

# Deep and intimate involvement in all investments, a profile of Parabellum Investments

*With #QVCS, Maddyness profiles different funds to give founders and entrepreneurs the information they need to choose the right investor. Today we interview Rami Cassis, CEO and founder of Parabellum Investments.*

Temps de lecture : minute

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I've always said an overnight success is ten years in the making. In my case it's closer to 25 years, and I'm not sure I'm a success yet!

I didn't follow the typical career pathway to becoming a growth investor. I spent years working across a range of different sectors and continents, working my way up operational and management roles before eventually holding several executive positions at large corporations, including Operations Director, Chairman, COO, and CEO.

My first private equity deal was a modest 15-person business in Doncaster, and I've since worked with companies across technology, life sciences, mining, energy, and luxury goods.

I founded my family office and private equity firm, *Parabellum Investments*, in 2012. Ten years down the track, I still stick to the same core approach as I did on day one when taking on new investments and challenges - I'm a growth investor that takes a 'hands-on' approach to drive organic growth in my companies.

## Which industries are you working in?

I currently have investments across a range of sectors, including financial services, enterprise software, pharmaceuticals, and most recently, fashion.

I acquired the luxury fashion e-tailer Hervia earlier this year, which was a pivotal moment for me personally. I've always had a deep personal interest in fashion, and this passion has only grown throughout my career. Every business meeting I walk into, no matter where in the world it is, I see the same greyed-out corporate clothing. What we wear offers such a great opportunity to express ourselves and showcase our personality – so why does everyone wear the same outfit when meeting new business partners?

But personal interests aside, I'm really enjoying the challenge of leveraging my experience driving organic growth in companies and applying it in the fashion and luxury sector.

## What do you look for in a founder?

I work side-by-side with founders and CEOs in all of my companies, and that relationship must be rooted in a shared vision for the business.

The first thing I look for are strong interpersonal skills, particularly self-awareness. You can only inspire others if you know how to improve yourself. Empathy and excellent communication are also crucial for those in leadership roles. One of the biggest pitfalls I see at management level is a lack of clarity in vision and the use of imprecise language. Every part of a company must work in the same direction towards the same, definitive goals – and this all starts with clear communication.

But interpersonal skills must be matched with discipline and resilience.

You need to make a solid plan and stick to it, no matter the headwinds.

## Can you talk about your current portfolio?

Traditionally, I've had a very B2B and tech-based portfolio. My current portfolio includes several digital-first companies such as an automation firm, Parseq; serialisation specialist, Advanco; and digital transformation firm, ieDigital.

Entering the fashion and luxury sector by acquiring Hervia this year marked a big change in direction for me, and I'm absolutely loving the challenge of leading a fashion retailer. It's such a unique and exciting space, and I plan to diversify heavily into the luxury market over the next 12 months. I'm particularly attracted to the strong growth potential of Britain's fashion sector.

Hervia is only the start - so watch this space!

## How has COVID-19 changed the way you operate?

If there's one thing I've learned in business - it's to expect the unexpected and be prepared to adapt to completely new challenges. And while the pandemic was incredibly tough for many people and businesses, it also unlocked new and better ways of doing things, particularly from an operational perspective. For example, it helped accelerate the transition to digital-first workplaces and forced innovation in the supply chain.

The most recent economic challenges and geopolitical uncertainty have been stark reminders that the concept of 'business as usual' is far more fragile than many had previously thought. But I've always taken the long view in business and stuck to long-term growth strategies - and that's an approach I'm doubling down on.

# What does the future look like?

One trend I'm seeing more evidence of is people are spending more and more money on health, wellness, and quality of life.

This will also unlock growth opportunities across a range of sectors, from pharmaceuticals and life sciences companies pioneering new skincare products, to tech startups offering tailored fitness regimes.

This also extends into the fashion and luxury sector, which is why we have such exciting growth plans for Hervia. I plan on tripling the size of Hervia by striking new partnerships with emerging designers in the UK, France, and Italy, exploring new segments such as childrenswear, and strengthening Hervia's customer experience by investing in the brand's online platform.

There's so much talent and promise in British fashion, and I firmly believe that our fashion industry should be held in the same regard as the traditional fashion centres in mainland Europe, such as France and Italy. We must give young and emerging designers the resources and opportunities they need to commercialise their amazing creativity, and fashion brands and retailers play a crucial role in this.

# What makes Parabellum Investments different?

Parabellum Investments is a private equity firm with strong venture capital traits. I think private equity can learn some valuable lessons from venture capital's positive approach to risk and its much healthier relationship with its investments. Venture capitalists look to hold their investments for ten or more years, and I'm also committed to long-term growth for the businesses I invest in.

I've always thought private equity has an image problem and needs to work harder to attract people from different industries, professional backgrounds, and cultures. Leaders from HR, technology, marketing, and creative industries bring a broader range of perspectives and opinions can uncover any weaknesses and opportunities within a company.

I also lead the firm myself and deploy only my own capital, ensuring I maintain a deep and intimate involvement in all my investments. This allows me to provide a more personal touch than traditional private equity firms and leverage my experience across different continents, cultures, and sectors to identify new opportunities.

## What one piece of advice would you give founders?

You should never forget about life outside the business. The best founders I've come across are those who make time for a healthy, positive, everyday life outside the job. Personally, I spend as much time as I can with my nine-year-old daughter. She keeps me mentally young and lets me look at life in a different way. I'm also a semi-professional kickboxer, and this provides a crucial mental and physical break from my day-to-day work.

Rami Cassis is CEO and founder of *Parabellum Investments*.