

INTERVIEW

CHRIS SKINNER,

VICE PRESIDENT OF STRATEGIC
MARKETING AND R&D,
OWENS CORNINGJEC COMPOSITES
STARTUP BOOSTER
The leading startup competition on materials

Balancing ambition with discipline

Chris Skinner, vice president of strategic marketing and R&D at Owens Corning, shares why the Startup Booster remains a key innovation radar for major composites players.

JEC Composites Magazine: Which qualities did you value the most when selecting the startups participating in this year's Startup Booster programme?

Chris Skinner: I've been involved in the Startup Booster for several years now, and every year I am impressed by how the standards keep getting higher. In 2025, we reviewed more than 130 startup pitches, and what really stood out was the level of professionalism. Founders were clear on the problem they were solving and thoughtful about how their business models would work. Selecting just 20 startups from such a strong field was genuinely difficult, which is exactly what you want from a competition like this.

From Owens Corning's point of view, what makes a startup attractive?

C.S.: Owens Corning's motivation for engaging with the Startup Booster today is very much the same as when we first joined the program several years ago. Startups give us a window into emerging trends and technologies that might otherwise stay below the radar for much longer. That early visibility is powerful. It helps keep our organisation dynamic, curious, and better prepared to anticipate and shape change.

How do you analyse the dynamism of startups in the composite materials sector?

C.S.: Building a startup specialising in materials is very different from launching a startup in digital technology. Materials innovation takes time, capital, patience,



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sweat, and often tears. What is encouraging today is that startups understand this reality. They also recognise the importance of building an ecosystem around them, from partners and customers to suppliers and mentors, and they're learning how to balance their ambition with discipline. The most promising startups aren't rushing to scale; they're scaling with purpose.

How do they help you compete in an environment where innovation is key?

C.S.: Competition in composites is ultimately about delivering solutions that drive market growth through material substitution and /or productivity. Startups often bring fresh approaches designed to address these key industry challenges. They create options – new ways of thinking, new technologies, and new value propositions – that can support innovation and margin expansion at the same time.

How does Owens Corning support startups on the path to industrialising their solutions?

C.S.: Support can take many forms including funding or a commercial

partnership. Sometimes it involves helping founders navigate the complexity of the industrial ecosystem. And sometimes it is simply sharing experience and perspective – what works, what does not, and where the hurdles appear. Helping startups make the leap from a great idea to a scalable and viable industrial solution is where established players can add real value.

What advice would you give to the participants to help them succeed?

C.S.: Embrace the experience. Recognition is important, of course, but the real value comes from engaging with others and building relationships along the way. Use the visibility that the JEC platform provides to connect people to your solution. Remember, great pitches combine passion with storytelling not pretty slides full of technical details. □

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