

Good investors understand the nature of the technology, a profile of APEX Ventures

In the ever-growing investment landscape, funds are multiplying and diversifying, and for startups there is more to raising investment than the money and the media moment. With #QVCS Maddyness profiles funds to give founders and entrepreneurs the information they need to choose the right investor. Today, we interview Dr. Diana Röttger, Principal, APEX Ventures.

Temps de lecture : minute

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I had some sort of a coup de foudre when I attended my first lecture of medical computer science at a university open day. I was fascinated by what technology can do for medicine and knew I wanted to be a part of it, for the long run.

I studied medical computer science in Germany, followed by a PhD in which I focused on the brain. I wrote software that analysed images of the brain to support neuroscientists and neurosurgeons to understand the brain better and plan the removal of brain tumours.

After an invited research stay at Harvard Medical School, where I spent time at the Brigham and Women's hospital in Boston, I understood that I wanted to bring a commercially viable product to patients. I wanted to learn how to develop a product, make customers happy, bring it to the market and make money.

I joined a small image analysis startup, where I stayed for eight years and

built the neuro-oncology branch from scratch. I loved working with an interdisciplinary team consisting of radiologists, software developers, oncologists and drug developers.

Which industries are you working in?

APEX Ventures is a deep-tech focused venture capital firm, and I'm part of the APEX Medical Fund team with a focus on radiology, pathology, neurology and surgery. Although rather than focusing on certain industries only, we look for enabling technologies that can be implemented in various verticals.

What do you look for in a founder?

Rather than founder, I would say 'founding team', as it's often the combination that makes not only the idea but more importantly the execution a success.

As we are looking at game-changing novel technologies, they firstly need to have a deep understanding of the uniqueness of their tech, they really need to know their space and love to engage in questions and discussions around their tech, and they need to be able to sell the idea well.

Secondly, something inside them needs to create a drive, an urge and vision for their idea to become very big. Thirdly, they need to put the company first. Ideally, they are self-aware with low ego, for example if they are not the best suited CEO in three years' time, how do they react?

Can you talk about your current portfolio?

We have an exciting portfolio at APEX Medical including artificial intelligence (AI) drug discovery over medical image processing and speech biomarkers and a next generation magnetic resonance imaging

(MRI) scanner.

I am particularly excited to be on the board of *Robeaute* - a surgical micro robotics startup based in Paris. The founders are extremely driven and smart with ambitions of revolutionising diagnosis and treatments of brain diseases. I feel very honoured to be part of this journey as it feels like a natural continuation of my passion for the brain.

What does the future look like?

As I became a first-time mum last year and experienced some of the challenges that are accompanied with having a baby first hand, I am glad to see that more tech for female health will enter the market in all areas from fertility, pregnancy, motherhood to menopause as well as new drugs for endometriosis and ovarian cancer.

I am also excited to see novel biomarkers for diagnosis and to enhance treatment outcomes for patients - for example to identify which patients benefit from a therapy. In some areas, such as immuno-oncology or pancreatic cancer, it is still challenging to understand in which patients the drugs actually work. This is wasting a patient's time and money.

What makes APEX Ventures different?

I joined APEX due to the medical deep-tech focus, which is a great fit with my passion and expertise, but it's also the hands-on and value-add nature of APEX that gives portfolio companies a unique advantage. We share our experience, knowledge and networks to support founders in building enduring technology companies.

We have an exceptionally medically focused background in our team with Gordon, our lead partner, being a board-certified radiologist. Having worked in a startup myself, I also know how important it is that investors

understand the nature of the technology and speak the same language. It forms a basis of mutual understanding that is difficult to replicate.

What one piece of advice would you give founders?

Take hiring and retaining talent seriously, it can be very expensive and frustrating if not. Think beyond just recruiting another employee and seek out team members who can relate to your vision and goals. Prioritise the people that you need to keep growing and scale.

Article by Dr. Diana Röttger