The Interviewees and their Accelerators

Below, I provide brief descriptions of the people I interviewed and the accelerators they lead.

Saeed Amidi, founder and CEO of Plug and Play, a large accelerator housing nearly 400 startups, with 22 locations worldwide. Plug and Play has accelerated over 2,000 startups, which have raised an additional $5 billion. It invests anywhere from $25,000 up to $500,000 in its startups. Offers different industry-specific, three-month accelerator programs (in brand and retail, financial technology, food, health, insurance, Internet of Things, mobility, new materials, logistics, travel and hospitality). Plug and Play may take equity in its startups.

Sunil Bhargava, founder and managing partner of Tandem, a seed fund. Small accelerator for hardware and software startups. Its focus is on mobile. Investing both sweat and financial capital. The current fund, Tandem 3, is $100 million in size. Tandem offers a six-month program in which it works hands-on with portfolio companies to find product-market fit. Investments in early-stage seed deals up to $500,000 and later-stage investments up to $2 million; it may take about 10% equity in its startups. Small batches: two to six teams. It currently has investments in over 30 companies.

Gary Coover, head of global operations at Samsung NEXT Start, a corporate accelerator. It invests in seed-stage startups and entrepreneurs-in-residence who it supports in co-located spaces with funding, expertise, mentoring, and an alumni community. Its focus is on software startups (both consumer and enterprise-oriented) in frontier technology such as AR/VR, IoT, mobility, data and analytics, machine learning and AI, mobile health, payments, and smart cities.

Danielle D'Agostaro, partner and COO at Alchemist Accelerator, a venture-backed general accelerator focusing on growing seed-stage enterprise startups. Alchemist seeds about 40 startups per year with an average cash investment of $36,000. Co-working space is available. Strong emphasis on technical founding teams. The length of the accelerator program is six months, and it accepts a maximum of 17 teams in three batches per year. Its program consists of mentoring, coaching, and group activities. The average equity required is around 5%.
Doug Davenport, founder and former CEO of Prospect Silicon Valley, a non-profit urban-tech innovation hub for next-generation smart and sustainable cities. Its focus is on transportation, energy, and the built environment. Prospect works with industry and government. It helps startups to demonstrate and commercialize their products and scale their companies. It has a 23,000 square-foot Technology Demonstration Center, over 25 corporate sponsors, and over $90 million funding and financing. It takes no equity in its startups.

Cyril Ebersweiler, founder and managing director of HAX, an investment company that accelerates hardware startups – both consumer hardware and B2B. Its focus is on lifestyle, health, robotics, Internet of Things, and manufacturing. Provides seed funding, mentorship, office and lab space. Selected teams spend 15 weeks of the four-month program in Shenzhen, China – the ‘Silicon Valley of hardware’ – to finalize their prototype. HAX accepts two classes per year and 15 teams per class. Equity is 9% for $100,000.

Marlon Evans, CEO of GSVlabs, a large 72,000 square-foot campus and co-working space that provides a community for startups and established companies who wish to accelerate their vision. Its focus is on education technology (EdTech), sustainability, big data, and mobility. It is backed by GSV Capital. GSVlabs offers virtual and onsite programs, innovation labs, mentorship, and events. It currently houses about 170 startups. Startups pay a monthly desk fee. GSVlabs does not make direct investments, but it does take equity in startups participating in its quarterly accelerator.

Tom Ferguson and Nimesh Modak are respectively vice president of programming and director of Imagine H2O, a non-profit, grant-funded accelerator aiming to bring new solutions to global water challenges to the marketplace. It offers a virtual program on turning water challenges into business opportunities, including mentorship and access to customers and investors. It also organizes a boot camp. Imagine H2O has supported over 550 startups in 30 countries. It has an annual ten-month program of about 10-12 startups in which no costs are involved. It takes no equity in its startups.

Ian Foraker, executive director of Cleantech Open, a large, non-profit accelerator of early-stage clean technology companies. Its mission is to find, fund, and foster entrepreneurs with ideas to solve our greatest environmental and energy challenges. It has a volunteer community that it relies on. Cleantech Open works with about 150 startups per year (across the U.S.). Awarded over $6 million; over 1,000 participating startups raised more than $1.1 billion. Cleantech Open is funded through sponsors, fees, and memberships. It offers mentoring, webinars, boot camps, events, a prize
competition, and capital raising. It works on the basis of a participation fee. No office space is provided and it does not take equity in its startups.

Brian Hoffman, vice president of revenue and director of legal affairs at StartX, an educational, non-profit accelerator for Stanford University startup founders, from students to professors and alumni. StartX is industry and stage agnostic. Its programs are based on access to Stanford community, mentors, education, and resources. Offers one-to-one mentorship, drop-in office space, legal advice, and three ten-week sessions per year. It is backed by an uncapped StartX-Stanford Fund. StartX deployed over $90 million in 185 StartX companies. It boasts over 350 alumni companies, which have raised a total of over $1.9 billion. It offers a special medical program. StartX does not charge fees, and it does not take equity in its startups.

Ari Horie, founder and CEO at Women’s Startup Lab, which aims to catalyze and empower women-run startups. Year-long program, of which two weeks is a residential program and six months is via remote coaching. It is highly selective and will take only a maximum of nine female founders. Its programs consist of workshops, coaching, network expansion, advising, leadership skills, assessments, and access to investors. Unique features are its high-impact engagement and interaction and its personal approach. It charges a $10,000 tuition fee.

Emily Kirsch, co-founder and CEO of Powerhouse, a for-profit but mission-driven incubator and accelerator for solar software startups. Powerhouse Accelerator offers a six-month program, two batches per year, eight startups in total. It has 14,000 square feet in co-working office space. Cold hard investments of $10,000. Startup investment up to $50,000; equity: 5%. One-to-one coaching, free office space, and access to investors and contacts in solar industries. Its workspace currently hosts 20 solar startups; nine solar organizations, and 80 solar entrepreneurs.

Cindy Klein-Marmer, associate director of the Butler Venture Accelerator Program of Babson College; branch in San Francisco. The program is for both students and alumni, and startups are aided in everything from ideation via business model, team recruiting, minimal viable product, and marketing to business launch and growth. Its resources include faculty advisors, outside mentors, work space, seed funding, legal advice, workshops, events, and peer groups. Offers a summer venture program and organizes a rocket pitch and a prize competition. Cross-campus collaboration. 365 entrepreneurs participated in 2015-2016.

Naomi Kokubo, co-founder and COO of Founders Space, a global, for-profit accelerator focused on educating and training seed startups as well as early-stage startups. It provides an online incubation program, innovation
workshops, co-working space, startup pitch events, a two-week intensive startup accelerator program, a three-month online program as well as access to lawyers, marketers, VCs, serial entrepreneurs. Equity under 5%; startups may opt to pay a fee. Founders Space has a branch in Shanghai.

Duncan Logan, founder and CEO of RocketSpace, a large, co-working campus to help grow tech startups. It currently has 200 startups on its campus and has hosted more than 800 startups since 2011. RocketSpace offers 24/7 turnkey office solutions (private office, dedicated desk, drop-in desk); community education (workshops, speakers); access to VCs, mentors and advisors; and meeting and event spaces. 16 of its alumni companies are valued at over $1 billion. The average total of funds raised by startup members is $18 million; 1.5 startups secure funding per week. Special Industry Accelerator Program. It takes no equity in its startups.

T.M. Ravi, co-founder and managing director of The Hive, a small, co-creation studio and specialized fund focused on AI, context computing, autonomous agents, ambient intelligence, and blockchain. It targets startups in the enterprise, IoT, security, and financial services markets. Disruption driven by data. The Hive is involved in the intensive co-creation of new ventures and provides seed financing of $1.5 to $2 million. It takes in only four to five startups a year. Its equity policy is that if a company is started, The Hive also becomes a founder.

Prashant Shah, managing director of TiE LaunchPad, an accelerator dedicated to fostering entrepreneurship in the Bay Area with a focus on B2B startups, e.g. cloud apps, IT infrastructure, mobile, big data. Linked to TiE group, that has 13,000 members globally. The funding of startups is arranged through TiE Angels & TiE50 (awards program). Beyond idea stage; demo or prototype. Co-working space. Seasoned TiE entrepreneurs are startup mentors. TiE LaunchPad accepts eight companies per five-month batch. Funding $50,000; 4% equity.

Prem Talreja, vice president of marketing at The Fabric, an accelerator based on a collaboration model that works hands-on with startup entrepreneurs to help them refine their product, team, and business model and prepare them for series A funding. Seeds between $1 million to $1.5 million. Its focus is on cloud infrastructure technologies, and it has a Technology Innovation Lab in India. Only a few startups a year are accepted, for about six months. Network of mentors, investors, technologists, professionals. Equity proportional to investment.

Harm TenHoff, founder and CEO of BayLink, which combines a global medical incubator with a business accelerator. Its focus is on high-tech medical devices, life sciences, IT, and online retailing. Its incubator
concentrates on product ideas and concepts, while its accelerator focuses on product introductions. It links Silicon Valley to Europe, and vice versa. BayLink offers one-on-one coaching and mentoring. Invests in kind, soft money. No cash investments. Its business model is based on consultancy fees and sometimes equity.

Marco ten Vaanholt, co-founder and managing partner at BootUP, a micro-ecosystem for startups to create better entrepreneurs and accelerate their companies. It works on the basis of four pillars. BootUP World is a Silicon Valley launch pad and global hub. BootUP Corporate Acceleration empowers corporate ventures. BootUP Capital accelerates and funds startups; post-seed and series A/B. BootUP Wings is a private club of startups, VCs, and seasoned Silicon Valley CEOs. It offers co-working space and currently has 55 startups under its wing. Takes equity, between 5-10% for early-stage and between 2-5% for later-stage companies.

Matt Walters, former managing director of Runway, a 30,000 square-foot co-working space and startup hub for new business incubation. It provides office space to about 80 startups and 200 entrepreneurs; educational events, lectures, and network meetings; access to VCs, legal advice, domain experts; a Zen area; and demo days. Valuations totaling over $600 million. Virtual EdTech accelerator; $25,000 future equity investment. Runway itself does not require equity.

Jun Wong, executive director of Hacker Dojo, “a community for hackers and startups” that supports everything from launching a software startup to building a robot. It hosts a mix of software developers and hardware engineers and offers them 24/7 co-working space, an events venue, maker space, seminars and workshops, code tutorials, parties, and a startup program. Hacker Dojo cherishes its community feeling and emphasizes participation. There is no selection process for members. Its business model is based on memberships, sponsoring, and donations. Hacker Dojo takes no equity in its startups.

Elizabeth Yin, partner at 500 Startups, a global venture capital seed fund and startup accelerator with over $250 million in assets. It has invested in over 1,800 startups from more than 60 countries and has had over 50 exits. Its accelerator programs emphasize internet marketing and customer acquisition, design and first-use experience, lean startup practices, and metrics. It has a four-month in-house program for four batches per year, with 40-50 startups per batch. 500 Startups provides 10,000 square feet in co-office space and organizes investor pitches, demo days, events, workshops, and presentations. $150,000 gross investment for 6% equity. $500K follow-on right.