

Meet Vektor AI, helping mentees find great mentors to grow in their career

As part of our quick fire questions series – or QFQs – we spoke to Anna Buldakova, CEO and cofounder of Vektor AI about the importance of mentorship, diverse perspectives and experimentation, and how to keep a shared collective vision.

I am a journalist by education but 8 years ago I decided to transition into tech and became a product manager. It was a difficult decision and an even more difficult transition for me: my first PM job was on a Machine Learning product, and I knew nothing about product development, not to mention the machine learning itself. Luckily, I was able to find a mentor in my community who believed in me and helped me survive this period.

I feel like there are more and more people like me in the world now – people looking to make a change across industries or occupations or companies and needing some support. As a mentor myself, I've seen the demand grow so much since my first mentoring days. Younger generations don't want to join one company for 20 years and then retire – they want their careers to be a part of their identity, and that's why demand for mentorship is growing at such a fast rate. We launched [Vektor](#) to help people on this journey.

Tell me about the business – what it is, what it aims to achieve, who you work with, how you reach customers and so on?

We are like Airbnb for mentorship: we want to help mentees find great mentors to grow in their career. Our current focus is mentees who are mid level or senior professionals working in tech startups: we are best positioned to support them in developing new skills, adjusting to a new culture or growing to the next level with advice of a more senior expert. Mentees can set their career goals, explore recommended mentors and book a session with the ones that they liked.

Mentors can set up their availability and create their public page with their bio, links to social media and topics they are interested in discussing with mentees. We provide them with guidance, educational materials and templates as well as community support to make sure that they can get started even if they didn't have mentorship experience before.

Both our mentees and mentors come from various countries and companies such as Google, Meta, Canva, Miro, Intercom, various startups, and so on. We believe that the most important parameter for mentorship success is relevance of experience: essentially finding a mentor who was once in their mentee's shoes. When we match people, we are looking not just at the mentee's goal but also the mentor's industry, sector, stage of the company, and so on.

How has the business evolved since its launch?

It's hard to pinpoint specific moments because we're evolving and shipping new features all the time! We speak to mentors and mentees almost every day trying to learn about their pain points, habits, and success stories. Feedback from our community underpins every feature we design and ship.

On a more tangible note, we took part in the Applied AI program by Tech Nation, were selected as one of the five early stage startups to present our product at Slush and grew the team to 10 senior professionals.

Tell us about the working culture at Vektor

We've hired people who bring an entrepreneurial mindset and a diverse perspective to keep the product fresh. From day one, I've sought to give space for people to experiment and have fun while keeping a shared collective vision in mind.

But most importantly, we are very lucky to have team members who are passionate about changing the future of work and life-long education – people who are mentors and mentees themselves. It's crucial to have missionaries over mercenaries on the team.

How are you funded?

We raised a *pre-seed round of \$2.5M* led by leading early-stage European VC firms *Cherry Ventures* and *Mosaic Ventures*, with further investment from a supergroup of angel investors including Bradley Horowitz (Google), Deb Liu (Ancestry), Ujjwal Singh (Meta), Paul Forster (Indeed), Phil Chambers (Peakon), and many more.

What has been your biggest challenge so far and how have you overcome this?

We're reinventing the whole concept of mentorship, so we need to spend more time explaining our vision and defining the terms. Our mentors are our greatest ambassadors, and we're using every tool at our disposal such as social media and our new *blog* to get our message out there. This journey is just starting.

How does Vektor answer an unmet need?

Right now there are millions of job vacancies, millions of people who need upskilling or reskilling, and every day promises new technology that changes the landscape even further. There is a clear need for accessible professional advice tailored to your situation.

The answer we propose is a strong, diverse mentor community as well as AI to match mentees to the person most capable of solving their problems. And we

want mentees to start getting value from their first session. That's why the matching and the focus on action-oriented conversations is so important to us.

What's in store for the future?

We are currently working on one of our biggest releases yet which is going to beta in a couple of weeks. Follow us on [LinkedIn](#) to stay tuned and not to miss the announcement ☐

What one piece of advice would you give other founders or future founders?

Be ready to grow 1000x! Being a founder is such an accelerated growth experience where you are constantly having impostor syndrome and have to learn a million new things every day. Your own limitations, both professional and psychological, will become limitations of your company so you need to be able to recognise them and expand them very quickly. It might be very painful but for me it was also the most exciting and rewarding experience of my life.

I would also recommend a couple of resources:

[The Great CEO within](#)

[Psychology of entrepreneurship](#)

[Startup school from Y Combinator.](#)

And finally, a more personal question! What's your daily routine and the rules you're living by at the moment?

Building a company is a marathon, not a sprint. That's why it's important to remember that you are in it for the long run and prioritise your health and mental well-being.

I set my personal yearly/ monthly/ weekly/ daily goals. I plan my week and my day to make sure I'm doing the most important things for my company. I start my day by asking myself this question: "Which one thing should I accomplish to feel really proud at the end of the day?".

I invest in building my board of advisors and mentors to rely on in difficult situations.

I have work hours and try to have at least one day a week without doing any work.

I have blocks of “thinking time” to make sure I balance urgent executional things with high quality decision making.

I try to do sports or at least walks every day and sleep at least 8 hours a day.

At the end of the day, I do a quick retrospective and recognise things that made me happy throughout the day: it can be about achieving my goals but also about some small moments like receiving a positive comment from our users or being able to enjoy a beautiful sunset. Gratitude is one of the most important practices for your resilience, especially if you are on a startup rocket ship ☐

Anna Buldakova is CEO and cofounder of [Vektor AI](#).

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