

IP Impact Investing Show 3

Participation in the Impact Investing Space and What Investors Look For

This is Investor Perspectives. I'm the host of Investor Connect, Hall T. Martin, where we connect startups and investors for funding.

In our new Investor Perspectives series entitled "Impact Investing in a post-COVID World", you'll hear about participation in the impact investing space and what investors look for.

As the COVID pandemic passes, we emerge into a new era. The impact space is now undergoing tremendous change as we shift to a post-COVID world. Impact investing in the areas of sustainability and the environment takes precedence in the financial industry. We have investors and startup founders describe the changes coming up.

Our guests are:

1. [Brad Gurrie, CEO, Socialsuite \[01:13\]](#)
2. [Luni Libes, Founder and Managing Director, Fledge \[02:50\]](#)
3. [Vishal Arora, Managing Partner, VDOSH \[05:34\]](#)
4. [Chelsea Burns, Principal, Escaladora Ventures \[07:05\]](#)
5. [Richard Samuelson, Chief Investment Officer, SWAN Venture Group \[08:53\]](#)

We hope you enjoy the show.

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Music courtesy of [Bensound](#).

[01:13] Our first guest is Brad Gurrie, CEO of Socialsuite. Socialsuite is a SaaS platform that enables the collection, visualisation and communication of impact data. Their team is global and their customers span the globe and are leading impact-minded organisations. Brad, thank you for joining us.

Hall Martin: So what is your participation in impact investing so far?

Brad Gurrie: So we're certainly a supporter of impact investing as a service provider. And that's where we – that's our position around it. So typically, organizations are coming to us at a point in time where they need to be able to measure the impact of their organization. So what we'll do is that we'll actually support them through being able to embed their methodology of what is it that they want to measure into our technology solution, and then being able to use our tech solution to be able to support the data collection so that they can evidence their program or their organization. So that's where Socialsuite plays its role in terms of the impact investing space.

Hall Martin: Great. So what should investors look for to invest in an impact deal?

Brad Gurrie: So I think the underlying reason is that when we're looking at impact investing, it's always – there is a financial return on it, and that's an easy thing to demonstrate. But it's really about like, what is the underlying impact of that organization. And so, I think that there's core things that an impact investor really needs to look at, which is around areas of ensuring that the organization is set up successfully, to be able to measure the impact that they've actually – they're delivering upon the program.

[02:50] Our next guest is Luni Libes, Founder and Managing Director at Fledge. Fledge is a global network of conscious company accelerators and seed funds that help entrepreneurs create impactful companies and co-ops at scale through short, intense programs filled with education, guidance, and a massive amount of mentorship. Luni, thank you for joining us.

Hall Martin: So tell us more about your participation in impact investing so far. What are you doing now, and what have you done?

Luni Libes: I do a few different things. I run this global network of accelerators called Fledge. And I don't run them all around the world – what excites me about that work is that I just run the one in Seattle, and then I teach others around the world how to do a program that they want to do. It doesn't have to be exactly like mine, it can just be, take pieces of what I've done before or pieces of what someone else in the network has done before, and again, help mission driven for profits. Out of that has come three other things. One is that we now run an angel accelerator program. So now we have a program that's two months long, that isn't for entrepreneurs, but actually for angels. We teach people how to be impact angels. Third one that

popped out of this is Realize Impact. It's a 501(c)(3) non-profit public charity, and that sounds like we do charity work, but not quite. What we really do is take philanthropic dollars and turn them into impact investments. We've been doing that for almost two years, and it's working really well. There's a large amount of capital in the United States that's locked up on the – we call the other side of the philanthropic wall. So if you've given money to charity, you've gotten your tax return, you can't have the money back, it's not your money anymore. But a lot of that money is tied up in forms like donor advised funds and family foundations, and it's just sitting in Wall Street, it's not doing any good for the world. And so, we can unlock that and turn it into impact investments. And then, the fourth thing I do, something that's spun directly off of Fledge is called Africa Eats. That's my work in Africa. And there we took 27 graduates of Fledge, and we've wrapped them in an investment holding company and we're helping them grow faster than we could as just Fledge alums.

Hall Martin: Great. Well, you've already talked a little bit about what you look forward to invest in, it must be mission driven. Do you also put a financial criteria on it as well?

Luni Libes: Oh sure. So we're investors. We were for profiteers. We like market rate returns.

Hall Martin: What exactly is it?

Luni Libes: So the _____ we look at, when we look at companies is team impact and odds of success. That's how we summarize it. And so just like anyone else's team first, then we look at the scale of the impact in terms of Fledge, we don't care which of those SDGs you're working on, as long as it's measurable and one of them, at least one of them. And then odds of success are all their normal criteria to look at in a business.

[05:34] Our next guest is Vishal Arora, Managing Partner at VDOSH. VDOSH is a venture capital firm that closely works with a network of accredited investors and vetted entrepreneurs. VDOSH provides investors the opportunity to invest in promising new startup companies alongside major players in the industry. Vishal, thank you for joining us.

Hall Martin: And so, what is your participation in impact investing so far?

Vishal Arora: So our participation is mainly, we have not actively kind of looked into the social _____ we have looked into some of the social causes, but we have not actively looked into the environment and other side, because our thesis was different. Our thesis for the fund is to use often emerging technologies or multiple use cases for that to have an impact on a user economy. And when we talk about a user economy or experience economy, what it means is that how these technologies can leverage to make the life easier, whether it's the life of a consumer, whether it's life of a healthcare provider, whether it's life of a basically healthcare consumer like a patient and things like that. So we are looking for a technology empowered impact area, which makes either a service provider or consumer or basically a large institution

and their employees, their life much easier in terms of impact. So that's what we generally look for.

[07:05] Our next guest is Chelsea Burns, Principal at Escaladora Ventures. Escaladora Ventures provides water and energy technology consultant services. Throughout Chelsea's career she has bounced back and forth between consulting and operating startups. She currently focuses her work as a climatetech angel investor and startup advisor. Chelsea, thank you for joining us again.

Hall Martin: And so, what is your participation in impact investing so far?

Chelsea Burns: I've taken a couple of different angles here. First and foremost, I invest in climate tech just because that's where I work professionally. That's what I studied, I got my master's in, so I really understand the landscape. But I also just do some general gender lens investing, most of that has been through my angel network, which is Pipeline Angels, which is just really trying to get more access to capital to diverse founders, women, non-binary femmes, and just more women of color as well.

Hall Martin: Great. And so, what do you look forward to invest, what's your criteria?

[00:08:25] Chelsea Burns: I think founders that traditionally have not had access to capital is an important metric for me. I think in the climate tech space, the angle that really excites me is this intersection of fintech and climate tech. there's a lot of opportunity for retail investors now to gain access to markets that were traditionally reserved for more institutional level investors, be that renewable energy projects, energy efficiency projects, different projects, debt or equity, that actually have really nice solid returns in this low interest rate environment.

[08:53] Our final guest is Richard Samuelson, Chief Investment Officer at SWAN Venture Group. SWAN Venture Group is forming a family of funds for investing in early stage Seed and Series A rounds. They are a regional fund targeting their investments in the Pacific Northwest to include the US states of Washington, Idaho, Montana, Alaska, Utah, and the province of British Columbia, Canada. Richard, thank you for joining us.

Hall Martin: And so, what is your participation in impact investing so far?

Richard Samuelson: Well, we've invested in one sustainability company already in our high net worth fund. It's called Moment Energy. It's a Canadian company as it happens. And they are developing a technology that recycles EV batteries, and actually improves the performance of those batteries. So recycling is obviously a key element of sustainability, and they have attacked, what's going to be a burgeoning market, in our view. So that's our first impact investment, as you will. Our fund just closed in July, and we made three investments. So one of them is full on impact investment.

Hall Martin: What criteria do you look forward to make an investment here?

Richard Samuelson: We're looking for disruptive technologies, something that can make a step change, and addresses a specific climate related, sustainability related problem. And it oftentimes in a market that is under-addressed, in the case of Moment Energy, we don't run into a lot of companies that address the recycling of batteries problem for EV. And so, we seized upon that opportunity very, very quickly. We will continue to look for markets, growing markets like that, where a new technology can be very effectively implemented, and needs to be implemented quickly in order to achieve our shared sustainability goals.

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