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# UAE construction sector needs start-ups, experts say

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## Innovation and disruptive technology on show as The Big 5 launches a dedicated Start-up City and a Live Innovation Zone

November 15, 2018

In line with the theme of Shaping the Future of Construction, The Big 5 2018 will launch a host of new features aimed at advancing the construction sector through innovation and technology.

Among these are the Live Innovation Zone, showcasing a selection of innovative new products and solutions, and Start-Up City, presenting the next generation of construction tech disruptors.

Industry experts from organisations of the calibre



of Expo 2020, BuroHappold Engineering, AECOM and Green Technologies have selected the products and companies that will be hosted at the Live Innovation Zone and Start-Up City in 2018.



Prakash Senghani, Digital Project Delivery Lead -

Construction Services at AECOM, and a member of the recently formed Big 5 Advisory Panel, says: "Disruption is happening all around us, in every industry, but the construction sector does not seem to be progressing as quickly, even if we can see increased digitization in our industry in countries such as the United States."

Menna Dessouki, Senior Cities Consultant at BuroHappold Engineering, adds: "The industry needs solutions that can inform early stage decision making on projects, which is the time when the most critical decisions are made with the least information available.

"It also needs innovation in communication mechanisms between key stakeholders throughout the project lifecycle, to form the foundation for integrated design."

Experts note that the biggest hurdle to overcome isn't the lack of ideas and innovation. The main challenge is within the companies themselves as big construction companies often fear change. That's why the industry needs start-ups.

Dessouki adds: "Start-ups offer larger companies the speed, agility, and fearlessness needed to develop and test new ideas. Start-ups can contribute to the sustainable development of the sector through the creation of new and non-traditional job opportunities within it."

Senghani adds: "Start-ups with a focus on developing new tech-based solutions for the construction industry are not only important, but vital: creative ideas and innovative approaches have the potential to change the industry for the better.

"Start-ups are lean and agile; they are generally more adept and willing to take on risks, which the incumbent, often large, organizations are not."

More and more established companies are partnering with start-ups to innovate their products and internal processes.

"At both city and building levels, there is a strong push for smart and digital to become the new business-as-usual, with regular feedback on the performance of city-wide infrastructure and individual buildings," Dessouki explains. "This helps ensure built assets are operating within resource limits for long term sustainability."

Commenting on the introduction of Start-Up City at The Big 5, she says: "Key categories for innovations may include artificial intelligence (AI), augmented and virtual reality (AR & VR), big data and internet of things (IoT), blockchain and cyber security, robotics, 3D printing, and smart products.

"Ultimately, the industry needs people-centred, digital, outside-the-box solutions that overcome barriers related to data, and push the boundaries of what is achievable within the field."

The Big 5 will offer a prize to the most innovative start-up, which will be selected by a panel of judges through an exciting competition.

Visitors to the show will also be able to discover new products and solutions presented at interactive live demonstrations. A permanent display of the most innovative products at The Big 5 will offer a glimpse of what is shaking up the construction industry today.

Josine Heijmans, Portfolio Director of The Big 5, says: "I am extremely proud of the new features we're bringing to The Big 5 to drive this much needed change. In 2018, the brightest ideas, minds and initiatives from around the globe will foster innovation and disruption of the status quo of the construction industry at the show."

To know more about The Big 5 (26-29 November, Dubai World Trade Centre), visit [www.thebig5.ae](http://www.thebig5.ae).

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