Stanford



Phillip Wickham

Adjunct Lecturer, Design Courses

Bio

BIO

“Of the 10,000 start-ups we studied, 65% died because of dysfunctional human dynamic.” - Noam Wasserman (Founder’s Dilemma), HBS

Phil Wickham believes that a leader's energy and its impact on organizational culture is under-appreciated for its role in successful innovation.

Phil is Co-Founder and Executive Managing Director of Sozo Ventures, a $1.7-billion venture fund with offices in Redwood City and Tokyo. Sozo has, for over 15 years, invested in disruptive data science start-ups with global ambitions, specifically supporting them with early, intelligent engagement with Japanese markets. Notable successes include Palantir, Twitter (X), Square, MongoDB, Coinbase, Zoom, ChorusAI and Fastly. Sozo is also an early investor in Applied Intuition, Anduril, Saronic, Grammarly, Deel, Chainalysis, Need, Molten, Mercy Bio, Yellow Card and Carbon Robotics.

Phil is emeritus CEO and Chairman of the Kauffman Fellows. Over 30 years, he’s shepherded the development of nearly 1000 emerging leaders in venture capital in more than 60 countries. During his tenure, more than 300 new venture funds were created from within the Kauffman global community. He also helped conceive, staff and seed-fund TrueBridge Capital Partners (FoF), as well as The Kauffman Fellows Fund (direct), and is an emeritus advisor to the Creandum Fund in Stockholm, Angular Ventures in London/Tel Aviv, Taro Ventures in Tokyo, Frontline Ventures in Dublin and MaC Ventures in LA.

From 2018-2022, Phil taught capital formation at Waseda University as a Visiting Professor. In 2024, he co-founded the 11KS Foundation in Japan to promote innovation education. Phil has also published two #1 best-sellers in Japan on capital formation for startups and writes regularly for publications there.

He was raised on hockey rinks in Upstate New York, and has been playing competitive tennis for longer than he cares to admit. He is an avid collector of antique maps—a passion passed down by his father—and often invokes the parable of the “Island of California” to reinforce the importance of good inquiry and challenging assumptions. He is the proud father of two daughters, the youngest of three children and a screaming Enneagram Type 7.

University of Arizona, BSME, 1987
Rensselaer, MBA, 1994
Kauffman Fellows, 1997