



Startup tips for ag entrepreneurs.

Have a great idea? Looking to expand your current business?

Kevin Kimle, director of the Iowa State University Agricultural Entrepreneurship Initiative, works with hundreds of students, entrepreneurs and ag industry professionals each year to help them innovate, start up and grow ag tech businesses across Iowa. Here are a few of his key tips for entrepreneurs looking to bring their game-changing ideas to the world.

1 Dare to be different

Don't be afraid to take a new perspective or bring your own unique experiences to the table. Work on issues and develop ideas that bring a new approach to solving agricultural problems.

Iowa is the perfect place to bring a new perspective to some of the largest ag markets. We're number one in corn, pig and egg production, and a leader in soybeans, renewable fuels and much more. Here, your niche idea can find a large-scale market opportunity.

2 Don't look at the averages, look at the outliers

Products, services and businesses designed to deliver average goods to the average buyer will achieve results that are just ... average. Instead, look for opportunities to make a difference on the boundaries of the bell curve: the outliers. This contrarian search for outliers will result in outcomes that far exceed the average.

Connecting with Iowa's leading-edge universities and farmers can help you define the need and potential market for an outlier idea that could become mainstream.

3 Don't skip opportunities to meet new people

You can't give up all your evenings and personal time to go to every event, but you can make some of them. Find ways to attend events you might not usually attend, and to overcome hesitation to go to places where you know few people. It's the people you meet that will change your life, so find ways to meet more of them.

There is no shortage of opportunities to get involved in Iowa! Attend state and county level meetings of commodity groups. Take the next step and get involved in your local Chamber of Commerce, volunteer to mentor FFA and 4-H students, bring your expertise to a local community board.

4 Engage with other entrepreneurs

Making an effort to network and learn from entrepreneurs at all stages of business development will pay dividends.

The entrepreneurial ecosystem in Iowa has absolutely exploded in the past five to 10 years – new organizations, incubators, resources make it possible to connect with other founders and technology developers, and more importantly, mentors who have formed and led their own companies.

5 Look for significant upside and limited downside potential

It is a lot of work to start any business, so you might as well work on one with significant upside potential. If it's just as much work to start a small, average business, aim for higher opportunities. At the same time, take steps to limit the downside risk.

Tap into one of Iowa's many entrepreneur networks, competitions, incubators and more to test and receive feedback on your plans before you invest too much.



Kevin Kimle, currently serves as the Rastetter Chair of Agricultural Entrepreneurship at **Iowa State University**, Director of the **Agricultural Entrepreneurship Initiative**, and Associate Teaching Professor in the **Department of Economics**. He is also the co-director of the Ag Startup Engine based in Ames, Iowa.