

DOWNTIME

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Secret Hubs of Innovation

A closer look at labs that are quietly brewing the next big ideas.

DECLASSIFIED

Leaders are always coming up with innovative ideas, but sometimes they want to create world-changing products away from prying eyes. So we took a closer look at the backstories of some of the most intriguing labs, and the ways they are swiftly reinventing the future.



Lab 126

Amazon
Sunnyvale, California

Several hundred miles away from Amazon's Seattle headquarters, the lab is where the Kindle electronic book reader got its start. More recently, it's the birthplace of "Alexa," the virtual assistant found in the Amazon Echo.



The Foundry

AT&T
various locations

It's a collection of six labs around the world, from Houston to Ra'anana, Israel. Each has its own focus, from Internet-of-Things software and cybersecurity to smart cities and connected healthcare. Since the first lab was founded in 2011 in Plano, Texas, more than 500 projects have been developed.



Skunk Works

Lockheed Martin
Palmdale, Calif.

During World War II, engineers built the first United States fighter jet in a rented circus tent in Burbank, California, next to a foul-smelling manufacturing plant. Now located in Palmdale and officially called Advanced Development Programs, the lab's original nickname, "Skunk Works," has become synonymous worldwide with groups working on secret projects.

Nike Sport Research Lab

Beaverton, Oregon



Nike initially opened a research center in 1980 in Exeter, New Hampshire, to get a better understanding of runners. Relocated to the company's world headquarters, the lab collects reams of data on how all types of athletes perform, move, and fatigue.



MetLife

LumenLab

MetLife,
Singapore

One wouldn't necessarily think a life insurance firm would need a laboratory, but MetLife set one up in 2015 to find new Asia-centric businesses around health, wealth, and retirement. Services tested here include a virtual-reality character that offers insurance advice and an app that helps protect mothers from gestational diabetes. 