Twitter Thread by Erik Torenberg



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1/ Someone emailed me asking how to break into VC, so I wanted to answer on Twitter where others could see and contribute to the conversation.

2/ “Being a VC” can mean a lot of different things, so it’s worth asking:

What actual activities do you want to do?

- Deep market analysis?
- Be in the flow of information and people?
- Make deals?
- Work closely w/ founders over time (e.g take board seats?)
- Manage capital?

3/ It’s worth specifying what type of VC you might like to become — as there are different archetypes. E.g.

- Benchmark (Lead series A/B - couple investments a year)
- First Round (Lead seed rounds, partner w/ a few companies a year)
- SV Angel (Make lots of seed investments)

4/ Continued:

Expa - Incubate companies

YC / Village Global - Build a platform to help entrepreneurs at scale

Do you want to join a firm or start one? There’s a lot to consider.

Different paths will require different skillsets & sets of experiences.

5/ Since the person who wrote the email is a young person trying to break into VC by joining a firm (and who doesn’t want to start a company), I’ll tailor this tweet storm to that goal. There’s some overlap.

6/ If you are looking to join a VC firm, the question the firm needs to be able to answer is:

“Is this person going to help me to invest in companies that I otherwise would not have invested in without him/her?”

How do you do this?

7/ Basically you want to see yourself as having an asset or “portfolio” of assets that make you uniquely valuable—not only next to thousands of other smart, connected, well-branded ppl trying to break into VC—but also to other *existing* angels/VCs.

Why will you see great deals?

8/ Maybe because you own a key network. Examples:

- You worked at Stripe or Palantir and run their alumni group (Company)

- You went to MIT and ran their on campus fund (College)

- You ran Waterloo’s startup community and you know all the great projects (Location)

9/ More examples of key networks:

- You host the signature AR/VR conference (Vertical network)

- You run a community like "Interact"—top technologists under 25 (Horizontal network)

- You’re the best writer in, say, crypto—or more specifically, privacy coins (Legible expertise)

10/ Or you have some unfair advantage:

- You worked at Product Hunt or in journalism (can help startups with distribution/PR)

- You host "The 20 min VC" (can help startups raise money)

- You run a podcast called "The 20 min Blockchain Engineer" (can help startups recruit)

11/ The important thing is to do the work upfront.

Here are other things you can do to add value to VC firms:

1. Send them good deals
2. Send their companies customers or talent
3. Invite partners on your podcast or to your event (or any of the assets mentioned above)

12/ These things, of course, are hard.

How do you get access to customers in the first place? Host a VP of Sales Event once a quarter, or an event for another core buying audience.

Talent? Start a job board site for engineers, or a regular happy hour for top designers.

13/ Deal flow? Have some asset that makes founders come to you — an event series, a valuable network, or a domain expertise — and then send deals to others. The more you send good deals the more you'll receive.

14/ Quoth Rob Go: " it's much less about "how" to find a VC job but more about "being" the kind of person who can get a VC job."

15/ Getting a job in venture capital is partly less about "who you know" and more about "who you've helped."

Start creating a personal portfolio of projects that allow you to help others, especially around getting into deals, and you may break into VC.

Add any other thoughts.