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## Being Al Gore

**Entrepreneurs offer advice to the veep-cum-venture capitalist.**

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In some circles, being named a partner at Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers is more highly prized than, say, an Oscar, an Emmy, or a Nobel Peace Prize. Well, Al Gore doesn't have to choose, now that he has joined the storied Sand Hill Road venture capital firm as a partner investing specifically in green companies. We asked a group of entrepreneurs running green companies where Gore should look for deals.

### Focus on Micromanufacturing

"I think building local micromanufacturing infrastructure is going to be crucial to the economic success of the country over the next several decades, especially as the dollar loses value. Importing is going to be prohibitively expensive, and the cost of shipping products is going to rise as well. Strong local networks of small manufacturers can bolster the economy. Plus, there are opportunities to marry micromanufacturing to clean technology. I'm talking about advances in biocomposites and soy-based polymers. And this opportunity exists globally--it will play out here and in developing nations like India as well. Some people might say that manufacturing on the micro level is inefficient, but to me, that's the wild, new frontier of business, and that's where VCs are supposed to be."

*--Jason Salfi, co-founder and president of Comet Skateboards, a skateboard manufacturer with offices in Oakland, California, and Ithaca, New York*

### Invest in H2O

"Energy is a big area, and so is water. In fact, we may run out of water before we run out of petroleum--at least, water we can use, meaning clean, drinkable, potable water. So I'd look to invest in technology that deals with water purification, desalinization, reducing usage through smart faucets and so forth, and distribution of water to places where there is not enough."

*--Ray Anderson, chairman of Interface (NASDAQ:IFSIA), a billion-dollar manufacturer of sustainable carpet, in Atlanta*

### **Invent the Electrinet**

"Gore has been talking about the creation of a 'smart' electric grid, and I would encourage him to draw attention to that idea now that he's a VC. We have a very dumb grid that knows how to expand capacity only by adding coal- and gas-fired power plants--so we need to invest in more network optimization technology. I would also encourage him to invest in energy-storage technology, solar-panel technology (where there is plenty of room to improve price-performance curves), and fuel cells."

*--Peter L. Corsell, president and CEO of GridPoint, a company whose technology allows utilities to integrate sources of alternative energy into the existing power grid*

### **Think as Big as Big Oil**

"Gore has said he plans to invest in businesses related to alternative sources of energy: geothermal power, hydroelectric power, wind, solar--and I think that's exactly the right place to start. We need a major, major, major expansion of alternative sources. These industries will have to complement and become as big as the oil industry is today."

*--Eric Hudson, founder and president of Recycline, which creates consumer products from recycled materials, in Waltham, Massachusetts*

### **Just Make a Fortune**

"Alternative energy is the right place to start. Solar, wind, and wave all need to be pursued. But really, I just want Gore to make a fortune, because if he does, a lot more resources will flow into the industry. I've heard some cynicism about the idea that he is donating his salary to environmental groups but not his earnings from investments. There's this sense that the environmental movement is supposed to be not-for-profit, and I disagree with that. We need Gore to get rich, and then we'll end up with even the Bush family investing in businesses that make ethanol from switchgrass."

*--Shayne McQuade, CEO of Voltaic Systems, a New York City company that makes backpacks and bags with solar cells that charge hand-held electronic devices*