

New investment territories



“We are accelerating our investments in venture capital funds specializing in technology. We are also looking at making direct investments in smaller, even higher-growth companies.”

DAVID DARMON,
Group Deputy CEO



Wendel created the Wendel Lab in 2013 as a response to the Group’s desire to enhance its knowledge of new business models and disruptive technologies. With the Lab, Wendel invests via funds or directly in innovative, high-growth companies. The Lab gives the Group visibility into several hundred start-ups, mainly in the digital field.

The Group’s first investments include Innovation Endeavors, Andreessen Horowitz, Accel Partners, Kleiner Perkins, Bond Capital Partners in the United States, Quadrille Technologies in France and Invascent in India. Wendel also made a direct investment in AlphaSense, a leader in market intelligence. Early on, Wendel made investments of approximately €10 million to €30 million per fund. Eight years of experience has encouraged us to step up a gear. As part of its investment strategy for 2021-2024, Wendel has already committed approximately €100 million to the Wendel Lab with quality partners.



“In the medium term, we are aiming for 5% to 10% of our assets to be deployed in growth funds or direct investments that will enable us to increase growth in our portfolio and create a technology ecosystem within the Group. For example, Bureau Veritas, Constantia Flexibles and Stahl will be able to benefit from this expanded network to create innovative partnerships. These young companies will therefore be introduced to important potential customers and our operating subsidiaries will have privileged access to disruptive technologies,” anticipates David Darmon, Group Deputy CEO.

In May 2021, Christopher Witherspoon joined the Group as Leader of the fund investment activity of the Wendel Lab. His recruitment illustrates the Group’s desire to structure and intensify the development of the Lab.

Within the investment team, Christopher’s mission is to select and closely monitor the funds in which Wendel will deploy its capital and to identify start-ups whose profiles can be synonymous with value creation or ambitious partnerships for the portfolio companies. *“My role is to be Wendel Lab’s ambassador to the Group’s stakeholders. Wendel’s expertise must become a benchmark in this area in the coming years. The Lab is a valuable tool for detecting the leaders of tomorrow. These are the companies that Wendel seeks out as a long-term investment,”* said Christopher.

In short, the Wendel Lab has multiple purposes. Over the long term, it will observe industrial and technological developments, seize investment opportunities and meet emerging leaders.



CASE STUDY

In 2019, Wendel took the opportunity to invest directly alongside Innovation Endeavors in New York-based start-up AlphaSense for \$3 million. Founded in 2011, AlphaSense is a platform specialized in information retrieval that relies on an engine powered by artificial intelligence. A disruptive technology with very strong growth that corresponds to the profile of the investments sought by the Lab.

Another success of the Lab: the Chinese company Tuya created in 2014, a world leader in IoT, was floated on the New York Stock Exchange in early 2021. Through its investment in the Quadrille fund, Wendel contributed to the meteoric rise of this start-up.