MIT Initiative on the Digital Economy

Technology is racing ahead exponentially. People and organizations are not keeping pace. This dichotomy presents a set of grand challenges for our times.

The MIT Initiative on the Digital Economy (IDE) explores how people and businesses will work, interact, and prosper in an era of profound digital transformation.

The IDE is MIT Sloan's largest research consortium, where we create a solution space and a "can-do" approach to address these critical challenges. We provide the underlying research, experimentation, and thought leadership so important in identifying positive action for individuals, corporations, foundations, and governments.

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Solution-Driven Research

Our work is grounded in first principles, with empirical research at its core. At any given time the IDE has more than 30 research projects underway, led by outstanding technology, business, and economics scholars. These projects are focused in seven primary Research Groups:

Misinformation & Fake News.
Professor **Dave Rand** bridges the fields of behavioral economics and psychology to explore the perceived accuracy of false news, political preferences, and the dynamics and impact of social media.

Social Networks & Digital Experimentation. Professor **Dean Eckles** uses new analytical methods and field experiments to understand causal inference in social networks and online experimentation. He is a former Scientist at Facebook and at Nokia and Yahoo!

AI, Labor Economics & Marketplaces. Professor **John Horton** works at the intersection of labor economics, marketplace design, and information systems. He is former Chief Economist for oDesk, one of the leading online labor markets.

Human-First AI. Professor **Renée Richardson Gosline** is an expert on the connection between behavioral science and technology, with a focus on where friction and "Human In The Loop" can make for a better experience for the work force and for customers.

AI, Quantum and Beyond. Professor **Neil Thompson** is the director of the FutureTech Lab at CSAIL. where his group studies the economic and technical foundations of progress in computing - pace of AI development, labor market implications, and use cases for quantum computing.

Accelerated Organizations. IDE Co-Director **Andrew McAfee** focuses on organizations for our new AI and digital age: how norms of speed, ownership, science and openness can propel the success of firms to be not just mistake-proof, but fault tolerant. He's the author of The Geek Way, More from Less and The Second Machine Age.

Generative AI and Decentralization
IDE Director Sinan Aral's groundbreaking and highly relevant research into Generative AI, blockchain, social networks, social media, and fake news have made him a leading and sought-after expert and thought leader in these unprecedented times. **Read Sinan's bio.**

Outreach & Convenings

We communicate the results of our research through our web presence, events, research briefs, social media, and dedicated interactions with our Stakeholders. In 2024, the IDE hosted 20+ events. These events are not just an opportunity to share our research, but important for a diverse set of participants to share, discuss, and debate how we can and must embrace technology to drive dynamic and meaningful business outcomes, economic policy, and social change. Visit **ide.mit.edu/events** to view current and past events.

BIG.AI @ MIT

On November, 15 2024, the IDE hosted the inaugural MIT Business Implications of Generative AI (BIG.AI), co-hosted by the IDE, Thinkers50 and Accenture. The event attracted more than 300 attendees, including thought leaders from academia, industry and venture capital. They grappled with one of the technology's biggest challenges today: How to quickly embrace and adopt AI while also protecting society from its potential harms. Featured speakers included MacArthur Genius Prize Winner Sendhil Mullainathan, and Accenture's Chief AI Officer, Lan Guan.

2025 Calendar of Events

MIT IDE Seminar Series
February–May

GenAI Lab Student Projects
January - May

Business of Quantum Summit
April 4

MIT IDE Annual Conference
May 19

Platform Strategy Summit
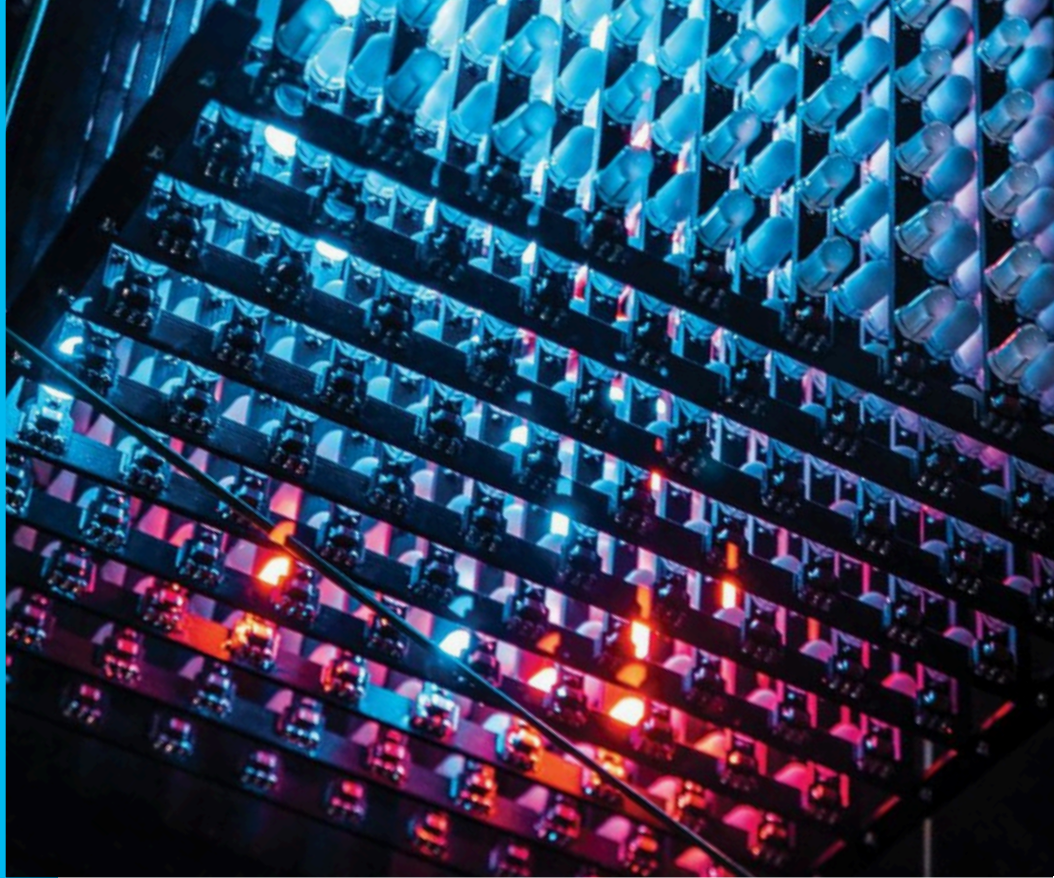July 17

Analytics Lab Student Projects
June–December

MIT IDE Fall Seminar Series
September–December

Conference on Digital Experimentation
November 14-15

Community

The IDE engages a diverse group of stakeholders, including corporations, foundations, non-profit organizations, and government. By fostering cross-sector connection and dialogue, we aim to accelerate the conversation about the digital economy and some of the tough challenges we face. We provide a solution space and an action-oriented approach for our stakeholders. Together we remain dedicated to crafting a new playbook for thriving in the digital era.

Education

We play an important educational role at the MIT Sloan School. Our faculty are prominent in Sloan's Executive Education programming—from Digital Business Strategy to IOT; from Platform Economics to AI; and from Digital Experimentation to the Impact of Social Media. The IDE also runs the fall Analytics Lab (A-Lab) and spring GenAI Lab, MBA courses that use business cases (and data) from our Stakeholders. In this Action Learning program, student teams solve analytics-based business problems and deliver actionable insights.

Learning in Action

The IDE's Analytics Lab (A-Lab) is one of the most sought after Action Learning courses at MIT Sloan. During the past eleven years, this flagship offering of the IDE has enrolled almost 1000 students from more than a dozen departments to work on 200+ projects. Projects have ranged from identifying a correlation between healthy food and cost savings to improving corporate marketing strategy with a customizable, image recognition tool to measure in-store brand presence.
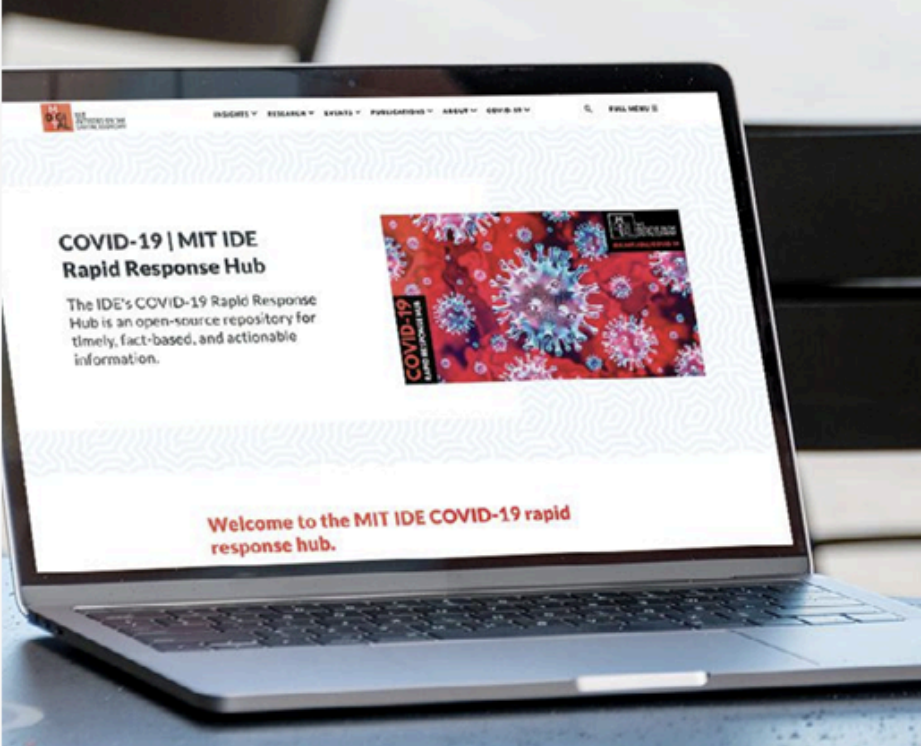
IDE & the Pandemic

When the global pandemic hit in early 2020, our research team quickly sprang into action to provide timely, accurate, and data-driven analysis of COVID-19 and its effects. IDE researchers engaged with Facebook, Safegraph, Praekelt, Graphika, and other companies to analyze millions of data points with the goal of advising global leaders on the most effective ways of lowering the infection curve and reopening the economy. The result of this tremendous effort was the COVID-19 Rapid Response Hub, an open-source repository for timely, fact-based, and actionable information that includes more than 60 papers and citings to date. This resource provides information and solutions for policymakers, business leaders, and citizens alike. Visit our **Covid-19 Response Hub**.
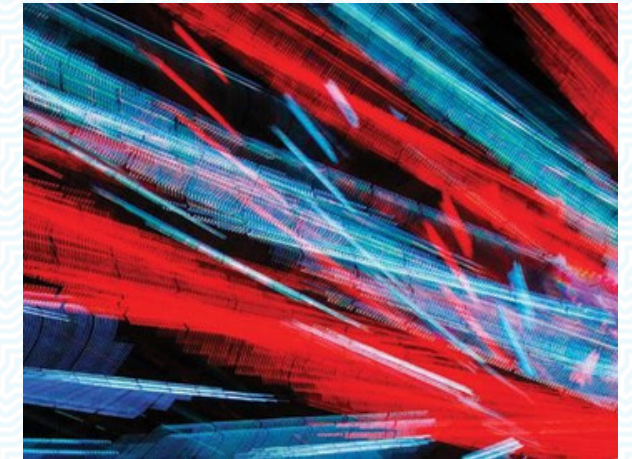
Support

During this unprecedented time of change, the IDE remains committed to crafting a new playbook that will enable society, organizations, and workers to successfully navigate and thrive in the digital era. The IDE operates with a mindfully optimistic worldview, and is guided by the belief that the challenges posed by the digital economy are solvable. Support for the IDE comes from the generosity of corporations, foundations, and individual donors. We invite you to connect, engage, and share ideas with other visionaries who are shaping the digital economy. Visit **ide.mit.edu/support** to see our full list of supporting organizations and individuals.

A Visionary Academic Team

Our world-renowned team of faculty and research scientists generate findings that equip businesses and society to adapt as digital technology race ahead. While our research is academic in its approach, our charter is to understand, inform, and pragmatically solve real-world challenges based on facts and causality. Our mission is rooted in positive action.

IDE Corporate Membership

Join the MIT Initiative on the Digital Economy.

The mission of the IDE is rooted in positive action. While our research is academic in its approach, our charter is to understand, inform, and pragmatically solve real-world challenges based on facts and causality. We achieve this through our Corporate Membership program.

Corporate Membership is an IDE cornerstone that helps us to diversify our work and foster a knowledgeable and impactful community of stakeholders. We invite you to connect, engage, and share ideas with other visionaries who are shaping the conversation about the digital economy.

What Are the Benefits of Membership

Strategic Advantage

— Access IDE research findings ahead of public release and other members-only content
— Explore collaborative, sponsored research opportunities

Active Engagement

— Attend all IDE events gratis*
— Communicate directly and personally with IDE leadership to amplify value of membership

Actionable Insights

— Engage graduate student teams to deliver a data analytics project and actionable insights for your organization
— Obtain 15% discount on Sloan Executive Education open enrollment courses for your employees

Visible Affiliation

— Align your organization with the MIT ecosystem and brand
— Access potential speaking opportunities for your leadership

* Unlimited seats at virtual events; 10 seats [or more, space permitting] at in-person events

Who Benefits From Membership

Everyone at your organizations—from the C-suite to the front line—can access the benefits of IDE Corporate Membership.

Join Us Today. Impact Tomorrow.

By joining the IDE, you fuel our research engine and enable IDE scholars to generate world-changing insights that address the grand challenges of our time. You are seeding the work and intellectual development of PhD and Post-Doctoral Associates, the next generation of academic scholars. Our digital future thanks you.

Corporate Membership

$50,000/year for 3 or 5 years

Founding Membership

A customized engagement developed in partnership with IDE leadership. Contact us for details.

Want to Learn More or Join?

Contact IDE Associate Director Albert Scerbo (**ascerbo@mit.edu**).

Visit **ide.mit.edu/support** to see our full list of IDE Corporate Members.