



Bertelsmann Stiftung (ed.)
Dr. Joachim Rother

Innovation and Cooperation – Connecting German Mittelstand and Israeli Startups

Learnings and recommendations from an innovation exchange project

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In December 2019, an innovation exchange between Germany and Israel brought the innovative power of Israeli startups together with the know-how of German Mittelstand firms from East Westphalia-Lippe. A key insight: As in other arenas, personal contact is the key to success.

Israel's innovative power is no secret – and neither is the German Mittelstand's need for innovation. An exchange program has now brought these two together. The program enabled Israeli startups to present their business ideas at the headquarters of German Mittelstand companies. By organizing the event, Israeli NGO Start-Up Nation Central has brought to fruition a vision prepared by the Bertelsmann Stiftung through two studies conducted since 2017: a deepening of the relationship between the two

countries through the initiation of economic contacts. The Bertelsmann Stiftung supported the innovation-transfer program by carrying out an evaluation.

Among its numerous findings, this assessment showed that providing an opportunity for personal contact and detailed discussion is critical for the success of a project of this nature. It is also important to manage participant expectations well. This is particularly vital because the face-to-face format involves meetings between representatives of different business philosophies – that of the traditionally thinking Mittelstand and of the dynamic startup world – as well as of different cultures. Sustainable cooperation between the two sides can develop only if organizers ensure that these factors are addressed. Finally, the latter point in particular also underscores the importance of choosing an intermediary who is familiar with the idiosyncrasies of both markets and can navigate them both with confidence.

With these and other final recommendations, the report is sure to offer useful insights for anyone with an interest in the international transfer of innovation, even beyond the German and Israeli ecosystems.

Project

- [German-Israeli Young Leaders Exchange](#)

CONTACT - CONTENT



Stephan Vopel



Dr. Joachim Rother