

The Venture Capitalist

Nina Achadjian's mission to invest in global entrepreneurs

IN THE REALM of technology, innovation is happening at an unprecedented level. Transforming a novel idea into a successful business, however, requires much more than just a creative product or design alone. By some estimates, as many as nine out of ten tech startups end in failure. As entrepreneurs can attest, success requires product-market fit, the ability to recruit a great team and access to capital from investors who are willing to take the risk.

That's where venture capitalists like Nina Achadjian enter the picture. Based in San Francisco in the heart of Silicon Valley, Achadjian works as a Principal at Index Ventures, a leading international venture capital firm that manages \$1.65 billion dollars. Nina is responsible for finding compelling investment opportunities in startups as well as doing the

diligence to form conviction in leading an investment. Beyond a financial investment, Nina's responsibilities also include helping startups scale after they receive funding.

"Being at a venture capital firm that has invested in Dropbox, Slack, Sonos and Robinhood gives me a unique perspective. We get to interact with entrepreneurs who change the world," she says. "It's both humbling and inspiring."

At Index Ventures, Achadjian focuses on early and growth businesses that provide Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) solutions to replace pen and paper workflows, as well as Digital Health innovations that democratize access to healthcare. It is a position with a global reach as Index Ventures invests in both U.S. and Europe-based companies. This opportunity particularly appeals and excites Nina who

believes the next great technological innovation doesn't have to happen in Silicon Valley.

"Technology is the one industry in which borders don't matter. Using software, one can build products to reach consumers and customers across the world. You can build a multi-billion dollar business from almost anywhere in the world."

Achadjian's passion for venture capital began while working as a Financial Planning and Analysis lead for Google's AdSense team, covering a multi-billion dollar book of business including tech giants Amazon and eBay. She remembers constantly being approached by tech founders from Armenia seeking expertise from Silicon Valley to help start their own technology ventures back home.

"It's extremely difficult for entrepreneurs to break into the Silicon Valley scene if they are not based here. Even if they are, it's insanely competitive."

Despite not having any experience in venture capital at the time, Achadjian had the vision to build a bridge between Armenian entrepreneurs and Silicon Valley. This led her to launch HIVE Ventures, the first venture capital fund dedicated to investing in and providing mentorship to Armenian entrepreneurs globally. Over the past three years, HIVE Ventures, backed by the Hirair and Anna Hovnanian Foundation, has invested in approximately 30 Armenian-led technology companies in Armenia and in the United States. Achadjian is particularly proud of HIVE Ventures's work in bringing senior leadership from the world's top technology companies, including Slack, Amazon, Pinterest and Google, together with investors from the renowned venture capital firms Kleiner Perkins and Y Combinator, to Armenia this past October.

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Achadjian inside the office of Index Ventures in San Francisco.

“HIVE Ventures provides entrepreneurs in Armenia a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to learn from the best of the best in Silicon Valley.”

Growing up Armenian, Achadjian says she always felt a strong sense of pride and also of responsibility. Her parents, immigrants from Iraq, instilled in Nina at a young age the importance of education and the notion that she can learn and do anything she set her mind to do.

That willingness to take smart risks when the odds are seemingly stacked against you has defined every step of Achadjian’s professional career. It was what inspired her, after graduating from Harvard University, to accept a Rockefeller Fellowship in Turkey to discover her family’s roots while working in a bakery in Istanbul. She then pursued a position as a high-yield bond trader on the trading floor at Citigroup’s New York and London offices despite not having any background in finance. Following that, she made the transition to a highly-coveted job at Google not having any operational experience in technology. Most recently she launched the venture capital firm for Armenian start-ups. “I love being the underdog,” she admits.

Like her father, an engineer with two advanced degrees who built his own business, Achadjian has an entrepreneurial spirit. She tries to always be aware of her strengths and weaknesses, and what skills she needs to be successful. At the same time Achadjian says she drew inspiration and support from within the global Armenian community, including the strong connections she developed as an intern with AGBU’s New York Summer Internship Program (NYSIP). “It was the first time I met Armenians that were outside of the Bay Area,” she remembers. “It was incredible to see the international network of Armenians that were all bonded together over this common experience which offered just the right balance of social events and professional responsibilities.”

More than a decade later, those connections are still reaching out to her after hearing about her successful exploits in the world of venture capitalism. Always in search of the next investment opportunity, including among more than 700 technology startups she has identified in Armenia alone, Achadjian promises she is only getting started. 🌐