

Corporate venture capital investing globally in Impact Scaling entrepreneurs, a profile of TDK Ventures

With #QVCS, Maddyness profiles different funds to give founders and entrepreneurs the information they need to choose the right investor. Today, we speak to David Delfassy, Investment Director at TDK Ventures.

Temps de lecture : minute

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I dreamed of building airplanes from an early age, so I decided to study aerospace engineering at Duke University. After graduating, I joined Airbus as a flight and ground test engineer and spent much time inside test aircraft and sophisticated engineering simulators.

Being around airplanes every day was fascinating and intrigued me to learn more about the wider business and industry. This is why I joined McKinsey in 2014. While at McKinsey, I was a strategy consultant and advised global company leaders in corporate strategy and management. Itching to drive the execution of my projects and pursue a newfound interest in investing, thanks to a consulting engagement with one of McKinsey's private equity clients, I jumped into early-stage investing. Today, my primary focus is investing in the decarbonization and energy transition sectors. In my new role as Investment Director at *TDK Ventures*, I lead the deployment of the firm's new Fund EX1, which is focused on electrification and decarbonization in North America and Europe.

Which industries are you working in?

TDK Ventures' Fund EX1 focuses on electrification, energy generation, and decarbonization. We are actively involved in sectors such as renewable energy generation, energy storage, sustainable fuels and chemicals, carbon capture and utilisation, advanced battery technologies, critical metals, and grid resiliency.

What do you look for in a founder?

First and foremost, we seek to partner with founders who are mission-driven, possess a clear vision, and are unwavering in their commitment to achieving it with resilience and determination.

We also value those who approach challenges from a first-principles perspective, utilising fundamental concepts to innovate and solve problems effectively. Excellent communication and inspirational leadership are imperative, as they enable founders to articulate their vision, inspire their team, secure financing, and effectively engage with partners.

Finally, humility, honesty, and open-mindedness are qualities we hold in high regard. These qualities foster a culture of trust and continuous improvement.

Can you talk about your current portfolio?

TDK Ventures actively invests in both digital transformation and energy transformation technologies. Examples on the energy transformation side include:

- Ascend Elements: enabling the direct recycling of spent batteries into new battery materials.

- AM Batteries: developing a lithium-ion dry battery electrode coating technology with significant cost and energy savings vs conventional wet coating.
- Peak Energy: developed a sodium-ion battery for grid-scale long-duration energy storage.
- Verdagy: commercialising electrolyzer technologies used to produce green hydrogen.
- Type One Energy: developing a Stellarator nuclear fusion reactor.
- INERATEC: scaling reactor technology used to produce sustainable aviation fuels.

What does the future look like? New trends/technologies, changes in the global/local economic landscape?

I am looking forward to a future where we shift from fossil fuel-based processes to electric ones powered by low-carbon renewable energy. There will be new methods for generating baseload clean electricity, such as nuclear fusion and high-temperature geothermal, that will be commercially viable and deployed at scale. Additionally, there will be new types of conducting materials, such as carbon nanotubes, to supplement the limited availability of copper.

Breakthrough materials will enable the efficient transmission of renewable electricity across long distances from regions with an abundance of solar and wind energy. Furthermore, new technologies will be used to capture greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide, directly from the atmosphere in a cost-effective and widespread manner. This captured carbon dioxide will be stored permanently and recycled into sustainable fuels alongside excess biomass for use in aviation, shipping, and heavy-duty vehicles where electrification is challenging.

What makes TDK Ventures different?

TDK Ventures is the corporate venture arm of TDK, the Japanese conglomerate with businesses across electrical components, power supplies, energy storage, sensor technologies, and more. In addition to our Investment Team, TDK Ventures has an Engagement Team dedicated to supporting entrepreneurs and their companies. This team creates partnerships with TDK's various business groups worldwide, accelerating the development of technologies and engagements with customers, suppliers, and other partners, regardless of whether they are part of our portfolio or not. TDK Ventures also has a Scaling Team who support entrepreneurs with functions such as business development, finance, legal, marketing, and communications. One of TDK Ventures' core values is "Entrepreneurs First," which emphasises that entrepreneurs are at the core of everything we do. You can read about the other values in our CODE of Conduct in TDK Ventures' introductory presentation [here](#).

What one piece of advice would you give founders?

Maintain perspective throughout the long journey of building a company. When challenges arise, remember that there is ample time to improve. Conversely, stay humble and avoid complacency when things are going well, as the business environment can change rapidly.

David Delfassy is Investment Director at [TDK Ventures](#).



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