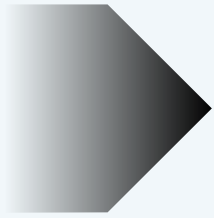
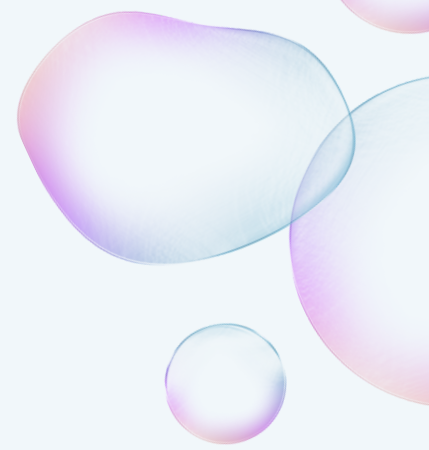


a deanslist
case study



SOLLINKED



sponsored by the



Who is this report meant for?

This document aims to show Solana startups the value they can get out of Dean's List's feedback services, with the ultimate goal of finding PMF in this challenging ecosystem. In this case study, we take the example of Sollinked, a recurrent client of ours, to showcase the positive impact that our feedback can have on your product.

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1. THE VALUE PROPOSITION OF DEAN'S LIST

2. CLIENT CASE: SOLLINKED

3. CONCLUSION

Who are we?

The Dean's List Network State is paving the way for the future of decentralised work on Solana: we have generated **\$200k in revenue** from our dApp feedback and DAO consulting services to **over 50 Solana startups** in barely 1 year.

All of our members are Solana OGs with **many years of experience** building in Web3, up to almost a decade for some of them: we have unmatched insights into what makes any kind of Web3 protocol successful, and that is why the **Solana Foundation** has collaborated with us on many occasions. Notably, Dean's List was solicited by the Solana Foundation to judge about 200 submissions for the **Hyperdrive** hackathon, and was most recently entrusted with awarding **\$60k** worth of **DAO-focused grants** to the most promising builders on Solana. Many of our previous clients have already become stars in the Solana ecosystem: Tensor, SolBlaze, AllDomains, Underdog Protocol, to name a few.

Our citizens specialise in all the aspects of the blockchain, and are also involved in many reputable and award-winning Solana (and broader Web3) startups such as **Tatami, PubKey, Pine Analytics, Zignaly, Stockpile and Triton One RPCs**; some of them have been regular speakers at major Solana conferences such as Breakpoint and AthensDao.

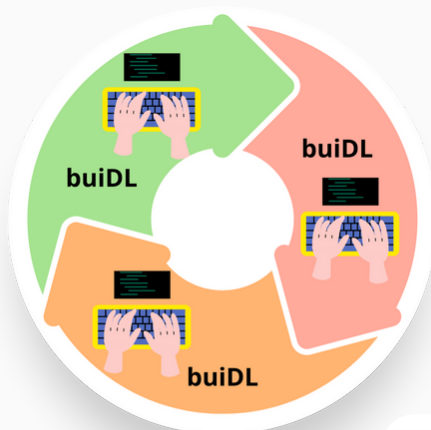
Every one of our full-time citizens holds a Dean's List NFT as a token of membership, from an iconic collection of 100 animal-inspired avatars, which you might catch here and there in this document.



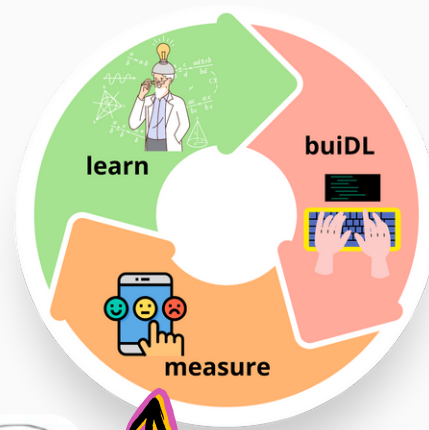
THE VALUE PROPOSITION OF DEAN'S LIST

Just like any startup, Web3 startups are young businesses looking for the right business model. At this early stage, undoubtedly the most challenging, founders usually have a clear idea of MVP and work hard to build it while striving to think straight despite the many uncertainties in the process. During this difficult period, founders form a strong bond with their idea, but sometimes as they are highly focused on building and trying to ignore all the “noise”, they risk falling a little too much in love with it, which can compromise the success of the startup.

what many Web3 devs do:



this is the way!



THIS IS WHERE DEAN'S LIST FEEDBACK COMES IN

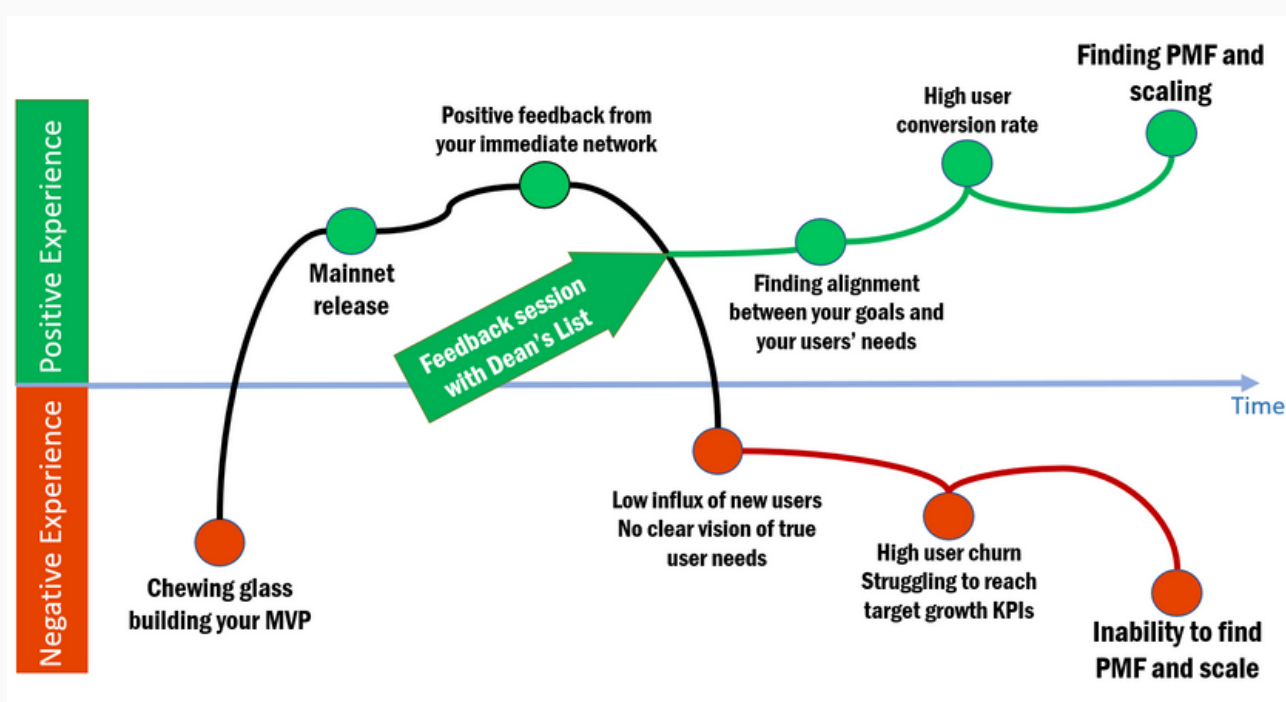
To prevent that from happening, founders should stick to an iterative **“build, measure, learn”** (BML) process, which if properly carried out ensures that the vision of the founder stays perfectly aligned with the real needs of their target customers. You can think of Dean’s List’s feedback as a boosted “measure” step of the first (or subsequent) iteration.

“That sounds great, but my team doesn’t have the time for this.”

This is what we sometimes hear, or indirectly when teams don’t respond to our *free* (for hackathon winners) feedback session offer. Many Web3 builders still find the time to

tweet about PMF on X though, but guess what: it won't take you longer to send a DM to Dean's List to book a feedback session! Once you have your MVP ready (**build**), our testers will review every single feature of your app, from the attractiveness of the front-end to the full functionality of off and on-chain operations (e.g. sending out transactions), and help you think of new killer features for your product, all while thinking in the shoes of your target user segment (**measure**). Our mission is to help you build an evolved version of your protocol (**learn**) with which you will breeze through the next iteration of the BML process.

Oh, Dean's List will give you the secret to PMF right away: it's being **customer-obsessed**.



How does a typical Dean's List feedback session unfold?

Like for most DAOs, the vast majority of our activities takes place on Discord. After we link up with your team, you'll have a quick chat with the feedback session managers about your product, where you're currently at in your roadmap, and which features of your platform you want our testers to focus on specifically. We will then promptly begin the 2-week review session. We also offer a **1-hour workshop** call included our feedback session bundle, during which we'll review the best feedback that was given by the testers and you'll get to ask them about it in more detail to fully address these critical points, and also ask them any question you might have about their experience of your protocol.

CLIENT CASE: SOLLINKED

Sollinked is an online marketplace built on Solana that provides appointment booking, e-mail and blog/newsletter subscription services, all in one comprehensive platform. Sollinked aims to provide content creators with all the tools they need to seamlessly publish and manage their written content (blog posts and newsletters), and to allow Web3 professionals to properly manage and filter their meetings and e-mails and set customised rates.



Meet Kida, founder of Sollinked

At the heart of Sollinked's value proposition lies the need for Web3 professionals to freely decide how they want to be rewarded for their work:

- ▶ being properly compensated for the time they spend writing quality content, while benefiting from a communication channel that lets them efficiently deliver their content to their subscribers.
- ▶ being properly compensated for sharing their expertise over a call or an e-mail, while still being easy to find and reach.
- ▶ being able to connect with other Web3 professionals and read your customised Web3 digest, all in the same place.

We have worked with Sollinked on two occasions so far. The first feedback session took place in September 2023, when the founder of Sollinked, Kida, had barely finished building an MVP (minimal viable product). At this stage, just like Kida, many founders already have a clear idea of what they want their protocol to look like at a more advanced stage of development, however as we said before (with the **BML** process), this is exactly when founders should resist the urge to put their heads down and rush development, and rather ask target users for a review of their MVP.

We conducted our second review of Sollinked a few months later in December 2023, after Sollinked brilliantly won the **1st prize (\$30k!)** of the Mobile Consumer Apps track of the Solana Hyperdrive hackathon. We were delighted to see another of our clients reap the rewards of their hard work! By then, more progress had been made in the development of the app, and we were able to give more creative feedback to improve the blog and newsletter services, for example.



HYPERDRIVE
hackathon

How do we work?

We usually divide our feedback in four categories, laid out in the four circles below. The first category contains observations from the testers about their experience of the UI, and suggestions for improvement. The second category comprises all kinds of bug reports, from front-end bugs to back-end/on-chain operational errors, or security threats. The third category concerns ideas of new features from our testers, which if added to your protocol would take the UX to the next level from their point of view. Lastly, we also like to give feedback on your social media strategy (even if it wasn't specifically requested) since in Web3, clear communication with your user community is of paramount importance.

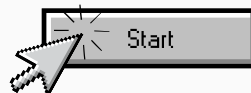
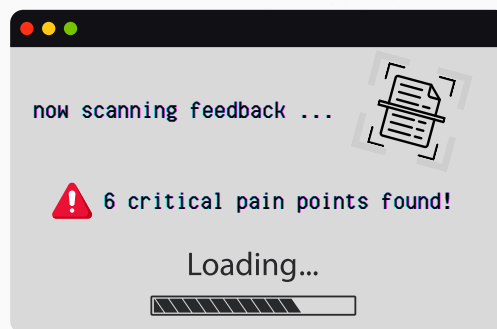
UI/UX

Bug

Feature
request

Socials &
branding

Keep in mind the **colour codes** as we go over the best feedback for Sollinked!



“ Creators should be able to link their social media accounts (e.g. Twitter) on Sollinked and have badge certifying their identity was verified, in order for visitors to properly carry out their due diligence and be protected from scams.

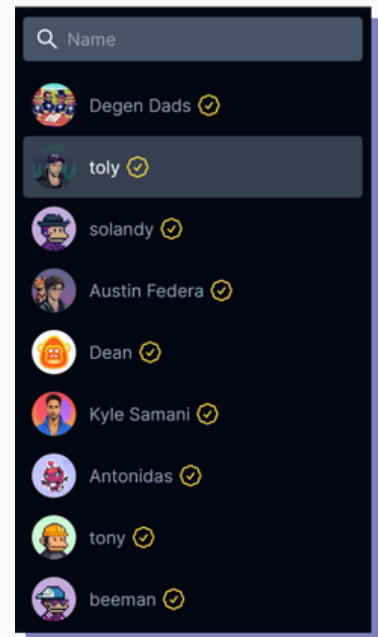


PAIN POINT

Users looking to contact someone via e-mail cannot be sure they're sending their money to the right person.



In a recent update, a verified tick was added to the creators whose identity was verified by the Sollinked team. This is a step in the right direction and solves a major user anxiety, in a Web3 space where impersonation is a very popular scamming method many have unfortunately fallen for. We encourage the team to also enable sharing external social media links for transparency reasons (especially for those without the verified tick): the network effect in Web3 is particularly strong on several mainstream social platforms, however that network strength is highly dependent on how easy it is to link people's identities across these different platforms. Going the extra mile to protect users can only greatly benefit Sollinked and improve its reputation as a safe and truly professional platform.



“After a blog creator changed his pricing, I got locked out of his content and could not see his new posts nor his older posts I had already unlocked. There should be a period of notice after a creator changes their pricing, during which subscribers can accept the new tariff or opt out.”



PAIN POINT

Creators have full control over subscribers' access to the content they have already unlocked by modifying the price of their content pass.

At Dean's List, we give the opportunity to any passionate Solana power user to contribute to our work and live the Dean's List experience on a Business Visa. This thoughtful feedback remark was made by one of our temporary members.

Content pass pricing is another aspect of Sollinked where our testers thought user protection was lacking. Content that has already been unlocked after buying access should remain accessible to subscribers forever. If a creator wishes to change the price of their pass, the new price could immediately apply to new subscribers, however current subscribers should be given a period of notice (e.g. 1 week) for them to decide whether they deem the content worth the new price. For example, if the pass price change was made within 1 week of a subscriber's renewal date, the new price would *not* apply to this renewal, but only to the *next* renewal.



I sent an email from one of my accounts to another and didn't respond, which caused the email to expire, but no refund was made to the wallet I paid with.



PAIN POINT



There is a bug where Sollinked keeps the escrowed money in case a creator does not respond to an e-mail within the agreed deadline.

It's no understatement when our clients say our power users tested every single pixel of their protocol! We get in the shoes of your different user profiles and make sure every feature of your app works flawlessly and best serves their needs. We document every bug we run across, and here while simulating a specific situation, one of our testers found a critical threat to user funds (which was likely not intentional) where the money to be refunded was in fact kept in escrow.



Supporters could gather around a common idea for writing, and if the author writes it, the supporters get to read it for free and a share of the revenue made from it (by other readers who paid to read it).



PAIN POINT



Sollinked lacks a feature that embodies the ideals of Web3: leveraging community resources and a fair distribution of rewards.

As a content creator who regularly writes blog posts on Sollinked, one of our core members felt like Sollinked still lacked a feature that would make it stand out from alternative Web2 platforms. Web3 people probably do not just need a pay-to-reach LinkedIn, they would rather like a unique platform that makes the Web3 ideals come true. At Dean's List, we like to think that everyone who contributed to the realisation of a task should be fairly compensated for the amount of work they put in. Similarly, when a subscriber thinks of a highly relevant topic to write on that could be useful to many other subscribers and teach them something valuable, and that the blog/newsletter author did not think of, that subscriber could be rewarded for their idea in the form of a free read and small share of the revenue made from the article/newsletter.



The app doesn't currently give the feeling of a social app. The current menu/member list should be scrapped and replaced with a feed with posts from different Sollinked creators; I feel it would encourage me to check out creators whose content I liked.

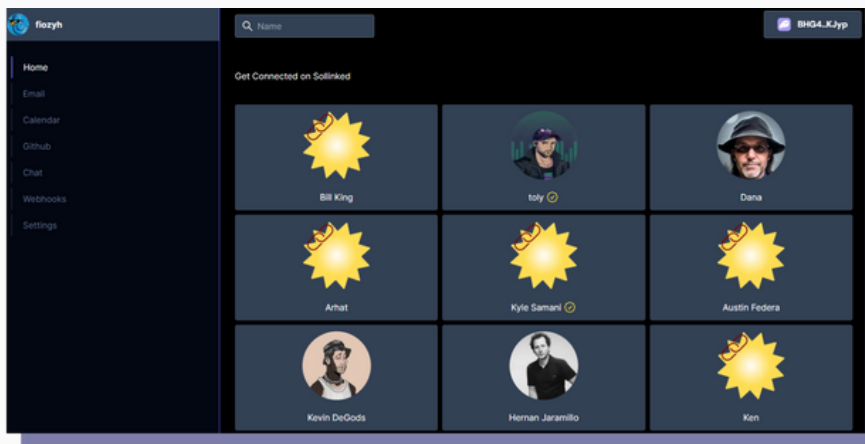


PAIN POINT



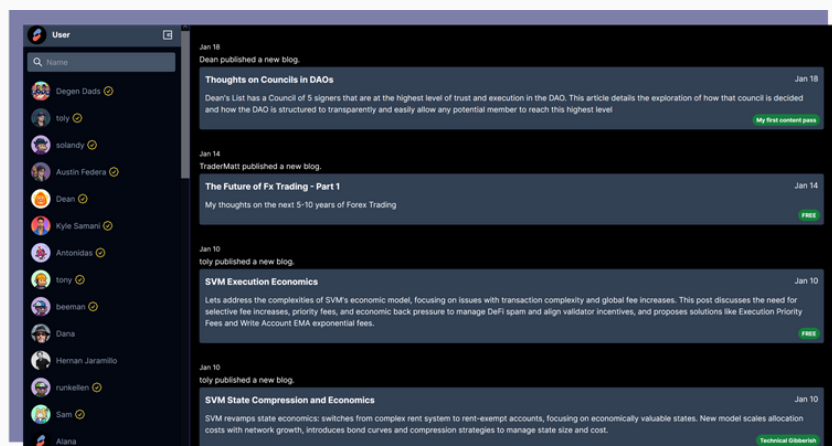
The home page is missing the opportunity to showcase content from creators. It doesn't give users the feeling that the app has any valuable insights to offer.

While at the early MVP stage, our testers were underwhelmed by the appearance and the content of the home page of the app. Most mainstream social apps nowadays have a feed where users can find content posted by the people they follow, and also from people they don't necessarily follow. Many of our testers expressed the need for Sollinked to have a feed where they'd see the latest content from their subscriptions and also creators they're not subscribed to, and that this feed feature would improve the visibility of creator content.

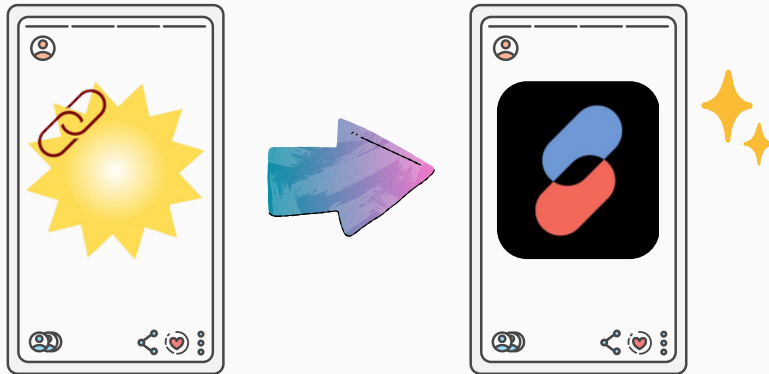


Before

AFTER



You should consider redesigning the logo of Sollinked. The sun with a chain link is a little bit too straightforward.



Your logo is an essential part of your branding strategy even though some might think of it as a detail of secondary importance. The sun was scrapped and the chain link was given a sleeker makeover, symbolising an exchange of value between two parties.



CONCLUSION

We would like to thank Dean's List for the outstanding feedback and pitch deck services.



Communication between the testers and the client developers is key.

How did we help Sollinked become more competitive?

- We pinpointed problems encountered by subscribers in verifying the identity of creators and accessing the content they should rightfully have access to, as well as the terms and conditions of these subscriptions;
- We identified a bug where user funds that should have been returned were in fact kept in escrow, which is a crucial issue to be resolved as the reputation of Sollinked heavily depends on it;
- We highlighted two ideas of new features that would get Sollinked closer to a true Web3 platform by harnessing the ideals of Web3, and that would efficiently deliver to users the content they really want to see.

What did we learn from our two sessions with Sollinked?

- if the client developers engage more with the testers, they can get a clearer idea of the bugs encountered and the optimisations suggested by our testers;
- if our testers do their best to understand the requests and explanations from the client team, it maximises the value that the latter receives from our services.

What kind of deliverable can you expect when we wrap up the session?

In the period between our two sessions with Sollinked, we have also improved the quality of our final deliverables. We will provide you with two documents: a report consisting of an organised summary of critical points (the feedback we deemed most relevant) which strives to best convey the testers' perspectives while keeping it concise; and a curated and well-structured sheet with all the valid feedback given by our testers.

| ID | Tester | Category | Other items | Feedback | Media |
|----|--------|-----------------|-------------|--|-------|
| 1 | Scout | Feature Request | | Add a unique feature to share gameplay snippets / specific moves directly from the game to Twitter with hashtags and link to SolCiv on social media, and generally help promote the game. | |
| 2 | Scout | Feature Request | | Add a unique feature that would impact resource production and unit movement (Block, drought, hurricane). | |
| 3 | Scout | Feature Request | | You could do something with DMR, an NFT drop that's required to play the game, free for whoever signs up, this bypassing the need to do the regular career campaign. The free version (DMR, NFT), with creating the world for every part the game is necessary for the user to play with other players in the game. The free version (DMR, NFT), with creating the world for every part the game is necessary for the user to play with other players in the game. | |
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DL: deanslist

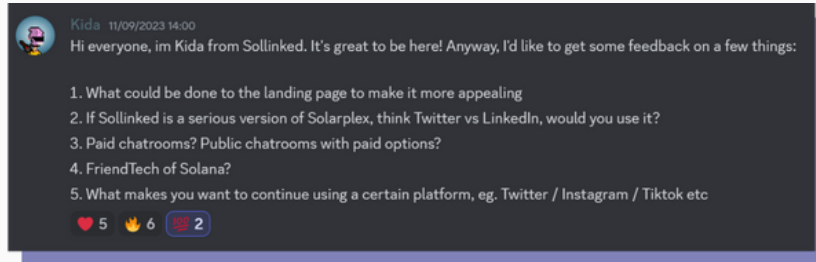
Feedback Summary

General understanding of the game's features

- It took more than the first couple of turns to fully understand what all the different resources could be used for and how to start farming them, for the vast majority of our testers. Every time a new resource is obtained, there could be a pop-up thoroughly explaining how to use it. Some testers felt there are too many resources; maybe they could be introduced gradually as the player progresses through the game.
- When clicking on a city, most of our testers thought the layout of the menu was clear enough, but the information on there was unclear for about half of the testers; the purpose of all the different units and buildings needs more explaining. Some testers felt like there is no real need for more buildings and harvesting resources to beat the current version of the game (whatever the mode).
- The content of the Quests menu was clear for most. The need for a unique icon for every quest and the use of simple, plain words in the quest description was brought up. The need for (at least) the first couple of quests to be pushed to the player on the main screen was brought up as well, otherwise they would simply ignore the quests. Many testers expressed frustration about the current reward system (though they understand that the game is still young), it was unclear to some of them whether the rewards are automatically received or should be manually claimed.
- The content of the Research lab was well understood by most, though it should nevertheless be well explained to beginners because of its complexity. Some testers thought the current gameplay is quite imbalanced, in that units are too powerful to even need to unlock more technologies.
- Echoing a quick poll that was recently made in the SolCiv Discord, the majority of testers thought SolCiv should keep its current UI and not make it similar to that of mainstream games.
- When asked about the pace of the gameplay, some testers felt it was too slow, especially at the beginning of a game. The possibility of adding real-time conditions (instead of turn-based conditions) to certain features in the game was also brought up.

LAST TIP FOR THE ROAD

How to make the most out of our feedback service? **Make this feedback session yours!** We encourage our client teams to engage as much as possible with our testers and ask them specific questions about their experience of certain features of your app, general questions about their needs and experience with similar apps to better frame the user profiles they belong to, and what they think of your own feature ideas that you're thinking of adding to your app (think A/B testing). In that regard, Kida led by example during our first session:



**OUR MISSION IS TO MAKE SOLANA STARTUPS THRIVE AND
BECOME SUPERSTARS IN THE SOLANA ECOSYSTEM.
HAVEN'T BOOKED YOUR FEEDBACK SESSION YET?
WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR!**

