

One pitch, thousands of investors: Focal, the leading startup demo day, is back

Focal's flagship Demo Day returns for its 9th edition. With Issie James taking the helm for what promises to be the biggest and best yet! The application window opens 8th April and closes at 9am BST on 24th April, ahead of Demo Day on 16th May. Focal welcomes applications from pre-seed to Series A startups based anywhere in the world and raising now or in the near future. It takes 5 minutes and you'll get your pitch in front of 250 leading VC funds just by applying!

What is Focal?

Since its founding in 2020, Focal has built one of the world's largest startup demo days, which garners thousands of pre-seed to Series A stage applicants from around the world, as well as thousands of investors. We run Demo Day virtually twice a year, typically in May and October.

Focal is rewriting the rulebook of venture fundraising through a core focus on collaboration over competition. At the heart of our offering lies a partnership model where 250 leading VC funds support Focal in promoting each Demo Day and voting on applicants, in exchange for access to the companies that apply.

For founders, it means they can find all the most relevant and best investors for their fundraise in one place, whilst the open application form means that founders are able to fundraise based on merit rather than who they know. Broadly, we're trying to tackle the mess that is the venture fundraising process by making it exponentially more efficient and meritocratic.

To date, over 8000 companies have applied to Focal and 122 have pitched at Demo Day. More to the point, it's working. Former finalists have gone on to raise hundreds of millions and there are a number of breakout companies, such as [*scan.com*](#), [*Jude*](#) and [*Honest Mobile*](#). We've also enabled Focal attendees to personally invest in 10 of Focal's companies, through special purpose vehicles, to date!

We continue to build Focal beyond the realm of our flagship Demo Day, working towards our ultimate aim of making the fundraising process as frictionless as possible. Earlier this year, we launched Focal Deploy, a new Demo Day format where VC funds pitch to Limited Partners. We had a whopping 245 VC funds apply and partnered with more than 110 blue chip Limited Partners. Focal Deploy will return in 2025 and we're excited to see it continue to grow.

Recently, we built and launched a platform for our former finalists, The Focal Community. Our 100+ previous alumni can now request introductions to investors and other alumni founders on demand, as well as receive offers from our sponsors and other partners. We believe Focal will primarily be a platform business at some point in the not too distant future and we're excited to talk more about this soon. We think the problem we're trying to solve (the broken fundraising process) is simply massive and there's so much we can do!

[Apply Now](#)

How does Demo Day work?

It's super simple! Startups apply in 5 minutes through [*our application form*](#). Applications are then reviewed by the Focal team and our 250 VC partners, and 20-30 companies are selected to pitch at Demo Day! Whilst reviewing applications, our partner VCs let us know if they want introductions to any of

the companies, and we'll ask you at that point whether you'd like to speak with the investor.

The finalists will then need to put together a video pitch for Demo Day. On Demo Day itself, they'll be invited to do a live Q&A with one of our partner VCs after the pitches, whilst finalists are also invited to an afterparty with our partner VCs and sponsors!

Key dates for your diary:

9am BST, Monday 8th April - application window opens

9am BST, Wednesday 24th April - application window closes

2pm-5pm, 16th May - Demo Day

If you'd like to watch, you can sign up [here](#). We kick Demo Days off with a quick introduction, followed by a panel discussion, this time with two of Focal's former finalists ([Peony](#) from Jude and [Josh](#) from Honest Mobile). This will be followed by the pitches and, finally, the one-to-one discussions between each founder and a partner VC. We run several of these sessions simultaneously so you can choose which conversations you watch.

We've also got a few things to announce for S24.

Firstly, we're absolutely delighted to be teaming up again with [HSBC Innovation Banking](#), [Google Cloud](#), [Carta](#) and [BDO](#)! We're also excited to be welcoming [Fuelled](#) and [Cooley](#)! We're also thrilled that more top tier VC funds are joining the party, such as Frontline Ventures, Kindred Capital and Cavalry Ventures.

Finally, this time, we want to recognise the brilliant founders and startups which don't even make it to Demo Day. After all, only around 1% of applicants can pitch at Demo Day and there are so many top quality companies which miss out! Here, we'll be announcing the Focal Top 100; the 100 applicants with the highest number of VC votes. If you're investing in early stage startups, this is a list you won't want to miss.

Whether you're a founder, investor, or are generally interested in seeing the world's most exciting early stage startups, we hope to see you at Demo Day on 16th May!

Issie James is Chief of Staff at [Focal](#).

Read also

Turning the fundraising model on its head: an interview with Focal

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