



**ACCELERATING  
FINTECH PARTNERSHIPS:  
HOW APIX HELPED PRUDENTIAL'S  
OPEN INNOVATION JOURNEY TAKE FLIGHT**

# Introduction

As we embark on the road towards a post-COVID world, the outlook for Singapore's FinTech industry remains positive despite challenges brought about by the pandemic.

Earlier this year, Singapore came in first among FinTech nations in the Asia Pacific, according to the Global FinTech Index 2021 (findexable, 2021). In addition, while worldwide fintech funding nearly doubled between 2020 and 2021, funding for Singaporean financial technology firms ("FTs") had increased 2.5 times during the same period. 60% of the S\$3.1B of equity funding in 2021 was raised in Q3 alone. ("A record year for Singapore fintech", 2021)

Establishing such a thriving ecosystem is a huge undertaking, which is made possible only through a combination of sustained and progressive efforts from the government, FTs, financial institutions ("FIs"), and other enablers. One key aspect of this endeavour is the drive towards greater partnerships between FTs and FIs.

There are many advantages to such partnerships. FIs such as Prudential can contribute deep content, market expertise, credibility, and access to financing; while FTs can stimulate the FIs' innovation efforts and strengthen their competitive advantages through speed, agility, the integration of new technology, and improvements to customer experience.

However, collaborations between FIs and FTs can be challenging. From the FIs' perspective, common pain points include concerns about selecting the right partner and the need to secure executive buy-in from senior management.

That said, such difficulties can be overcome with the right support. This paper presents how Prudential Singapore ("Prudential") accelerated its digital journey by adopting APIX Hackolosseum™.

ASIA PACIFIC		
Region Ranking	Overall Ranking	Country
1	4	Singapore
2	6	Australia
3	15	China
4	21	Japan
5	23	India
6	26	South Korea
7	30	New Zealand
8	35	Taiwan
9	43	Indonesia
10	46	Malaysia
11	53	Philippines
12	55	Thailand
13	66	Kazakhstan
14	70	Vietnam
15	77	Pakistan
16	78	Bangladesh

Figure 1. Singapore topped the regional rankings for Asia Pacific in 2021 (Source: Global FinTech Index 2021, findexable 2021)



# Benefits and Challenges of FT-FI Collaboration

The journey started in 2019 when APIX first presented its solutions to Prudential's Innovation, Technology, and Procurement teams and Prudential began adopting APIX to discover new possible FT partnerships and to carry out Proof of Concepts (POCs).

In 2020, Prudential successfully hosted its flagship open innovation programme, *PRUFintegrate Partnership Programme*, on APIX's platform for the first time. Prudential continued to work with APIX to host the programme on APIX Hackolosseum™ in 2021.

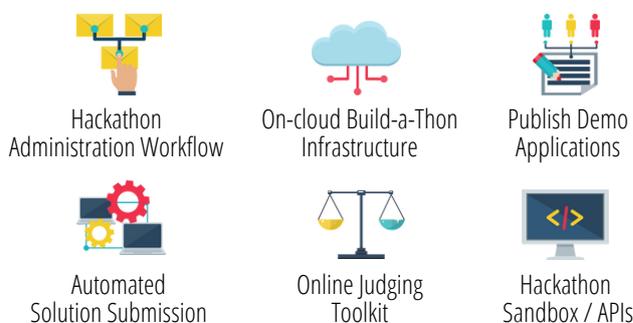
## PRUFintegrate Partnership Programme

Prudential has always placed great emphasis on the importance of innovation and developing solutions that will help people get the most out of life. *PRUFintegrate Partnership Programme* is Prudential's annual flagship open innovation programme for Design, Tech, and Student communities around the world to reimagine health and wealth outcomes and contribute creative solutions to business challenges.

This competition is open to all and shortlisted participants get to pitch directly to senior decision-makers at the Singapore FinTech Festival, win attractive cash prizes, and become part of the Prudential Innovation Community.

## APIX Hackolosseum™

APIX Hackolosseum™ is an end-to-end online platform for global hackathons, events where participants work to solve challenge statements from the organisers. Key features of APIX Hackolosseum™ include the following:



## About PRUDENTIAL

Prudential Assurance Company Singapore (Pte) Ltd is one of the top life insurance companies in Singapore, serving the financial and protection needs of the country's citizens for 90 years. The company has an AA-Financial Strength Rating from leading credit rating agency Standard & Poor's, with S\$49.3 billion funds under management as at 31 December 2020. It delivers a suite of well-rounded product offerings in Protection, Savings and Investment through multiple distribution channels, including a network of more than 5,000 financial consultants.

## About APIX

APIX is an initiative of the ASEAN Financial Innovation Network (AFIN), a non-profit organization founded by the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS), the International Finance Corporation (IFC) of the World Bank Group, and the ASEAN Bankers Association. As a worldwide, open-architecture platform, it aims to bring together financial industry participants in ASEAN and around the world to discover, design and deploy innovative digital solutions within a collaborative ecosystem.

## Other solutions by APIX

Prudential also made use of other features on the APIX platform to discover solutions.

- 1 **APIX Marketplace** enables users to search from a directory of FIs and FTs. FIs can also post problem statements, try out real-time APIs, see API metric performance, and more.
- 2 **APIX Sandbox** is a collaborative development and test platform for rapid prototyping of FinTech solutions.
- 3 **APIX chekFIN** is a global FinTech registry that will assist FIs in identifying and evaluating the capabilities and credibility of FTs for collaboration and development opportunities.



# How an Open Innovation Programme Can Resolve Common Pain Points – The Prudential Experience

## 01

### Finding the Right Partner



FIs are rightfully concerned about enterprise-grade capacity, scalability, reliability, and tech risk compliance readiness of FTs. However, this often limits their options and leads to difficulty in sourcing for and evaluating suitable FTs that can meet the FIs' operational goals.

Prudential is no exception when it comes to the care placed on finding the right partners. This pain point is further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. In the past, staff had to travel to source for and work with partners. With travel restrictions in place, an alternative approach was necessary.

Hosting *PruFintegrate Partnership Programme 2020* on APIX's platform was a solution that resulted in the following positive outcomes for Prudential:

- 1 Prudential was able to reach out to APIX's network of FTs without the need for physical tours and roadshows.
- 2 There was an increase in cross-border submissions from across Asia, Africa, Europe, and America, indicating greater diversity and reach despite travel restrictions.
- 3 Prudential was able to involve more colleagues from across the region, including top global executives for digital leadership and senior management from regional Local Business Units (LBUs).
- 4 Prudential was able to go on to commission exciting new projects, offer jobs to and collaborate with selected *PRUFintegrate Partnership Programme 2020* finalists (see pages 6 and 7).

These positive outcomes prompted Prudential to continue hosting the programme on APIX Hackolosseum™ in 2021.

# 02

## Accelerating Progress



Adopting new technologies and processes can be a time-consuming and resource-intensive process for FIs. For example, in general, the inherent structured decision-making process in an FI can cause a collaboration with an FT to take up to 12 to 18 months (see Figure 2).

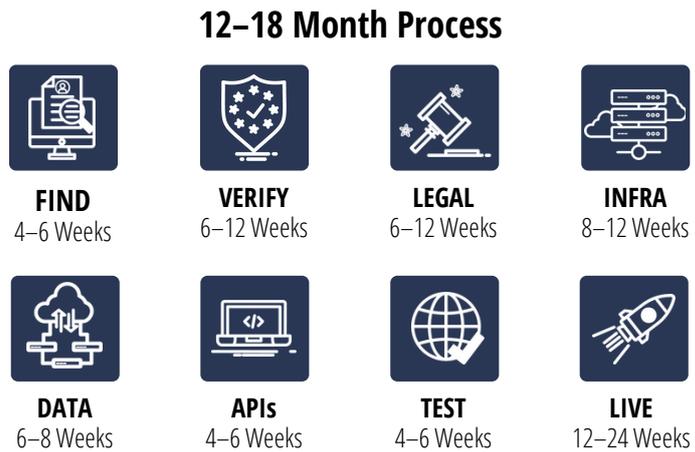


Figure 2. Collaboration between FIs and FTs can be time-consuming. (Source: APIX)

FTs, on the other hand, are more agile, have a singular focus, and are likely to adopt an accelerated approach with simpler processes. However, they may not understand the corporate policies safeguarding an FI and its customers, and may not be sure how to navigate the layers of approvals required. Such delays to implementation often leave both sides frustrated.

An open innovation programme like the *PruFintegrate Partnership Programme* can come in useful as they are organised with specific challenge statements in mind. These challenge statements serve to align expectations and ensure that everyone focuses on shared goals and deadlines.

In addition, adopting APIX Hackolosseum™ benefits Prudential in the following ways:

- 1 The platform's content management system and automated workflows allow Prudential's Innovation Team to quickly set up the *PRUFintegrate Partnership Programme* and provide updates.
- 2 Prudential and FTs can explore possibilities, develop chemistry, and commit to projects in a sustainable manner as there is a mutual understanding in terms of timeline and transparency in terms of decision-making.
- 3 Within the fail-safe environment of APIX Hackolosseum™, Prudential is able to manage risks and democratize experimentation beyond internal teams.

# 03

## Securing Executive Buy-In From Senior Management

A survey in 2020 indicated that one of the main pain points in FinTech partnerships is “the lack of leadership buy-in” (Kærhøg & Jensen, 2020). Securing a mandate from the right stakeholders is critical for ensuring commitment and promoting innovative work.

In Prudential, the standard way to develop a solution requires a mandate from one of the regional Centres of Excellence and at least one LBU. With *PruFintegrate Partnership Programme*, the panel of judges is made up of senior regional executives and key decision-makers who are able to scale up solutions rapidly across global markets.



Figure 3. The panel of judges for *PruFintegrate Partnership Programme 2021* is made up of key decision-makers.

In addition, APIX Hackolosseum™ provides tools and workflows that help to articulate the value propositions in a systematic and coherent manner. For example, in the case of Prudential, judges consider solutions with Prudential's values and purpose in mind and their decisions are based on the benefits the solutions bring to Prudential's customers. Such values are articulated clearly in the problem statements, which eases the process of securing executive buy-in.

# Partnerships Formed From PRUFintegrate 2020

After hosting *PruFintegrate Partnership Programme 2020* on APIX's platform, Prudential was able to initiate new relationships with the following partners.

## Finute – For Gen Z by Gen Z

Finute is an award-winning education technology company that aims to empower the next generation of learners by merging education and play.

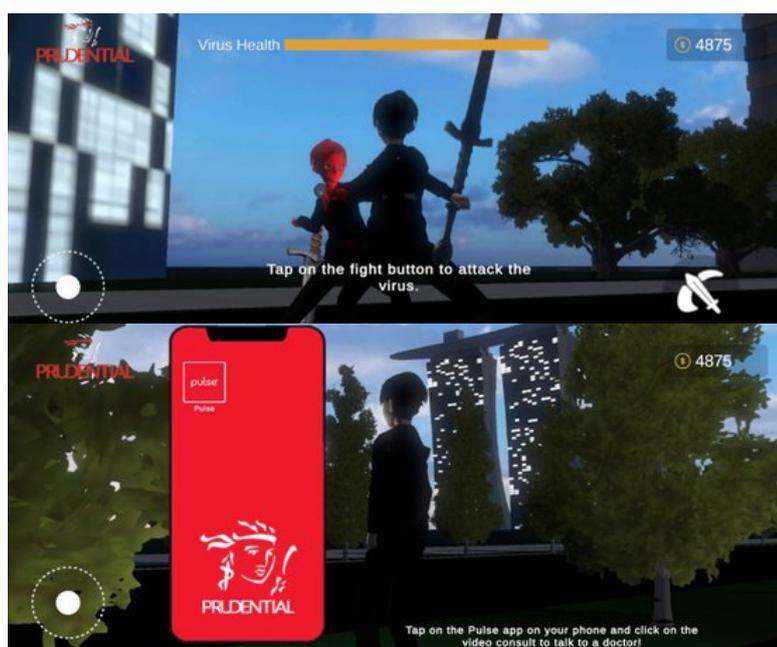
Started by a team of students, Finute's proposed solution was a 3D open-world game that utilizes real-world contexts to educate youths on financial literacy.

### About the Partnership

For this project, Prudential assembled a team to co-create a solution that would engage Gen Zs on the importance of financial literacy.

The team, which comprised Finute, Prudential's Customer team, its design-trained staff ("Design Doers"), and interns worked closely together to develop a targeted outreach programme. Finute applied their technical know-how as well as their knowledge of the Gen Z demographic, while Prudential shared its deep experience in insurance and financial literacy. Prudential's Gen Z Design Doers and interns also carried out user testing and helped to refine the value proposition.

The final product is *PruQuest*, which was successfully launched at Singapore FinTech Festival 2021.



“ The PRUFintegrate Partnership Programme gave my team a platform to showcase the work that my startup is doing. We received valuable feedback from the various Prudential stakeholders including C-Suite executives from around the region to further improve on our solution. Overall, it was a fruitful experience. ”

**Winston Ng**  
Chief Executive Officer, Finute

Figure 4. Screenshots of *PruQuest*

# Limitless – Making Accessible Financial Literacy the Bridge to Taking Action

Limitless Singapore has built a financial literacy tool centred on highly engaging multimedia content to bridge the knowledge gap between money problems and the steps needed to solve them. The tool incorporates a unique and entirely novel system to both empower the user and involve financial consultants where appropriate.

## About the Partnership

Prudential had a similar solution prior to the submission of Limitless' proposal. However, the FI saw some interesting elements in their app and decided to work with this FT to rapidly experiment and test-learn. This was a win-win arrangement because Limitless received a paid POC which is funded by the Business Growth Grant ("BGG"). The BGG, a component of the MAS-SFA-AMTD FinTech Solidarity Grant, is awarded to eligible FTs for their first POC with an FI on the APIX platform. Limitless also got the opportunity to validate their solution with actual users.

Prudential's partnership with Limitless illustrates how it is possible to accelerate procurement processes to work with a startup on projects.

# Adanian Labs Africa – Creating a Borderless Continent

Adanian Labs Africa is a fusion lab built on AI, blockchain, and smart technologies.

The solution they proposed is eCOBbA, a FinTech platform built to support community savings and lending groups. The platform will enable users to have better data storing and management, secure transactions, financial access and value addition (i.e., micro insurance, pensions, and loans), connect them to a marketplace for their products, and build capacity into their productivity.

## About the Partnership

This is a good example of a cross-border submission. Despite the distance between Singapore and Africa, the *PruFintegrate Partnership Programme* helped Prudential's African businesses find a FT partner through the APIX platform.

On the FI's part, this win-win collaboration would allow the insurer to scale-up effectively and provide value-added services to its customers better. From the FT's perspective, they would be able to bring their solution into new markets.

A Memorandum of Understanding with Adanian Labs Africa has been signed, with plans to deploy the solution in Zambia, followed by Kenya, then all 8 of Prudential's LBUs in Africa.





“ COVID-19 is impacting economies and societies the world over. Preparing for the world post-COVID requires us to rapidly adapt and innovate. We want to support the FinTech community that has helped our industry innovate, and with whom we have been partnering to make insurance simpler and more accessible to our customers. We hope through this package, we can provide them some peace of mind in knowing they are protected in these challenging times. ”

**Dennis Tan**  
Chief Executive Officer, Prudential

## **APIX Cares**

Partnerships do not always need to be commercially motivated and support can be mutual and reciprocal.

On 18 May 2020, Prudential partnered with AFIN to provide support to the Singapore FinTech community impacted by COVID-19 under the *APIX Cares* programme.

*APIX Cares* was introduced by AFIN to help the Singapore FinTech community on the APIX platform cope with the COVID-19 global pandemic. The Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) had provided all Singapore FTs with six months of free access to APIX, as part of its S\$125 million support package announced on 8 April 2020.

As Singapore's first insurer to be onboarded on APIX and a committed partner in Singapore's FinTech ecosystem, Prudential set out to provide both protection and financial support to employees of more than 1,100 FTs in Singapore. These FinTech employees stood to benefit from the following when their companies register on the APIX platform:

- 1 S\$20,000 complimentary coverage against accidental death and injury, which increases to S\$50,000 if an employee is retrenched
- 2 Hospitalisation income payout for dengue haemorrhagic fever
- 3 PRUcare package: S\$500 cash benefit for those served with quarantine orders and S\$200 daily hospitalisation allowance if hospitalised for COVID-19

The *APIX Cares* programme is a good example of how APIX brings together various players in the FinTech ecosystem, including Prudential, to proactively contribute to the community.

“ There is a definite demand for innovative solutions among financial institutions, but the process can be lengthy, complex, or limited by geographical distance. With over 1000 FinTechs and 70+ Financial Institutions from 80+ countries on the APIX platform, we offer both FinTechs and Financial Institutions an opportunity to accelerate corporate innovations and such collaborations through our suite of products. As a social impact platform, our aim is to support and promote FinTech innovation and development globally. ”

**Professor Olayinka David-West**  
Associate Dean, Lagos Business School, Pan-Atlantic University and Advisor to the Board, ASEAN Financial Innovation Network

## What's Next

The COVID-19 pandemic had disrupted the usual open innovation activities, but with the support from APIX, Prudential was able to expand its network and connect with FTs around the world. Following a virtuous cycle of support, Prudential also provided support to the FinTech ecosystem and in recognition for its contributions, it received the APIX Anchor FI Award. This is just the beginning.

In December 2021, APIX announced the launch of chekFIN, a global FinTech registry that will assist FIs in identifying and evaluating FTs for collaboration opportunities. Prudential is amongst the first 10 industry partners that will issue Verifiable Credentials (consent-driven and cryptographically secure digital certificates) on the platform to FTs. (Fintechnews Singapore, 2021).

Both APIX and Prudential will not stay still but will continue their journey to build a stronger and more resilient ecosystem that will benefit the entire financial industry.



Co-create exciting FinTech, HealthTech and SMETech solutions with Prudential! Learn more about PRUFintegrate by contacting us at:

✉ [innovation@prudential.com.sg](mailto:innovation@prudential.com.sg).

Interested in learning more about chekFIN or organising an online hackathon? Contact us at:

✉ [sales@afin.tech](mailto:sales@afin.tech)

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