



Wipro Ventures managing partners on investing during pandemic and more

By Joseph Rai | 17 July, 2020



Wipro Ventures managing partners Venu Pemmaraju (left) and Biplab Adhya

Wipro Ventures, the investment arm of IT services major Wipro Ltd, **launched its second fund of \$150 million** earlier this year to invest in tech startups. The firm has also executed exits from its debut fund that started investing in 2015.

Notably, Wipro Ventures appears to be **leading the race against the Infosys Innovation Fund**, the venture arm of Wipro rival Infosys Ltd, as the latter got hobbled by a management change after a blazing start.

In a quick interaction with VCircle, Wipro Ventures managing partners Biplab Adhya and Venu Pemmaraju said the firm aims to strike a similar number of deals in the fiscal year ending 31 March 2021 despite the coronavirus pandemic that has crippled businesses globally.

They shed light on why most businesses that Wipro Ventures has backed are based in the US and explain the criteria for making Limited Partner (LP) bets on a venture capital fund. Edited excerpts:

According to Wipro's annual report, Wipro Ventures divested its stake in Emailage and CloudGenix in 2019-20. It had exited Demisto in the previous fiscal year. Could you give us a sense of the returns Wipro Ventures generated from these exits?

As part of our investment management processes, we measure both the strategic and financial returns from our investments. This is confidential information and is not shared publicly. Suffice to say that our financial returns, and the current value of our portfolio, put us in the top quartile of venture performance (for the 2015 cohort).

What does the exit pipeline of Wipro Ventures look like?

Exits are not, and cannot be, planned ahead.

What is the investment pace of Wipro Ventures going to be like this year given that it announced its new fund in January? Will the investment pace slow down because of the pandemic?

Our plan remains at making between four and six investments in a fiscal year. The pandemic has not affected the investment pace yet but it has had an impact on the due-diligence process and post-investment governance activities.

Most of the firm's investments have been centred on the US. What are the main reasons for not making significant bets on startups in India? Is there any plan to expand the India portfolio?

Wipro Ventures is a strategic investor and we look for solutions and startups that are driving innovation and addressing customer issues in novel ways. We are somewhat agnostic to the location of the startup but do place an emphasis on the team, investors and target market.

That said, a number of the startups that we have invested in have their main development centres in India (for example, Altizon, Avaamo, CloudGenix, CloudKnox, Headspin and Imanis Data).

Wipro Ventures also makes LP bets on venture funds. Its annual report said that it invested in B Capital (co-founded by Facebook billionaire Eduardo Saverin) in the last fiscal year. Could you give us a flavour on what criteria do you look for while making LP bets?

We look for firms that have partners with a superior investment track record. We also look for partners who have enterprise software experience, who are adept at identifying enterprise trends and who invest in early-stage enterprise software companies. This is but a subset of criteria we look for when investing in funds.

Have you allocated a specific portion of the fund for making LP bets? Does it plan to make LP bets on Indian VC firms as well?

We do not allocate a specific portion for fund investments. We do not comment on which funds we will invest next.

Wipro Ventures

Biplab Adhya

Venu Pemmaraju

Wipro Ltd

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