

METHODOLOGY

# America's Best Startup Employers 2025

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# Methodology – Best Startup Employers 2025

## Summary

Despite the economic uncertainties of 2024, US-based startups demonstrated resilience, adapting to market shifts and technological advancements. While many companies optimized operations, innovation-driven firms continued to thrive, particularly in AI. The strong confidence in the startup ecosystem remained evident as investors backed promising ventures despite fluctuating market conditions. For the sixth time, the study “Best Startup Employers 2025” evaluates top-performing startups as employers through defined KPIs, guiding candidates toward innovative and stable workplaces. Companies considered must be headquartered in the U.S., founded between 2015 and 2022, employ at least 50 people, and maintain a startup structure. Spin-offs of large corporations without significant external funding remain excluded from consideration.

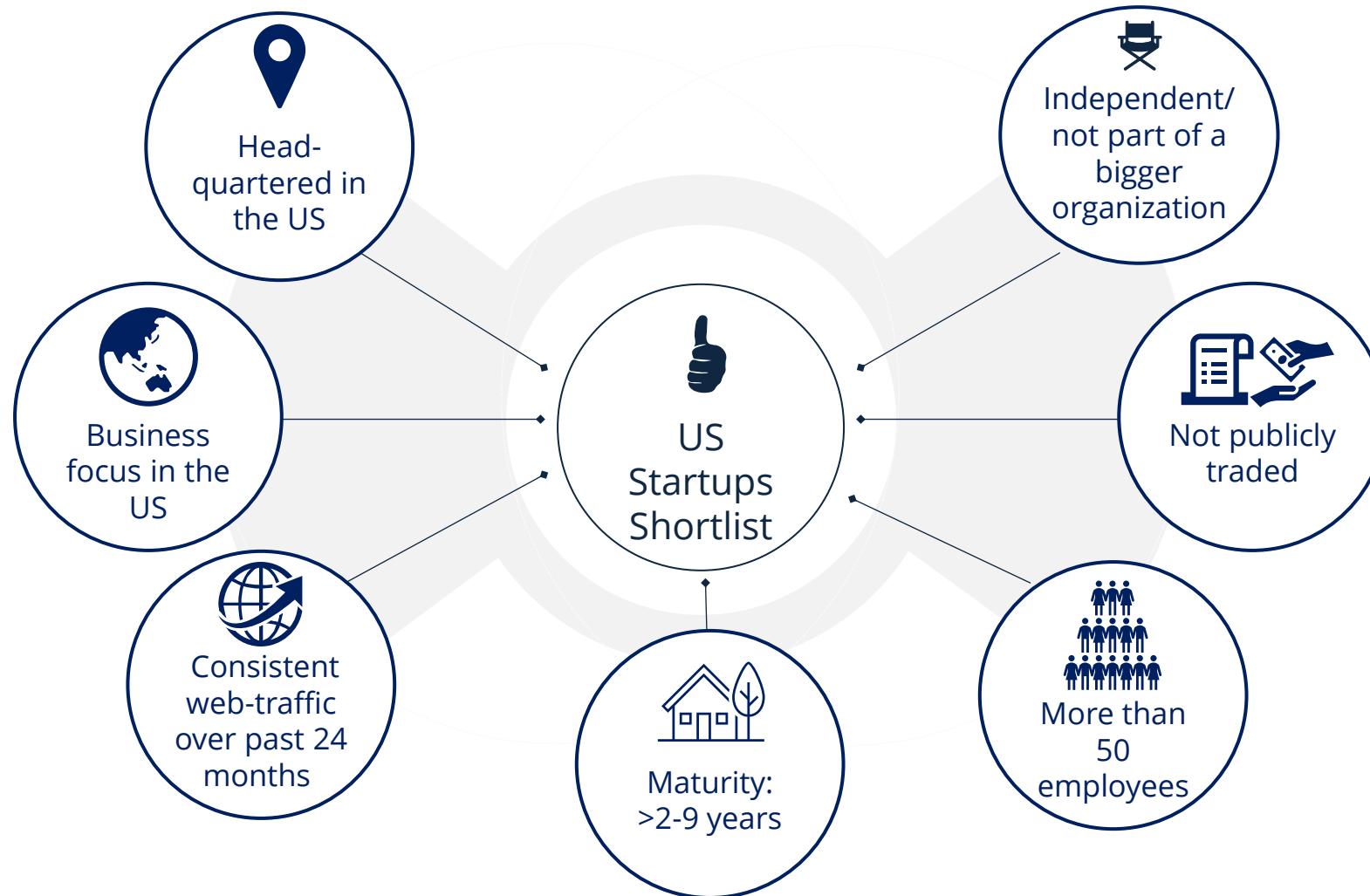
- Analysis of more than 7 million datapoints.
- All data gathered in Q3 and Q4 2024 via a social listening campaign and extensive desk research.
- First step: narrow down initial longlist of more than 20,000 companies to 3,000 companies that qualified for the in-depth analysis.
- The detailed evaluation of 3,000 employers was based on three different criteria:
  - I. Reputation as an employer (Social Listening)**
  - II. Employee satisfaction**
  - III. Growth**



The 500 companies receiving the highest total score are awarded The Best Startup Employers 2025

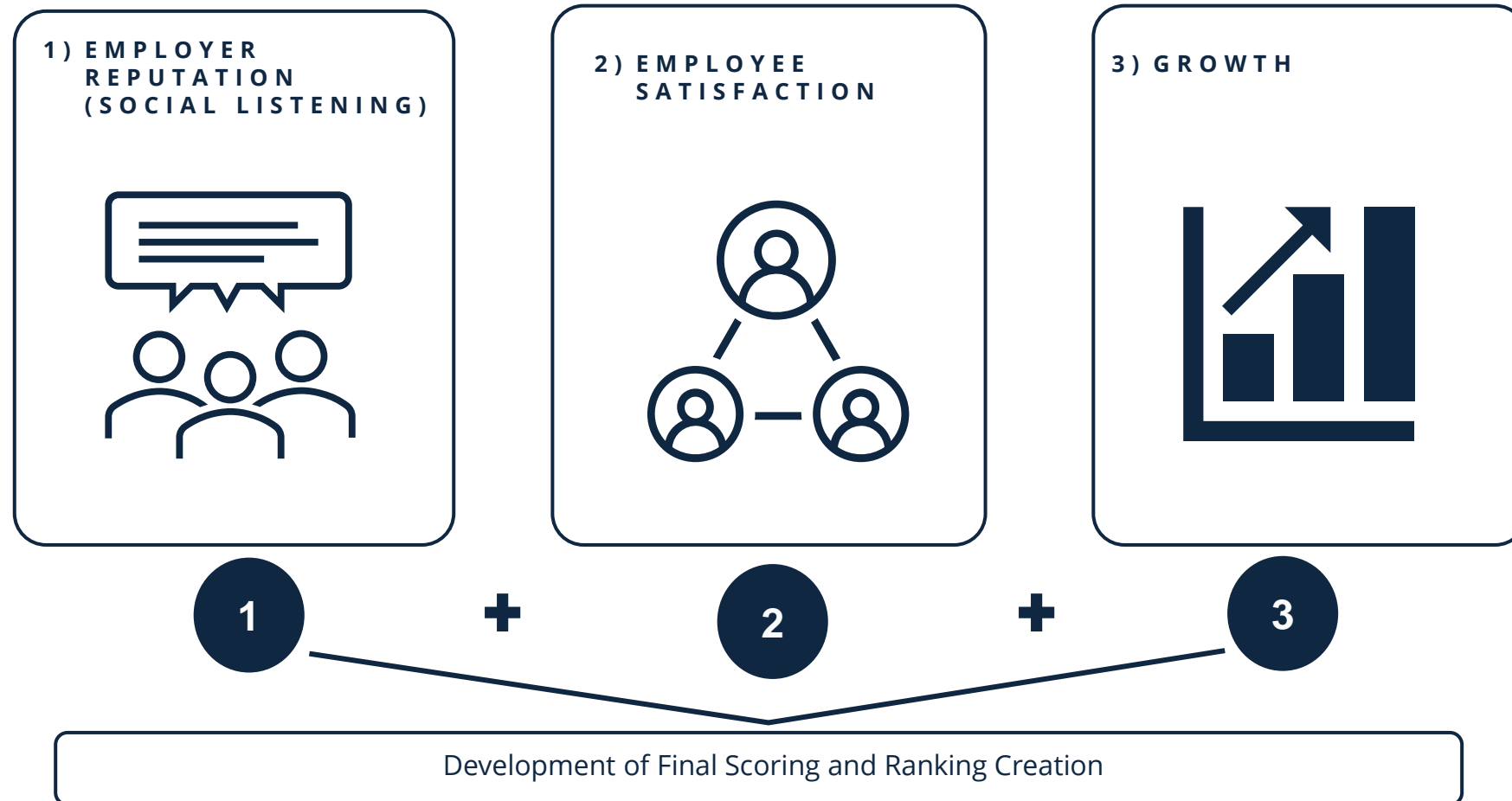
Startup definition and shortlist selection criteria have evolved with the experience of previous years and rollout to different countries

Inclusion criteria for shortlist



Large amounts of data are gathered from a variety of sources using state-of-the-art methods as well as desk research

## Main Pillars



# Social listening tracks and categorizes social media channels and web sources

## Methodology: Employer Reputation

1

### EMPLOYER REPUTATION (SOCIAL LISTENING)



- A positive employer reputation helps in building and maintaining a sense of belonging and loyalty among employees, which can contribute to higher productivity and collaboration, essential elements for success in a startup.
- In a competitive job market, a positive employer reputation can make a startup more attractive to skilled professionals who are looking for not just a job, but an engaging and fulfilling work environment.
- Data on employer reputation is collected using a social listening approach. This approach tracks information from social media channels and web sources and categorizes it.
- The results describe employer attractiveness based on direct information linked to our specified companies.

#### WHAT IS MEASURED?

- Relevant workplace **aspects** and **search terms** are defined and tested (e.g., employee engagement, company/corporate culture, company strategy, ...). For three months news sites, micro-blogs, blogs, and social networks will be tracked comprehensively regarding these aspects.
- Identified posts and articles are highlighted and through algorithm-based **text analysis** categorized as **positive**, **neutral** or **negative**. With this data, the share of positive content can be evaluated.
- Furthermore, the total **volume** of documents per company, a posts **virality** and **reach** (no. of linkages, shares and estimated readership) factored into the evaluation.

# Relevant KPIs researched on websites and job rating platforms

## Methodology: Employee Satisfaction

2

### EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION



- Employee Satisfaction is important especially for companies in the early stages of maturity. Early hires can shape the development of startups in a profound way. They help build something from the ground up and identify closely with the service or product.
- Not only are satisfied employees more productive, but they also represent the first line of marketing, can act as brand ambassadors and help to create a positive external perception.
- The indicators are identified, collected and evaluated through desk research and natural language processing.

#### WHAT IS MEASURED?

- Employee satisfaction can be measured through employee's **reviews** on the employer brands. The total number of reviews and followers in relation to their founding year and number of employees across openly accessible platforms, blogs and comments additionally indicates their **relevance as an employer**.
- Presence and form of keywords on topics on the companies' career pages such as:
  - **Compensation and benefits:** Analyze the employer's compensation package, including healthcare, leave policies, and other perks.
  - **Workplace flexibility:** Assess the employer's policies regarding remote work, flexible hours, and workspace mobility.
  - **Diversity and inclusivity:** Evaluate the employer's initiatives to promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

# Relevant KPIs researched on the website's careers pages and job rating and advertising platforms

Methodology: Growth Indicators

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GROWTH



- The main objective for many startups is growth. This is important not only for founders and shareholders but also for employees. Growth means **opportunities** to learn **new skills** and to take on new **responsibilities**.
- An innovative, fast-moving atmosphere is a unique selling point for startups to differentiate themselves from corporate employers with stronger brand recognition that can easily outspend them in terms of salary and other corporate benefits.

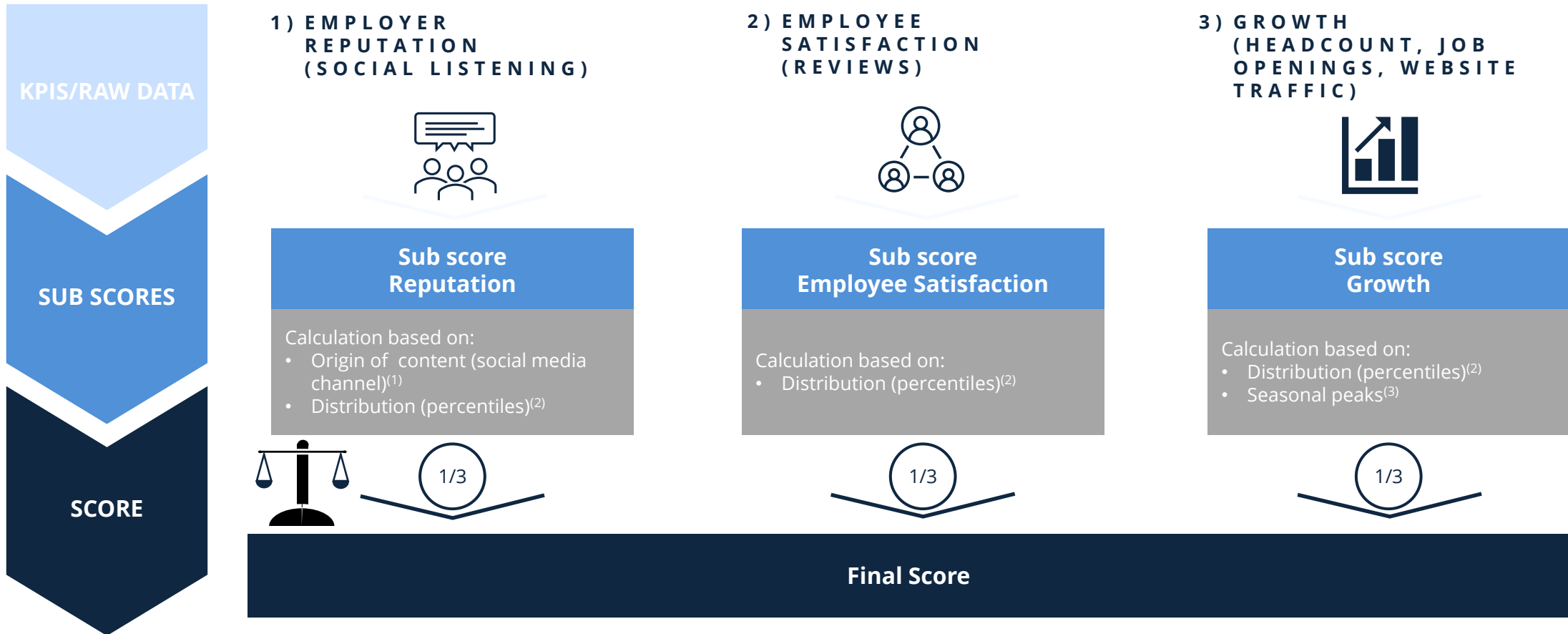
## WHAT IS MEASURED?

In absence of comparable “hard” financial data a set of proxies for growth are evaluated:

- **Website traffic monthly growth rate** (to prevent statistical outliers from skewing the results, a rolling average over 2 years was used to normalize time series data)
- **Website traffic** as separate measure of growth success
- **Headcount total** as separate measure of growth success
- **Job openings** referenced to company size, gathered from websites and openly accessible platforms

# Scoring model

All gathered data builds the basis for the Top 500 ranking



(1) Different weightings are assigned to different types of media. Logistic regression analysis was used to evaluate the impact each channel has on the sub score.

(2) Scores reported on an ordinal basis and were attributed by the percentiles.

(3) To control for seasonal peaks and valleys in the time series data, a 4-month rolling average was applied



# Industries

Each employer grouped by industry

1. Advertising & Marketing
2. Biotechnology & Agriculture
3. Business Products & Software Services
4. Retail
5. Communication & Social
6. Robotics/Engineering
7. Professional Services
8. Education & EdTech
9. Energy & Resources
10. Manufacturing
11. Finance
12. Hardware & Electronics
13. Healthcare
14. Hospitality
15. Lifestyle & Health
16. Media & Entertainment
17. Real Estate
18. Security
19. Technology
20. Transportation & Logistics