



ILLUSTRATION BY PAUL DALLIMORE

Meet me on the Segway

ARE you in want of a technology mogul to be your company's fairy godfather and stump up some investment? There once was a time where you would simply hotfoot it to the golf course to make connections but now a strange hush has descended over the greens of the super-rich. That cash is more likely to be found while kitesurfing, trampolining at the Burning Man festival in the Nevada Desert or tearing up the Segway polo pitch (yes, it's a thing and, before you scoff, Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak is a fan).

Riding the waves wearing a figure-hugging wetsuit may not sound like the way to score a serious deal but it's where the leviathans of the tech scene are congregating. The likes of Richard Branson, Elon Musk and Yahoo! CFO Kenneth Goldman are all devoted kiteboarders and Forbes estimated the total net worth of a recent gathering at £4.1 billion.

These hardcore pursuits can be a place to prove yourself – victory on the Segway polo pitch may be an indication of future potential – and what better way to test a working relationship than over a game of ultimate frisbee? Those who can survive playing extreme sport together can weather anything, even the harshest economic climates.

Technology industry recruiter Alan Cutter is encouraging New York techno types to take to the waves, saying "the ocean is the new golf course". Meanwhile Ed Baker, CEO of social networking site Friend.ly told Forbes: "Kiteboarding is a great way to meet new entrepreneurs and investors outside the boardroom in a non-pressure environment."

The best ideas now happen away from the meeting room. Postagram was hatched when founder Matt Brezina

TECHNOLOGY

Anyone for kiteboarding? Silicon Valley start-ups take business deals to the slopes, the skies and the polo pitches, says **Susannah Butter**

wanted to send his picture of a prokiter as a real postcard.

Just make sure you don't bash into Sergey Brin, who along with co-founding Google can count kitesurfing under the Golden Gate Bridge among his achievements. He is also known for his ultimate frisbee prowess and enjoys going to the Burning Man festival, which happened last weekend, and is a hotbed of alternative networking, Segway-based activities included.

These silicon schmoozers are a competitive breed. If you can't go hard you might miss out on that contract. Steve Wozniak has set up a Segway polo championship, Silicon Valley Aftershocks, and its annual world cup, The Woz Challenge, is a big deal in the tech calendar. And if you want to find Nest co-founder Tony Fadell and his lead investor Randy Komisar of investment capital company Kleiener, Perkins, Caulfield and Byers, a likely haunt is the foothills around Silicon Valley where they test their mettle doing endurance cycling.

Over here, London is not immune.

Focusing an event around an activity allows people to form relationships without really thinking about it'

Silicon roundabout's technology impresarios have started literally social climbing – meeting up to go bouldering and scale vertical challenges as they discuss how to grow their empires.

Founder of London Tech climbers Bud Chawla says while being "passionate about beer", he "thought it would be super to have some networking opportunities that were a little more liver-friendly... so what better than a challenging, creative and collaborative activity like climbing?"

Masters of all things social in the technology world 3 Beards have been on kayaking trips to expand their networks. Co-founder Joe Scarborough says: "Focusing an event around an activity, especially a fun and challenging one, allows people to form relationships without really thinking about it."

Eze Videra, general partner at Google Ventures, runs London Tech Biking, which is designed to raise money for literacy charity Room to Read. Those who have been talk it up as the very place to for a chance to sit down (on a saddle, mind) with a potential investor and explain your latest venture.

Mark Jennings, co-founder of Tech Bikers explains the appeal: "There is nothing like riding next to an investor and pitching. It forces you to keep it brief. Cycling gives you time to speak and get beyond a role or title, you uncover more reasons to work together than just the immediate need or sales pitch. Nailing a killer hill is a great way to get to know someone's true character."

The beginning of autumn doesn't mean an end to outdoor networking. There is time to start practising for snowkiting season in March – watch out for Dropbox's Drew Houston and Threadsy's Rob Goldman tearing up the slopes. So pack your outdoorwear and don't forget your business card.

On the ball: How we imagine Google's Sergey Brin and Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg might enjoy a spot of Segway polo

AL DESKO



Amelia Rope Dark Sea Salt and Honeycomb Chocolate (£5.60)

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Taste assessment: This is the kind of chocolate that could persuade even the most diehard 5:2 diet devotee to break their fast day. The tastiest chocolate in the world, perhaps. The reason to live. Any hyperbolic cliché you can think of applies here but the takeaway message is that Amelia Rope makes damn fine chocolate. With all her flavours, Rope starts with an excellent base of incredibly smooth, single-origin chocolate. This time, on top of the salt, she adds honeycomb. Simple and highly effective. The pale version (milk chocolate) is equally good.

Jasmine Gardner



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London Evening Standard

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