Saman Farid
Baidu Ventures

Saman is a passionate supporter of early-stage startups. He has built three companies in the areas of e-commerce, IP television, and logistics management, and faced the challenges of building, focusing, and scaling a company. Saman has spent more than 15 years in China and has held positions at Honeywell, Verizon, Deloitte Consulting, and Microsoft in roles ranging from R&D to operations optimization. He received his Bachelor’s degree in Control Systems Engineering from the Cooper Union and his MBA from Tsinghua and MIT.
Chris Abshire is an Analyst at Toyota AI Ventures, responsible for identifying startups, analyzing opportunities, and conducting due diligence. Prior to joining Toyota AI Ventures, Chris was on the investment team at Fenox Venture Capital, where he led the U.S. due diligence process and market research activities. He also was executive director of the firm’s Startup World Cup event, a platform that created innovation opportunities for startup ecosystems around the world.

Chris received a bachelor’s degree in petroleum engineering from the University of Kansas, where he received the CPE Outstanding Academic Achievement Award for graduating at the top of his class.
Michael is an investment partner at a16z focusing on AI, crypto tokens, and AR/VR. Previously, Michael worked at startups and large companies as a software engineer and data scientist, and led AI research projects during his time at Berkeley, Harvard, and MIT. At a16z, he was part of the team that created the a16z AI Playbook.
Samir is managing director within Microsoft Ventures providing technical leadership for the recently announced AI Fund and leading investments in startups innovating in core AI. He will also lead investment activities in other key frontier technology areas such as quantum computing and autonomous vehicles. Prior to this he was senior director for business development and product management in Qualcomm Research. In this role he led early stage validation, partnerships, acquisitions & strategy for embedded/on-device deep learning. Samir started his career at Microsoft and spent several years in Redmond leading product management/product planning efforts for enterprise mobility before heading to Palm, Samsung and Qualcomm. He holds a bachelor’s of science degree in mechanical engineering from Cornell University.
Yaara manages Mighty Capital’s deal flow. She is an experienced strategy and technology professional. She brings strategic initiatives to life by identifying market opportunities, bringing products to market, and scaling.

Katie is a tech industry veteran with almost 20 years experience building and scaling innovative web and mobile products at early to mid stage startups such as TrueCar, Byliner, and Prism Skylabs. She has a proven track record of building and managing product, software, and marketing teams in agile, high-growth environments. Her domain expertise includes artificial intelligence, machine learning, automotive, and media/publishing.
Veronica previously apprenticed in venture at S-Cubed Capital under Mark Stevens, former Managing Partner at Sequoia Capital. While at S-Cubed, Veronica sourced deals in Secret, Second Spectrum and Embark (acq. by APPL). She served attended board meetings for Elemental Technologies (acq. AMZN), Zapproved, Deal Decor and Second Spectrum. Previous to venture, she launched a dairy farm while living in rural South Africa. She graduated Summa Cum Laude with a degree in finance from the University of Southern California at the age of 20.

While in college she conducted research on the financial crash, executive compensation/incentive alignment, and published her honors thesis on the impact of microfinance on inequality. During college she started businesses including a second hand marketplace for women’s clothing and a photo editing/ filtering business.
Benhamou Global Ventures (BGV) is an early-stage venture capital firm based in Silicon Valley. Like the talented entrepreneurs we work with, we share a passion and commitment for building valuable companies, especially those that drive the digital transformation of enterprises. BGV operates at the intersection of leading-edge enterprise IT, active early-stage venture investing and cross border innovation. We place particular emphasis on cloud technologies; virtual and software defined networking; productivity-based, customer centric applications; cyber security, mobility and the Industrial Internet of Things. We are a team of people that combine many years of investment experience with successful senior operating roles in major global companies. This has enabled us to establish a powerful network of technical advisors, executives, functional experts and co-investors who will actively engage with our portfolio companies. Together we are able to offer our entrepreneurs substantial expertise, resources and strong connections.
Lu Zhang is the Founding and Managing Partner of Fusion Fund (A.K.A. NewGen Capital). Prior to starting Fusion Fund, she was a Venture Partner at Fenox Venture Capital. She participated in over 20 investments and assist M&A of the portfolios. Lu was also the Founder and CEO of a start-up focused on non-invasive technology for the early diagnosis of Type II diabetes (acquired in 2012). Lu received her M.S. in Materials Science and Engineering from Stanford University and holds several patents. She is an advisor and mentor to several innovative programs and incubators in Silicon Valley. Lu has won numerous awards and is frequently invited to speak at events. She was awarded the Forbes US 30 under 30 & Featured as the Honoree of VC category. She was also awarded the Forbes Asia 30 under 30 of Finance category in the same year. She was recently awarded as the T&C 50 Modern Swans Influencer, representing top female entrepreneurs in US.
Robert Neivert
500 startups

I am presently a Venture Partner at 500 Startups specializing in B2B seed investments. Previously I was an executive for startups having founded or worked at eight companies with four exits and four companies still operating. I was CEO for last two venture funded startups. I also maintain a broad domain of expertise, having held leadership positions in products, marketing, and operations. Academic credentials include a BA, BS, MS, and MBA degree from Stanford, Wesleyan, and Santa Clara. I am a 500 startups Venture Partner, a mentor/advisor for Cardinal Ventures, Stanford iFarm, and Stanford’s Treehacks program as well as an executive advisor for over 15 funded startups, and previously held the position of Executive in Residence at Quest Venture Partners.
Katie Gray is a Partner on the Investment Team at In-Q-Tel, the strategic venture firm that supports the missions of the Central Intelligence Agency and the broader U.S. Intelligence Community. Katie focuses on identifying investment opportunities in cybersecurity, data analytics, IoT, automation, and additive manufacturing. Before joining In-Q-Tel, Katie spent more than ten years in software product management for mobile consumer electronic products, including the Handspring Treo line of smartphones, mobile phones and tablets at Palm and HP. Prior to joining Handspring, Katie was a member of the founding team and Vice President of Marketing for Bluelark, a pioneer in mobile web software. Handspring acquired Bluelark in 2001. Katie earned both a B.A. and an M.B.A. from Stanford University.
Yigit Ihlamur is a partner at Vela, a seed-stage venture capital based in San Francisco, London and Istanbul. Earlier in his career, Yigit worked at Google Cloud on operations, growth marketing, product strategy, management, and startup partnerships. Yigit received his master’s degree in computer science with a focus on artificial intelligence from the University of Oxford and bachelor’s degree in industrial engineering from Koc University. He currently lives in San Francisco, investing in SaaS and on-demand startups. Yigit has a passion for solving problems of small enterprises, sole proprietors and people of limited resources.
Heather Crawford  
Band of Angels

Heather has 20+ years of experience leading Business Development, Finance & Technology for leading consumer brands in wine (Beringer, Tech St. Jean, Stags’ Leap et.) Food (Amy’s), High Tech (Audience) and Health Insurance (Prudential, Blue Shield). An active start-up Advisor and Angel Investor her personal portfolio includes Food, Software, Hardware and Medical Device companies.  
Heather is a Member of the Band of Angels, Former Chairman of the Membership Committee and Co-Chair of the Software SIG. She is also a partner with Startup Mavericks, a Venture Advisor to BLD, ImpactVC and Lodestar and is the Angel Liaison for the NASDAQ Entrepreneurial Center where she is also a volunteer Milestone Maker Mentor. Heather has a BA in Economics and Political Science from the University of Arizona (Phi Beta Kappa) and an MS in Economics from CalTech.