INNOVATION AND GROWING A TECH BUSINESS: Why Silicon Valley continues to be special, and what we look for in startups

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Silicon Valley continues to be hugely influential for tech entrepreneurs and investors, despite growing startup ecosystems in many places and a reasonably “flat world” for talent, capital, data, and technology, and despite never-ending reports of its impending demise. In the meantime, large enterprises do not have a good track record of turning research and innovation investments into anything other than marketing impact, and most are now relying on venture funds for the early and growth stages of new business or category creation. I discuss my perspectives on innovation talk vs reality; why Silicon Valley is different from lots of other places with money, startups, and smart people; and what we look for in startups and investment opportunities.

Jaap Suermondt is a Silicon Valley investor, advisor, and operational executive with a track record of delivering and productizing applied innovation, and deep industry, go-to-market, and technical expertise. He is Executive in Residence at Plug and Play Technology Center in Sunnyvale, California (a large startup incubator). He is also Managing Director for Industry and Integration at the Stanford University School of Medicine, focusing on Population Health Sciences.

Jaap’s enterprise operational/executive and R&D career spans machine learning, data management and analytics, security analytics, IOT, healthcare, data de-duplication, ad tech / personalization, and operational efficiency. Previously, he was VP of Labs for HPE Software (a $3B+ SW business, now part of Micro Focus), and Lab Director at HP Labs, where he led software and analytics research for memory-driven computing (including successful open-source projects), data science and machine learning, healthcare, business optimization / management science, and services research, and ran groups in the US, Israel, India, Russia, and Mexico.

Jaap has a BS, MS, and PhD from Stanford University, is an inventor on over 40 granted patents, and is participating faculty in Stanford’s Clinical Informatics Fellowship Program and an elected Fellow of the American College of Medical Informatics.

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