PM - 2:30 PM
  - Lunch & Networking Break
- 2:40 PM - 3:30 PM
  - Ed Session Block 3 & Expert Office Hours LIVE
- 3:30 pm - 4:00 pm
  - Transition to 4<sup>th</sup> Floor
- 4:00 PM - 4:45 PM
  - Closing Keynote with Gabbi Tuft
- 4:45 PM - 5:00 PM
  - Closing and Additional Networking



## Werqwise - 4<sup>th</sup> Floor



## Werqwise - 2nd Floor



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# Opening Fireside Chat with Bhavik Shah

Thursday, June 5 | 10:40 am - 11:00 am

Presented by J.P. Morgan



Bhavik (ભવિક) R. Shah [he/him] is an award-winning leader and culture change strategist specializing in workforce mental health and DEIB (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging). Bhavik offers 17 years of demonstrated success within financial services, Fortune 100 companies, and nonprofit foundations on a global scale. He draws on his Gujarati South Asian immigrant roots and LGBTQ+ identity to promote awareness and build equitable workplaces for all employees.

**Moderated by:**

David Barbee

Head of Transaction, Global Banking

J.P. Morgan

# Closing Keynote with Gabbi Tuft

Thursday, June 5 | 4:00 pm - 4:45 pm

Former WWE Superstar, licensed sports nutritionist, and viral social media influencer, Gabbi Tuft scaled GLO Coaching to a 7-figure business in under a year. Known as the “Review Girl” with 30M-50M monthly views, she was named one of the Top 10 Women-Led Businesses of 2023 by WWD.



**Moderated by:**  
Brian Richardson  
CEO  
StartOut

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# Ed Session Block 1

11:30 am - 12:20 pm

## Early-Stage Business Model Design: Visualize, Test, & Validate Risky Assumptions

*Room: Cabrillo*

Not every business needs to be a startup—so what’s the best path for you? In this interactive session, you'll learn how to visually map out your business model, prioritize and test risky assumptions about your target market, and determine the best path for your venture. Gain clarity on your business model, funding needs, and growth trajectory so that you can align your goals with the right strategy and resources. Participants will have the option to work on paper canvases or in MURAL, a digital whiteboarding tool.



**Presenter:**  
Ryan MacCarrigan  
LEANSTUDIO

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## Boardroom Dominatrix Training

*Room: Sequoia | Redwood*

When women and minorities are in positions of power, incredible shifts happen. When respect is a standard and consent is honored in every interaction, human beings feel safe. And when employees’ needs are met and our planet’s boundaries aren’t being exceeded, we can start to have an accurate measurement of the success of a company:

A boardroom dominatrix is a person who balances an exchange of power with business acumen to create singular results—Strategically growing the company by garnering consent to technologically dominate, a boardroom dominatrix operates with a clearly articulated vision that drives the actions and decisions of all employees across all levels of the organization. The result is an extraordinary increase in revenues, and an ensuing satisfaction throughout the company.



**Presenter:**  
Beatrice Stonebanks  
Boardroom Dominatrix

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# Ed Session Block 1

11:30 am - 12:20 pm

## Is Your Early-Stage Product Strategy Pulling its Weight?

*Room: Pinnacles*

Your product strategy is failing if it's not helping you prioritize and adapt with confidence, define your MVP, and raise capital. In this session, we'll explore what effective, fundable product strategies consistently get right, how they help navigate moments when the path ahead feels unclear, and how to spot their cracks before investors do. You'll leave with sharper judgment, practical tools to strengthen your product strategy, and a clear understanding of how funders size up your strategy and vision.



**Presenter:**  
Chris Dowell  
Swiftwater Horizon

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## Negotiating Your First Venture Deal

*Room: Muir Woods*

Raising venture capital involves more than just a great pitch—it's a complex legal agreement that can shape the future of your business. This session offers a clear-eyed look at the legal considerations of your first VC deal, including key terms, negotiation strategies, and common legal missteps that trip up early-stage founders. You'll walk away with a foundational understanding of term sheets, ownership implications, and alternative financing options to help you make informed, strategic decisions for your company.



**Presenter:**  
Jay Schau  
Orrick

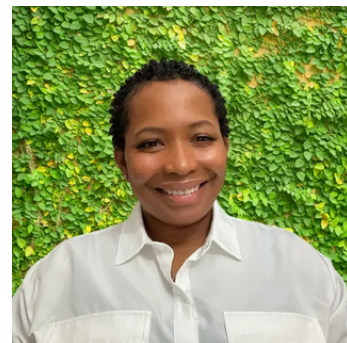
# Ed Session Block 2

12:30 pm - 1:20 pm

## Do I Need to Raise Venture Capital?

*Room: Cabrillo*

Venture capital isn't the right path for every business. This no-fluff session unpacks what it really means to raise a VC round, the common pitfalls founders make, and how to know if you're truly ready. Get a step-by-step checklist and alternative funding options so you can make the smartest choice for your business.



**Presenter:**

Ayanna Kerrison

Former investor at Precursor Ventures  
and Acumen America

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## Building AI Leadership Muscle

*Room: Sequoia | Redwood*

When a leader is asked—or tasked—to lead AI in their company, the journey starts with overcoming deep organizational resistance. This session explores what makes AI leadership uniquely challenging, from the speed and scale of change to the complexity of aligning cross-functional stakeholders. Learn how to build your AI leadership muscle to overcome different sources of resistance.



**Presenter:**

Wai Poc

Unleashed Leaders



**Presenter:**

Patrick Reilly

Resources in Action

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# Ed Session Block 2

12:30 pm - 1:20 pm

## The State of Trans Entrepreneurship

*Room: Pinnacles*

Trans, nonbinary, and gender-nonconforming founders face unique obstacles—but also incredible opportunities. This session explores the specific challenges trans entrepreneurs encounter, highlights the innovative power of trans businesses, and showcases trans-specific resources to build more thriving companies. Whether you're a trans founder or an ally, this is your chance to be part of a movement that builds lasting change.



**Presenter:**  
Ivan Hsiaol  
Trans Health HQ

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## Go-to-Market Mastery: Your Blueprint for Launching Successfully

*Room: Muir Woods*

A strong Go-to-Market (GTM) strategy is essential for turning your product or service into a market success. This hands-on workshop will teach you the key components of a GTM strategy, including defining your target market, crafting compelling messaging, setting pricing, and developing sales and distribution strategies. Discover how to map the customer journey and align your marketing and sales efforts to create a seamless path to growth.



**Presenter:**  
Shweta Agrawal  
Boston New Technology

# Ed Session Block 3

2:40 pm - 3:20 pm

## Non-Dilutive Funding in 2025: Grants, Loans & Beyond

*Room: Cabrillo*

So, you've determined that external funding is key to scaling your business—but how do you secure capital without giving up equity? This session will focus exclusively on non-dilutive funding, exploring options like grants, venture debt, crowdfunding, and more. Often overlooked, non-dilutive funding is a powerful tool for fueling growth while maintaining full ownership. Join us to gain clarity on your funding options and leave with a roadmap to secure capital on your terms.



**Presenter:**  
Patrick Driscoll  
Gaingels

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## Learn More Faster: GV's Playbook for Accelerating Customer Discovery

*Room: Sequoia | Redwood*

Learn Google Venture's proven formula for finding your ideal customer and building their perfect product. Inspired by the GV playbook, Learn More Faster, and with insights from Michael's 15 years of experience with hundreds of GV startups, this session offers practical strategies and skills you can use to accelerate customer discovery, define your unique value proposition and identify the specific customers who are initially most likely to adopt your product.



**Presenter:**  
Michael Margolis  
GV

# Ed Session Block 3

2:40 pm - 3:20 pm

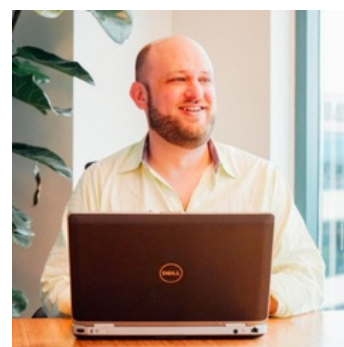
## Small Business Success Strategies

*Room: Pinnacles*

Running a small business comes with unique challenges—but you don't have to figure it out alone. This session delivers expert insights, actionable strategies, and access to national and local resources designed to help small businesses thrive. Learn the must-know tips to scale, sustain, and succeed as an LGBTQ+ entrepreneur.



**Presenter:**  
Eric Goldman  
AGA/Goldman Coaching



**Presenter:**  
Damian Wisniewski  
PILOT Inc

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## BurnOut Bootcamp: Thriving as an LGBTQ+ Entrepreneur

*Room: Muir Woods*

Building a business demands energy, focus, and resilience—and your wellbeing is the foundation for all of it. In this workshop, successful founders share their top strategies and daily habits for staying at their best, including tips on sleep, exercise, nutrition, and staying connected to their support networks. Leave with a personalized blueprint for balancing ambition with self-care so you can sustain your success without sacrificing your wellbeing.



**Presenter:**  
Skye King  
Geode Lifeworks

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# Expert Office Hours LIVE

Thursday, June 5

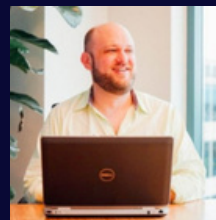
**Fast-track your startup success in just 20 minutes.**

Expert Office Hours LIVE is your chance to connect one-on-one with seasoned professionals who understand the unique challenges of building and scaling a business. These high-impact, 20-minute sessions are designed to deliver fast, actionable advice tailored to your current business needs—all in real time. Whether you're navigating a funding round, refining your go-to-market plan, or have questions about protecting your IP, this is your opportunity to get expert guidance on the spot.

## Topic Areas Include:

Sales & Business Development | Legal Insights for Tech Startups | Product Development & Product-Market Fit | Fundraising Strategy | Sales & Marketing | HR, People, & Culture | Go-To-Market Strategy

## Meet Our Experts



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# Pitch Practice Lounge

Thursday, June 5 | 11:30 pm - 1:30 pm

Step into the Pitch Practice Lounge at StartOut Con—an exciting, fast-paced opportunity to sharpen your pitch with the guidance of seasoned experts. In these rapid-fire, 10-minute sessions, you'll have 3 minutes to present your pitch, followed by expert feedback on everything from storytelling and delivery to slide deck impact. It's a high-energy, low-risk space to grow your confidence, refine your messaging, and level up your fundraising readiness. AV support will be available for founders who want to showcase their decks, so come ready to learn, iterate, and shine!

## Meet Our Experts:



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# STARTOUT BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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GARCIA**  
(she/her)  
CHAIR



**HERNAN  
LOPEZ**  
(he/him)  
VICE CHAIR



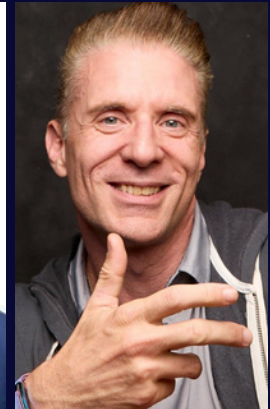
**RICK  
KLECKOWSKI**  
(he/him)  
TREASURER



**CHARLOTTE  
HAMILTON**  
(she/her)  
SECRETARY



**MIGUEL A.  
LOPEZ**  
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**LORENZO  
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(he/him)  
NOMINATING CHAIR



**ALEX TANNER** (she/her)



**EMILY MILLER** (she/her)



**JASON SCOTT** (he/him)



**JO SCHNEIER** (he/him)



**JOSEPH VARNER**  
(he/him)



**MOHIT JOLLY** (he/him)



**RIANA LYNN** (he/him)



**SEAN E. MICKENS** (he/him)



**SERENA POON** (she/her)

# STARTOUT TEAM



**ALLISON WRIGHT** (she/her)



**BRIAN RICHARDSON**  
(he/him)



**BEN HABERMAN** (he/him)



**CHRIS DAVIDSON**  
(he/him)



**BB** (they/she)



**CHRISTA KILDAY** (she/her)



**BRANDON PARKES** (he/him)



**DANIEL ANZUETO**  
(all pronouns)



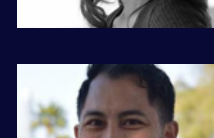
**DANIELLE WIGGINS** (she/her)



**KAT LÊ** (she/her)



**HERMAN FLOWERS** (he/him)



**PHILLIP OZAKI** (he/him)



**IRENE TANG** (she/they)



**PHILLIP OZAKI** (he/him)



**JAKE HANNIGAN** (he/him)



**TARIK PERKINS** (he/him)



**JENNIFER DAWSON**  
(she/they)



**YANIRA BORGES** (she/her)





# THANK YOU TO OUR PROGRAMMING BOARDS

Thank you to our Programming Board members across the country and globally who produce engaging events for LGBTQ+ entrepreneurs.



Special shoutout to our StartOut Con Board for organizing this amazing event!



**Brad Dressler**  
he/him



**Alyson Decker**  
she/her



**Amy Meadows**  
she/her



**James Yateman**  
he/him



**Kelly O'Connell**  
she/her



**Alex Lopez**  
he/him

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There is no better time to donate to our Pride Campaign  
and join our legacy of empowering the next generation  
LGBTQ+ entrepreneurs.



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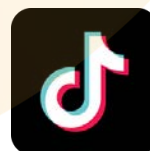
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