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COVER STORY

## Wilson Sonsini backs school for startup founders

By Banks Albach  
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With backing from Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati PC, the Nasdaq Stock Exchange has launched a nonprofit hub for entrepreneurs in San Francisco. The campus, much like a college, offers monthly classes across a broad curriculum — from public speaking, to dealing with the legal complexities of term sheets with venture capitalists.

Wilson Sonsini partner Steven E. Bochner sits on the organization's board and routinely gives advice to attentive crowds of company founders — and potential clients.

“We think this is going to be a magnet for entrepreneurship in the Valley,” Bochner said. “To the extent we can participate and provide representation to those exciting companies that we need here is fantastic.”

Bochner has been closely linked with Nasdaq for years. He serves on the exchange's private market advisory board and also held a chair position on the Nasdaq Hearing Review Council, which oversees rule and policy changes for companies with stock trading on the exchange.

Since its launch last year, the entrepreneurial center has worked with 1,200 individuals and offers 100 courses, said executive director Nicola Corzine, a former fund manager at Menlo Park-based Band of Angels, a firm focused on seed-stage investments.

Nasdaq's educational foundation, which is managing the center with an initial \$5 million grant and tested with an estimated \$3 million operating budget, has launched many pro bono pursuits, she said.

But finding a way to bridge the gap between a startup founder's singular vision and the legal



Banks Albach / Daily Journal

Nasdaq Entrepreneurial Center Executive Director Nicola Corzine and Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati PC partner Steven E. Bochner.

realities that can ensue when company starts to grow, was the driver behind forming the center. A common hindsight that founders face, she said, is realizing what you should have known.

“Nasdaq never really felt that they had a program that could have a long-tail approach to entrepreneurship,” she said. “We talk about founder development, not just company development, especially at the early stages because it's a guess on a good day as to whether the model is really identified or the market-fit is really known.”

Alexa Fleischman, who launched fashion

startup Savvy Society Fashion Co. in January, said she and her team learned the art of the pitch at the Nasdaq center.

“As a new startup, you know what you want to do,” she said. “But adding humor helps when you're talking to the press. They actually put us in front of a camera and recorded it.”

Corzine said the center is open to any company founder, in the tech sector and elsewhere, and usually log between six and 10 hours a month on the offered classes. The center is also working with the UC Berkeley School of Law and Stanford Law School.