



Michael
Schatzman

Founder & Managing Partner



MICHAEL SCHATZMAN

A super connector & serially
exited entrepreneur with 25
years of experience

OPERATING TRACK RECORD

3x

Exited
Founder

\$1B

Revenue
Generated

\$39B

Part of \$39B
IPO

Angel
Investor

3X MOIC

25% IRR

3X DPI

vntr

REF

VISA

NEW
LEAF
CAPITAL

eco Entrepreneur
Cooperative

SYNER

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UNION HOSPITALITY
GROUP



INTRO

Over the past 20 years, I've built and scaled companies across fintech, hospitality, media, and enterprise sales, growing business units to over \$500M at global companies such as Visa and News Corp, and founding ventures that generated \$12M+ in annual revenue from scratch.

I co-founded Venture Forward Capital to back founders using AI to solve real-world problems in vertical markets like healthcare, logistics, finance, and hospitality.

My operating background spans both corporate and entrepreneurial industries. At Visa and News Corp, I led 90+ person sales organizations and drove growth at scale. Later, I founded Union Hospitality Group, building three restaurant concepts from the ground up, employing over 100 people and navigating the complexity of brick-and-mortar operations at a high-growth pace.

I also launched New Leaf Capital, syndicating over \$6M in private investments with multiple successful exits, and co-founded Function, a finance and strategic advisory firm for early-stage companies—through our venture studio model at Venture Forward Capital.

Today, I work closely with portfolio companies, as an investor and an operator. I help founders scale with clarity, build resilient business models, and avoid the pitfalls that come from growing too fast without the right infrastructure.

I'm also an active member of founder and investor communities including VNTR, Heritage, The Founders Club, Coolwater Capital, and VC Lab Cohort 17. My focus now is backing founders—repeat and first-time—who are building the next wave of vertical AI businesses with asymmetric upside.

BEYOND BUSINESS

I'm a proud husband and father of three who believes in finding harmony in the chaos (not work-life balance). Former Chicago Cubs bat boy. Sake sommelier. Active supporter of Imerman Angels Cancer Support and Determined to Develop Malawi Africa.

I'm always interested in meeting operators-turned-founders who are solving real problems with AI, LPs who appreciate the operator advantage, and fellow investors who believe relationships trump spreadsheets.



HOW I WORK

Relationship-First Approach

I give before I get. My network is a powerful community of operators who've been through the fire: entrepreneurs, advisors, investors, and founders.

Execution Focus

I back founders who've been tested, not just the ones who look good on paper.

Strategic Patience

Unlike the "move fast and break things" crowd, I believe in strategy first, then aggressive execution.

OPERATING TRACK RECORD & KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Entrepreneurial Leadership

- **Co-founded Venture Forward Capital** and serve as Founder & Managing Partner since July 2022, investing in AI-driven solutions and repeat founders
- **Built Union Hospitality Group** from scratch across three restaurant concepts generating \$12M+ annual revenue over 14+ years
- **Founded New Leaf Capital** and led millions in investments with multiple successful exits
- **Built and exited multiple companies** across restaurant, technology, and investment sectors

Corporate & Scale Experience

- **Led teams generating over \$1 billion in revenue** across 25+ years of leadership roles
- **Grew business units to \$500M+** at Fortune 500 companies Visa and News Corp while leading US teams
- **Led strategy development** and scaled operations from startup phases through major corporate divisions
- **Indiana University Kelley School of Business** graduate with Bachelor of Arts in Marketing (2001)

Board & Advisory Impact

- **Director Board of Directors** at Sypher, Inc since July 2022
- **Advisory Board Director** at Function since January 2025
- **Multiple active advisory roles across** portfolio companies including Carboniste, Vebu, HighRewards AI, and others
- **Chapter Director / Chicago** at VNTR and **PEF Chicago Chapter Lead** driving investment community connections

Community & Network Recognition

- **Active leadership roles** in premier investment communities including VNTR (Chapter Director), PEF Community (Chicago Chapter Lead)
- **Proven track record** advising companies across tech, AI, food & beverage, and various vertical markets

