

ACA IN CONVERSATION

The hard part was never the technology.

INTERVIEWED BY



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Peng-Sang Cau, Director of Siemens for Startups, spent 22 years building a hard tech company before she joined Siemens — long enough to learn what stalls a physical-product startup and what gets it moving again. She now works with roughly 535 of them. Gary Forni, Managing Director of the Central Texas Angel Network, asked her what angels and their founders keep getting wrong about the companies they back. Four ideas from that conversation.



Peng-Sang Cau

Director, Siemens for Startups

Founder of an engineering startup in 1995, CEO for 22 years, took a new assembly technology from zero to \$30M in under six years, then sold to her largest competitor.

01

The hardest part of hard tech is rarely the invention. It's finding early adopters willing to take risks with a startup and new technology.

“Everybody loves innovation until you tell them it's innovative, then they don't want it anymore”

Enterprise buyers talk about wanting innovation and then decline to be customer number one, because nobody loses a job buying the incumbent. A founder can have working technology and still stall here for years.

02

A digital twin can sell a product that doesn't physically exist yet.

“Which one comes first? I don't have the money to build the alpha, so I cannot show it to my customers. My customer wants to see it, but I can't afford it.”

Peng's alpha would have cost \$300,000 she didn't have, so her engineers modeled the machine instead, designed the customer's own product into it, and simulated the metrics that industry cared about. The customer bought the first system, then thirteen more.

03

The Technology Can Work. And the Company Can Still Fail!

“Technology is not why a lot of companies fail. It's the execution of that technology is why a lot of them fail.”

Diligence on the technology alone does not tell you whether a startup will succeed. A brilliant technical founder may build a disruptive product and still struggle to build the company around it: repeatable production, a manufacturing strategy, a supply chain, and the sales, service and channel organization to support customers at scale. The question is not whether the technology works, but whether there is a credible path from early adopters to mass adoption.

04

Program pricing is a question about your capital, not theirs.

“If I'm going to put \$100,000 into a startup, they can use that money to buy the software, or they can use that money to hire the engineer to use the software.”

Peng says this as a former angel: the same check buys tools or buys the person who uses them. That's the practical reason to make sure your founders know the Siemens program exists.

CONCEPTION TO PRODUCTION

Startups need a real partner in design, production and execution. Siemens is that partner, every step of the way.

One such example is the digital twin, a key portion of the Siemens for Startups experience. Peng took a simulation into a boardroom because she couldn't afford a machine — the model ran the customer's own product, reported the metrics that industry buys on, and was benchmarked against real data from systems already in the field. The customer bought the first machine, then thirteen more.

That same asset answers the two questions an angel asks — will anyone buy this, and can they build it at volume — and it keeps working long after the first sale. The twin grows with the company: the product, then the line, then the factory.

WHAT PENG AND THE SIEMENS TEAM PROVIDE

Enterprise design, simulation and lifecycle tools at startup pricing. NX, Simcenter and Teamcenter, bundled — the full commercial versions rather than a stripped-down free tier, and startups keep full ownership of their IP.

A certified partner local to the startup. Usually in its own industry, with engineers behind the rollout rather than a download link.

Co-marketing at no cost. A case study video and a seat on the Pioneers podcast, which Peng hosts, plus places held for startups at events like Hannover Messe, NY Climate Week and Brickyard 400.

The whole of Siemens, from conception to production. Xcelerator marketplace distribution, proof-of-concept work with Siemens business units, corporate venture capital, and the specialists who build greenfield and brownfield factories. Peng's framing: "I just open doors."

WHAT A DIGITAL TWIN DOES FOR A FOUNDER:

Earns an LOI before hardware. A theoretical pitch becomes a conversation about the customer's own line.

Substantiates the claim. Simulation data stands behind the performance numbers in the deck.

Models the process, not only the product. Manual line first, then semi-automated, then the factory.

Cuts the cost of being wrong. Revisions happen in software instead of in tooling.

\$2,400



\$4.3B

One startup entered on the basic bundle five years ago. Two months before this interview they broke ground on a \$4.3 billion factory — Peng had walked it in VR a year earlier.

Roughly 535 startups work with her team today, across every stage from first sketch to full production.

WHICH OF YOUR PORTFOLIO COMPANIES FITS?

If a founder designs, simulates or manufactures anything in the physical world, they qualify for a conversation.

Admissions are rolling with no deadline, and applying takes nothing more than a short qualification call. No prototype required, and your introduction carries more weight than the link does.

Sectors in the program today Aerospace and Defense · Space · Robotics · Deep Tech · Energy and Battery · Medical Device · Advanced Manufacturing · Consumer Packaged Goods



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