

Silicon Valley legend Tim Draper loves Singapore's startup scene

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By Michael de Waal-Montgomery

During his talk on spotting and investing in the world's most disruptive tech companies, Draper called Singapore's government 'the best run' in the world



Tim Draper talks on a startup panel in Singapore. Image credit: e27

In a keynote speech at the Sands Expo and Convention Centre in Singapore this morning attended by **e27**, legendary Silicon Valley venture capitalist **Tim Draper** poured glowing praise on the local startup ecosystem.

Draper was talking at a seminar on spotting and investing in the world's most disruptive tech companies, hosted by DBS. He is a founding partner of Silicon Valley venture capital firm DFJ, which has backed the likes of Skype, Hotmail, Baidu, Twitter and Tumblr in the early stages.

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“The government here is so progressive and so entrepreneurial, and so excited about what they do [for startups]. It's unprecedented,” Draper said. The Singapore government was one of the first investors in DFJ's original fund.

“In Singapore, I noticed you have some amazing assets here. One is a premium on honesty, transparency, and the other thing that Singapore has is a good provincial culture that is very tight. So if you start a business here, other Singaporeans will be very forgiving of the first products that you come out with,” he added.

He reminisced on his first trip to China some 30 years ago, and how much has changed since that time. He came across an early entrepreneur who had grown a successful chocolate company, only for it to be nationalised by the government.

Draper advised China's minister of finance at the time against such actions — there was no incentive for entrepreneurs to build great companies if they had to live in fear of a forced government take over.

Asia's startup ecosystem has come a long way since then, with Singapore at the forefront of much positive change.

“[Singapore] is great for entrepreneurs, but the thing that I've noticed Singapore's entrepreneurs are missing is getting distribution. Get it out there,” Draper said.

“You have the best technologies in the world, the best education system, the people here are the brightest in the world, and you need to get those great

ideas to the rest of the planet,” he added.

DFJ is an investor in Singapore-based venture capital and incubation firm Clearbridge Accelerator. It is also a small investor in local Bitcoin startup CoinHako.

In terms of tech areas with huge growth opportunities, Draper lists: Micro-satellites (with applications for agriculture); drones (deliveries); healthcare (see blood-analysis startup [Theranos](#)); robotics (production and manufacturing); Bitcoin (finance); and wearables (monitoring the human body — “Imagine you have a wearable that tells you your blood glucose level is low, it sends a message to the pizza place, [which] then puts the pizza on a drone, and before you knew you were hungry the pizza is right there”).

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Draper also warns traditional VCs to be careful they are not ‘Napsterised’ — made obsolete by newer models of raising funding. These emerging threats include electronic shares, networked accounting, crowdfunding, Bitcoin (and blockchain), smart contracts, and secondary trading.

“I actually think governments have to compete with each other for us [VCs]. Singapore understands that. Clearly any government that has gone from 4.5 million to 5.5 million people in about two years understands that a government who competes well attracts very good people,” Draper said.

“Singapore is the best run government in the world,” he added.

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