

The Importance of Young People In Your Startup Community

From Chattanooga to Omaha to Las Vegas, many cities in the US – and around the world – are building startup communities. An important part of doing this is to attract, retain, and mentor more young people.

Behind every successful startup community is a group of young people with their entire life ahead of them. These youngsters aren't afraid to take on projects bigger than themselves and won't take no for an answer. They come from all different walks of life, places around the globe, and with varied experiences and knowledge. And they all come with enthusiasm and a desire to learn. Over time, as they learn who they are as young adults, they grow the communities they are a part of into something unique.

A new book that just came out, *2 Billion Under 20: How Millennials Are Breaking Down Age Barriers and Changing the World*, highlights the stories of young kids across the globe who are creating ripples in their own communities. One of the millennials highlighted in the book is [Fletcher Richman](#), now the platform manager at Galvanize Ventures.

As a University of Colorado at Boulder student, Fletcher Richman co founded [Spark Boulder](#), Colorado's first student coworking space, which Amy and I have financially supported (check out the bathrooms the next time you are there.) In his junior year in college, he largely directed and oversaw the fundraising, construction, and day-to-day operations of Spark. Fletcher could always be found meeting student entrepreneurs and would regularly seek out and offer other promising students internships at growing Boulder startups. He also helped create a set of classes at Spark that help students learn iOS Development, growth hacking, and front end web development.

Fletcher is constantly thinking about new ways to grow our startup community and young people like him that have made an enormous contribution to Boulder's growing startup scene. But they've also made contributions like Fletcher's all over the world. The book *2 Billion Under 20* has great examples of millennials from Iowa to Israel doing things similar to what Fletcher does to make their startup communities more successful.

Young people have the opportunity to move and build their life anywhere they want. So how do growing communities retain them? When I asked Fletcher why he chose to stay in Boulder, he said "everyone is very supportive and wants to help mentor you, so you learn a lot and have the ability to grow without feeling like you're in a rat race." Young people want to constantly be learning, contribute in a meaningful way and have the work they do be personally relevant and important to them.

It's easy to talk about attracting more talent to your city, growing your community and creating a new spot on the map for startup innovation. It's easy to get caught up in the numbers of how many companies your community has launched, how many have raised capital, how many jobs they've created, and how many have exited. But to do any of this over a long period of time you need to pay attention to those young dreamers who are already in the community and engage and mentor them to reach their full potential.

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