

Representing the voice of the next generation in the tech & VC ecosystem, a profile of GenZ VCs

With #QVCS, Maddyness profiles different funds to give founders and entrepreneurs the information they need to choose the right investor. Today, we speak to Meagan Loyst, CEO & Founder of GenZ VCs.

Temps de lecture : minute

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Can you tell our readers where and how it all began and talk about where you are today?

I started my first job in venture capital during the pandemic, and was the youngest member of my investment team by a factor of a decade. Naturally, as more and more Gen Z founders & startups targeting Gen Z came through the doors of our fund seeking investment, I became the "voice of the customer" evaluating companies, sitting on boards, and helping our founders reach my generation. I knew there had to be other young investors like me in similar roles, so I started tweeting about Gen Z trends and wanting to connect with other Gen Zers in VC on Twitter. This led to me interviewing 71 other Gen investors all over the world to better understand the trends we were following, and then my viral article coining the term "Gen Z VC" which evolved into the Gen Z VCs community. It quickly became a movement due to our viral growth and mission, growing from 30 friends to over 1,000 Gen Z VCs in a matter of days, landing us a cover story on Business Insider, and soon representing the voice of the next generation in the tech & VC ecosystem.

Since our founding, the Gen Z VCs community has become the largest & fastest growing community for next-gen innovators globally with 27,000+ members from 80 countries. We've launched several initiatives to make the Tech & VC ecosystem more accessible:

- Slack Community: 440,000+ messages & serving as forum for community members to connect
- Marketplace: our marketplace of discounts for founders, curated by founders in the Gen Z VCs community & featuring \$250K+ in savings from 50+ partners... saving Gen Z founders over \$8M to-date on their startup stack to help them get started. We have discounts to Hubspot, Brex, Ramp, Mercury, Slack, Carta, Notion, Loom, and more!
- Job Board: we've facilitated 10K+ applications into Tech/VC jobs for the next generation, including full-time, part-time, and internship opportunities.
- Education: our free VC 101 course has been taken by 1,600+ current and aspiring investors, teaching the fundamentals of venture capital, tips on breaking in, and how to succeed once you get the role.
- Fellowship: launched in Fall 2023, we paired 4 students/recent graduates with VC firms to do a week-long paid fellowship, getting hands-on experience sourcing, diligence, and portfolio work + mentorship from investors.
- Events: we host events in cities all over the world to bring together thousands of next-gen innovators, including our annual Gen Z VCs Future of Chicago Summit in partnership with the City of Chicago — declared “Gen Z VC” day in Chicago each year when we come to town by the Mayor of Chicago! We also hosted events in 2023 in New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, London, Paris, Amsterdam, Berlin, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Barcelona, and Milan. We've also created/hosted the first event led by Gen Z in our industry, the Gen Z VCs Summit for 3,000+ attendees featuring 60+ speakers on 4 stages, which was featured as the cover story on Axios + multiple features in Business Insider.

Fast forward to today, I'm the full-time Founder & CEO of Gen Z VCs, a content creator with 200K+ followers on social media, consultant for Fortune 500 companies supporting on Gen Z innovation and engagement strategies, columnist with *The Times*, and full-time student at Oxford pursuing research on how to help the next generation build wealth through investing (building on the success of Gen Z VCs). I'm building what I like to call a portfolio career, pursuing the things I'm passionate about and having anywhere from 4-6 careers or jobs at once. Expect to see more of this from Gen Z!

What do you look for in an entrepreneur or an investor?

When investing in founders, I look for a few things! Innate curiosity and passion about their industry, depth of expertise & connections in the space (ie: can they bring the best talent onto the team, kickstart their go-to-market with a competitive advantage, etc.), scrappiness (can they do a lot with a little), and creativity. I love getting excited about a category because a founder has convinced me about how big/deep the problem is, and that they're undoubtedly the right person to solve it. So much changes with early stage companies, but you're ultimately investing in the founder's ability to pivot, stay afloat, then soar. So you have to have strong conviction in the person you're backing above all else.

Can the new generation bring a different and innovative approach to entrepreneurship?

I think our generation is redefining the ways companies are being built, with community at the center. One of the biggest changes is seeing more creators become founders, building bootstrapped businesses around their communities instead of seeking venture funding. There are endless ways to monetize your audience and build a real brand/community. One of my

favorite recent examples of community-oriented startups is activewear brand Tala founded by creator Grace Beverley in 2019 as a 22-year old student at Oxford. The brand did £1M sales in 1 hour for their most recent product launch as a seed-stage startup, which is incredibly impressive at any stage! Not only that, 50% of their customers each week are returning customers.

What does the future look like?

AI is changing absolutely everything. Every startup is positioning themselves to have AI at the center, and it's changing the way companies are being built. This summer Gen Z VCs did an events series in Europe, hosting 8 events across 8 countries to unite Gen Z investors and founders across the continent in partnership with local funds. In each city we asked what the "top trend" each person was building in, and naturally in each city, AI was one of the top trends for founders, typically integrated within the vertical they're building in (ie: AI-driven vertical software, AI-driven climate solutions, etc.).

We'll also continue to see more money go into remedying the climate crisis -- more dedicated climate funds, climate entrepreneurs, and the smartest people working on one of the world's most pressing and difficult issues.

What makes GenZ VCs different?

Our commitment to our mission, making VC more accessible and transparent for the next generation. Our community is inclusive and serves as a place for everyone to meet their first friends/mentors in the industry, but also to learn and have access to resources to get started. We quantify our impact with each initiative we launch, and are consistently advocating for the importance of diverse perspectives and investing in the future of our industry. We're built by Gen Z, for Gen Z --

and that authenticity comes through in every event we host, initiative we launch, and person we support on their journey to become a high performing VC or founder.

What one piece of advice would you give founders and investors?

Don't let anyone tell you you're not qualified because of your age. I'm a big believer that age is just a number, and that lived experience can in many cases be just as valuable as the years of experience you have under your belt.

Is there anyone who inspires you?

Of course! I'm consistently in awe of women who create space for other women in our industry. I've been reading content from female fund managers like *Kirsten Green (Forerunner Ventures)* and *Mary Meeker (BOND)* for years, and love how they help people understand the lens of venture capital and investing through thoughtful writing and content. This inspired me to want to do the same, writing about the way I see the world and what our future could look like, with a Gen Z lens. It helped me discover my love for all things writing and content, paving the path for me to start Gen Z VCs and also grow as a content creator, becoming a voice for change in our industry on behalf of my generation.

Meagan Loyst is the Founder & CEO of *Gen Z VCs*