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WHITE PAPER · SCALE-UP DELIVERY

Asteyo Velocity

The scale-up delivery engine: ship the next two quarters of roadmap without breaking the team, the culture, or the runway.

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Reliability · People · Partnerships

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Speed is the scarce resource

For a funded start-up past product-market fit, the binding constraint has changed. With ideas validated and money raised, the hard part becomes shipping fast enough, without scaling the organisation into the ground.

The evidence is consistent: software delivery speed is one of the strongest predictors of business performance, yet most scaling teams lose the race to hiring lag, founder bottlenecks and compounding technical debt. Classic nearshore competes on cost while the scarce resource is time. This paper sets out a speed-first delivery model, a three-stage path from a single senior engineer to your own joint venture, and addresses the main objections to distributed delivery.

4–5×

faster revenue growth at top-quartile Developer Velocity companies vs. bottom quartile[1]

~70%

of failed start-ups were hit by premature scaling, growing headcount ahead of customers[2]

~13.5h

of a ~41-hour developer week already lost to technical debt and maintenance[3]

~196k

IT specialists in Romania, the 4th-largest tech workforce in Europe[5]

What this paper argues

- Compete on availability, focus and overlap rather than on the hourly rate.
- Protect founder mode by subtraction, freeing founders instead of adding bodies.
- Start small and variable to avoid the premature-scaling trap, then grow into your own delivery org.

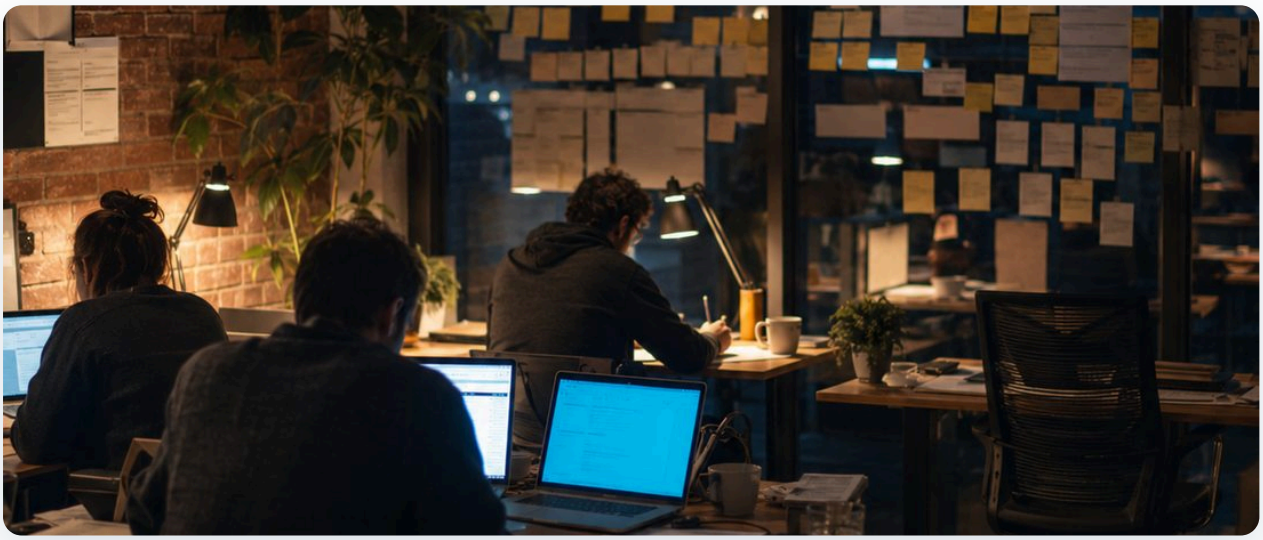
01 · THE MOMENT

When the constraint is time, not money

A funded start-up, just past product-market fit, with a different bottleneck than before.

Demand is real, the roadmap is exploding, and the gap between what you promised investors and what the team can ship widens every sprint. The constraint is delivery capacity, right now.

Classic nearshore is sold on cost. At the scale-up threshold the scarce resource is **time**: time to hire, time to onboard, time to ship before the window closes or a competitor does. Running out of cash is consistently among the top reasons start-ups fail[4], so every week of delay burns the one asset you cannot refinance: runway. Cost still matters here, mainly because it buys more of that runway.



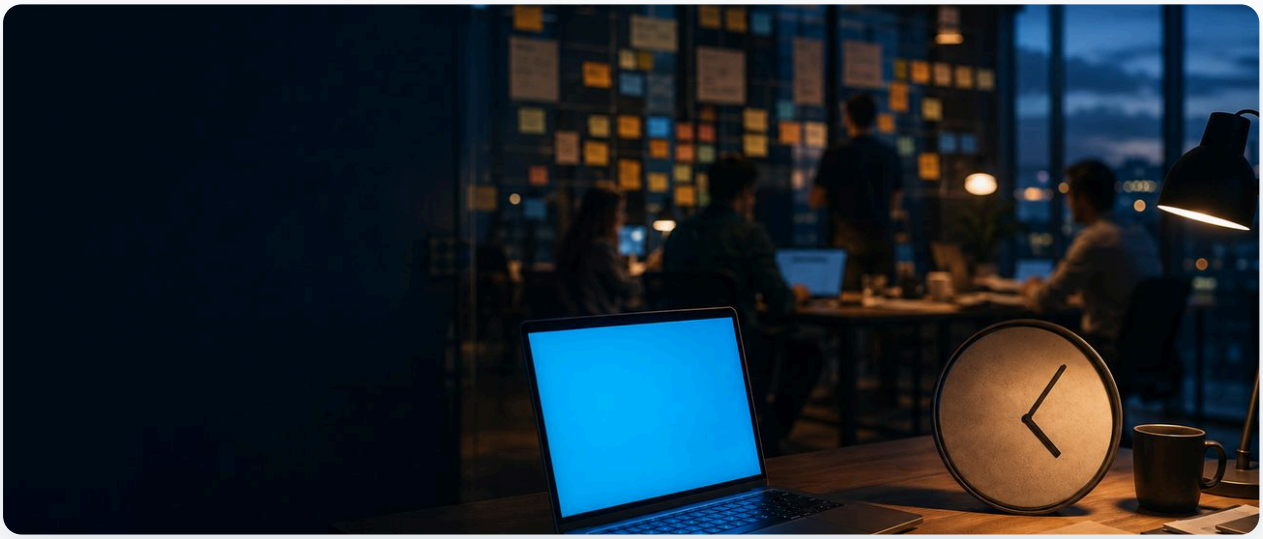
Demand is real and the team is already full: the squeeze every scaling start-up feels.

02 · THE REAL PROBLEM

Speed, not cost

Five forces define the scale-up squeeze, and none of them is the hourly rate.

- **Hiring cannot keep up with the roadmap.** Senior engineers take two to three months to hire in Western markets, and rarely apply on their own[10]; the roadmap needs them now.
- **Founders are the bottleneck.** The people who could onboard new engineers are the same ones selling, fundraising and building.
- **Focus is fragmenting.** Every new feature, customer and integration pulls the small core team another way.
- **Quality debt is compounding.** Teams already lose about a third of every developer week to technical debt and maintenance[3]; speed without discipline makes that worse.
- **The clock is the competitor.** Funding rounds, enterprise pilots and market windows all have dates.



The clock is the competitor: time-to-ship is what runs out first.

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The scale-up question is not “how do we get cheaper engineers?” It is “how do we ship the next two quarters of roadmap without breaking the team or the culture?”

THE ASTEYO VELOCITY THESIS

03 · WHAT THE EVIDENCE SAYS

Delivery speed shows up in the numbers

Three findings connect delivery speed directly to revenue, returns and risk.

Speed compounds into growth. McKinsey's Developer Velocity Index, built on 440 enterprises, found top-quartile performers grew revenue **four to five times faster** than the bottom quartile, with 60% higher shareholder returns and 20% higher operating margins.[1] Those are revenue, returns and margin, the numbers a board already tracks.

The expensive problem is drag. Stripe's research puts developer time lost to maintenance and bad code at roughly **$300 billion** of global output a year.[3] Cheaper hands on a high-drag system buy little; senior people and lightweight discipline are what raise throughput.

The market is voting. The IT staff-augmentation market, about **$300 billion in 2024**, is growing at double-digit rates, with nearshore the fastest-growing segment as buyers prioritise real-time collaboration over pure offshore cost.[7]

+60%

higher total shareholder returns, top-quartile Developer Velocity[1]

~$300B

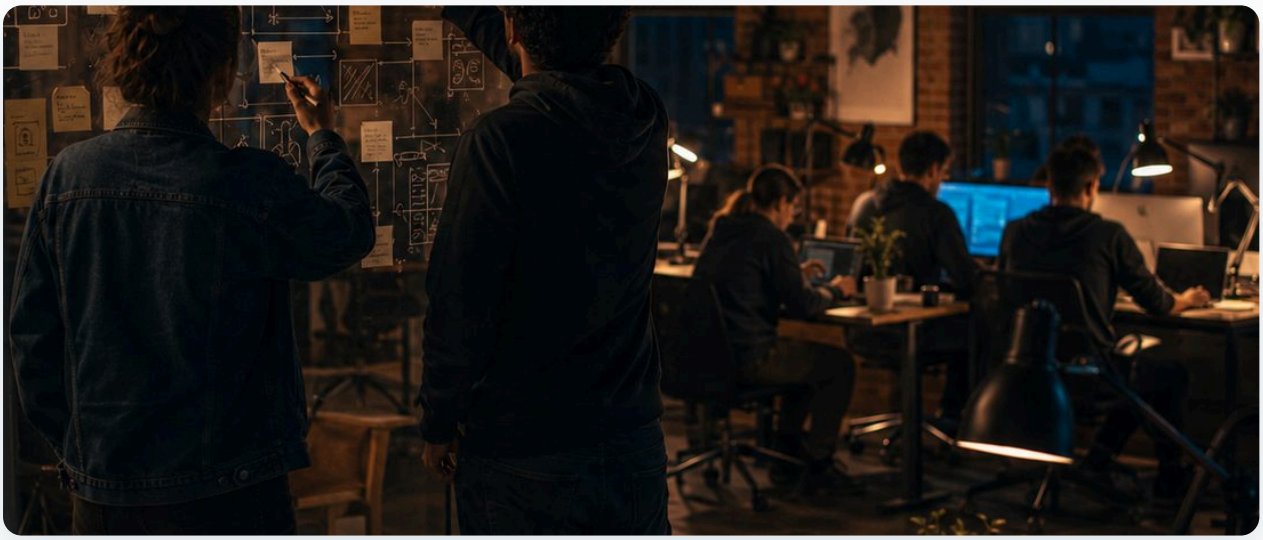
global output lost yearly to technical debt & maintenance[3]

04 · THE FOUNDER-MODE OBJECTION

We don’t replace founder mode, we protect it

Founders believe speed only happens when everyone sits in one room turning pizza and Mate into code. Dismissing that loses the room, so we don’t. We give you more of it.

- **Founder mode scales by subtraction.** We take everything that is not the founders’ unique contribution off their plate.
- **Speed comes from availability, ownership and overlap** rather than a shared postcode. A senior squad online in your time zone beats a half-hired local team you are still interviewing for.
- **We work as one team with you.** Your Slack, your board, your standup, your definition of done. Founders feel augmented, part of the same effort.
- **We have lived it.** Asteyo itself was built start-up style; the pace, the ambiguity and the culture are ours too.



Founders stay in flow on what only they can do, while the squad quietly handles execution.

05 · WHAT MUST BE DIFFERENT

Built for speed first

Six principles that distinguish a scale-up delivery partner from cost-first nearshore.

1

Availability

Senior engineers live, not a pipeline. Start in weeks, real-time overlap, founder access.

2

Focus

A dedicated squad that works only for you, owns outcomes, never time-sliced across clients.

3

Culture fit

We get start-ups: bias to action, comfort with ambiguity, ship-learn-iterate.

4

Senior from day one

People who have shipped before, no junior bench training on your runway.

5

Quality that survives speed

Lightweight but real: code review, CI/CD and automated tests, so velocity never turns into debt.

6

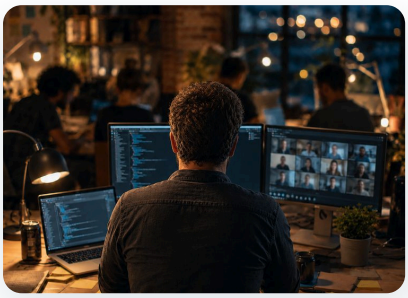
Grows with you

One specialist today, a squad next quarter, your own JV when it is strategic.

06 · THE PATH

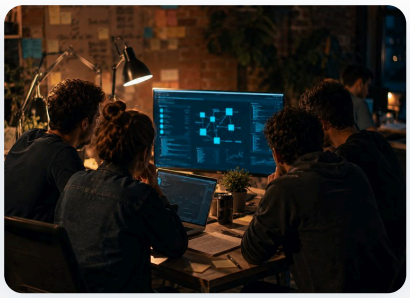
A speed-tuned 3-stage model

The same trusted Asteyo path, tuned for scale-up speed. You start where it fits and always see the whole way.



1 · Specialist

One or two senior engineers embedded. The fastest, lowest-risk start.

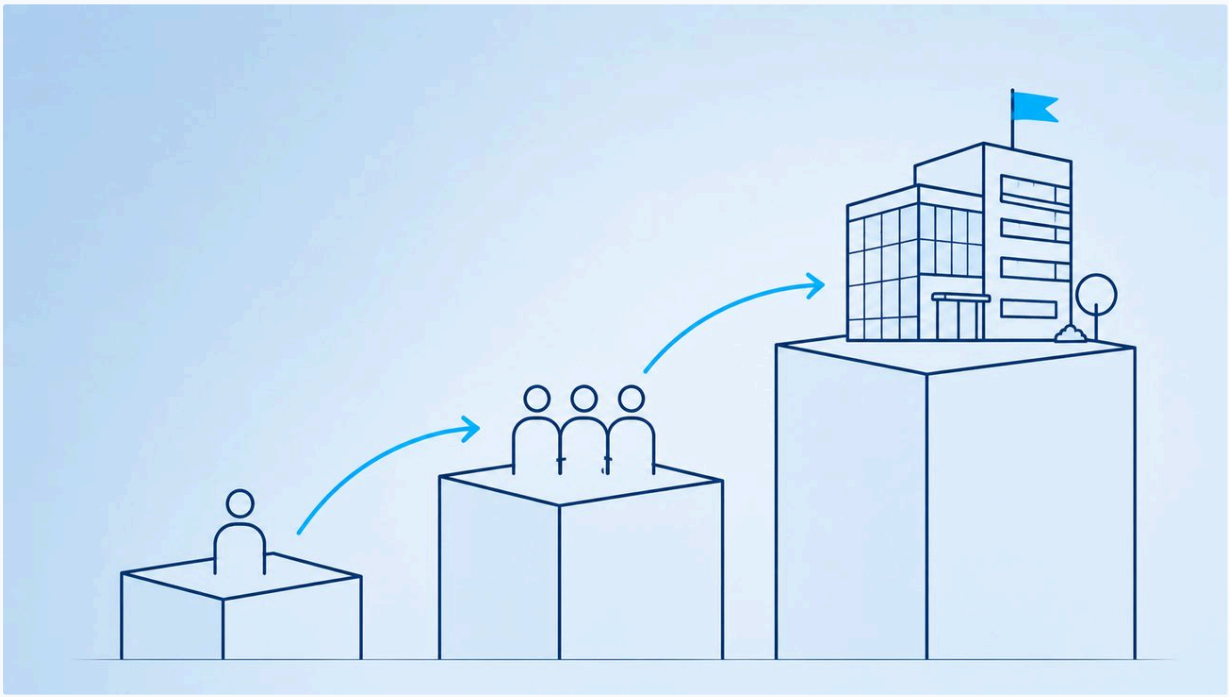


2 · Velocity Squad

A dedicated squad owning a product area. Throughput without the hiring lag.

3 · Own Joint Venture

Your Cluj delivery org via Build-Operate-Transfer. We build it, then transfer ownership.



From one specialist, to a dedicated squad, to your own company. Full ownership is part of the plan from day one, so the model stays an asset you control.

07 · HOW FAST, IN PRACTICE

From weeks to your own centre

2–3 wks

Specialist

First senior engineer typically productive

6–8 wks

Velocity Squad

A 3–5 person squad assembled and onboarding

Your timeline

JV / BOT

Once the squad is proven and Romania is strategic

Indicative of the model, not a contractual SLA. We confirm against current recruiting capacity before any commitment. For context, hiring a single senior engineer in-house typically takes two to three months.[10]

08 · HOW WE PROTECT SPEED AND CULTURE

An extension of your team

One team, your rituals
Your Slack/Teams, board, standup and definition of done.

Real-time overlap
Same time zone, a short call not a night shift.

Founder access
A direct line to the people doing the work, no account-manager wall.

Outcome ownership
Squads own features and outcomes end to end.

Lightweight quality
Code review, CI/CD and tests sized for a start-up, not a bureaucracy.

Two cities, one team
German-Romanian, same pace, the same start-up spirit.

09 · THE HARD QUESTIONS

Where distributed delivery is right to be doubted

The honest objections to this model, and how we answer them.

"Adding people to a late project makes it later."

Brooks's Law is real, for junior bodies bolted onto a monolithic effort with heavy onboarding. We do the opposite: **senior engineers who own a bounded area** and take non-core load off the founders, rather than enlarging the critical path. What grows is throughput on a scope the squad owns end to end.

"One in four outsourcing relationships fails."

A fair concern. Deloitte's research attributes failures to lost visibility, weak governance, hidden costs and the wrong vendor.[8] We built the model around those exact failure modes: **your tools and rituals (visibility), outcome ownership (governance), transparent monthly pricing (no hidden costs), operator-led delivery (the right partner).**

"Distributed teams are slower than one room."

Distance only bites when working hours don't overlap. At ~1h from the DACH region we share a **full working day**, unlike far-shore. All-remote companies such as GitLab show distributed delivery scales when ownership and a written operating model replace hallway coordination, which is precisely how we run.

Cost, lock-in and the scaling trap

"Isn't bringing in an external squad just premature scaling?"

The opposite. Premature scaling, the biggest avoidable killer of start-ups[2], means committing **fixed** headcount and overhead ahead of validated demand. Our model is deliberately **low-commitment and variable**: start with one specialist, scale on traction, scale down if the roadmap shifts. You buy delivery capacity, with no payroll overhang.

"Cluj is getting expensive and the talent pool is tight."

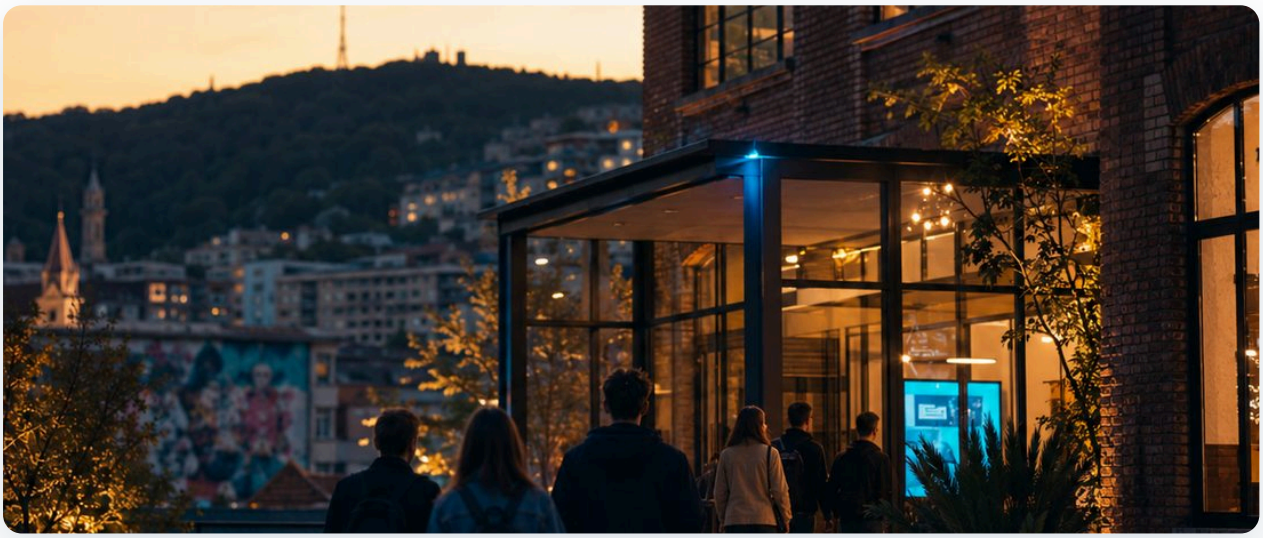
Fair. Senior Romanian salaries have risen more than 10% and inflation is high[9]; Romania is no longer the cheapest option, and we don't pretend otherwise. **The pitch here is speed; the cost advantage is a bonus on top.** Blended rates still sit well below Poland and the DACH region under a flat 10% tax regime,[9] and a ~196k-strong, renewable talent pool[5] sustains availability that cheaper but thinner markets struggle to match.

"We'll be locked into a vendor."

The exit is in the plan from day one. The Build-Operate-Transfer path gives you a **pre-agreed route to full ownership** of your Cluj delivery org. Ownership is the planned destination, on your timeline.

Why Cluj works for scale-ups

- **A deep, renewable pool.** ~196,000 IT specialists, the 4th-largest tech workforce in Europe, in an industry above €17.7 billion turnover.[5]
- **Language & proximity.** Romania sits in Europe's high-proficiency band for English (~12th of 116 countries),[6] about 1h from the DACH region with fully overlapping hours.
- **More runway per euro.** Senior engineers at roughly €40–50k a year, blended rates below Poland and the Baltics, under a flat 10% tax regime.[9]
- **Already proven at scale.** Many global corporations already run delivery in Cluj, so you would not be the pioneer.



Cluj-Napoca: an EU start-up talent hub with a full working-day overlap.

11 · ENGAGEMENT & COMMERCIALS

Low risk to start, priced for velocity

Low-commitment start
Begin with a specialist or a small squad; scale on traction.

Transparent and flexible
Monthly, scale up or down with your roadmap and your runway.

Priced for velocity
Senior, available and focused, priced for value and speed.

Path to ownership
A clear, pre-agreed route to your own JV if and when it is strategic.

12 · NEXT STEP

Let’s map your bottleneck

A 30-minute call to map your roadmap, your bottleneck and your culture, and to agree the fastest low-risk first step, usually one senior engineer on your real backlog within weeks.

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Asteyo — Reliability · People · Partnerships. We get things done.

REFERENCES

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