CAREER ACCELERATOR

CAREER ACCELERATOR -TURNING POINT OF YOUR CAREER

YOUR CAREER

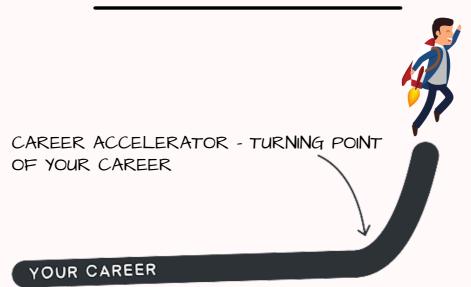
KRISHNA KIRAN

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WHAT TO EXPECT



This is an action book, a systems book. Not a motivational book. I teach you a system, and give you tools. The framework I teach will take the guess work out. All you need to do is take action. There is no magic bullet, but as Elon musk likes to quote often -

"Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic" - Arthur C. Clarke.

I promise, if you build yourself a career growth flywheel, your career growth will look magical to others.





I am on a personal mission to 1) make work more joyful through career growth and meaningful work and 2) help educate poor kids. In 2020 I sponsored 10 poor kids through <u>Isha Vidya</u>. In 2021 I want to sponsor 50 kids and hopefully scale more.

In my day job(which I love), I head Engineering at Amazon Pay. I lead two development centers, with about 100 engineers and managers in Seattle and Cupertino. Over the past 16 years with Amazon and Adobe, I grew from an entry level engineer to heading an engineering org at Amazon. I have learnt a lot of career lessons the hard way:). I hope to make it easier for you.

Over 16 years, I have mentored, promoted and approved promotions of hundreds of engineers.

MY STORY

Over the years, I have realized growth brings happiness. You will be happy if you are growing. This book and the bootcamp is my humble effort to bring growth and joy at work.

I have had the fortune of having great mentors and I have personally mentored hundreds of engineers and managers. As a people leader, coaching and mentoring is a key aspect of my day job. Seeing my team members and my mentees grow and achieve their career dreams is the most rewarding aspect of my career.

It will be my honor to help you grow and accelerate your career.





WHY I BUILT THE CAREER ACCELERATOR BOOTCAMP

We always has two reasons for what we do —a good one, and the real one. - John Pierpont Morgan

My good reasons: I want to help as many people grow fast in their career. I get energy out of making an impact in people's career and life. We invest significant amount our productive life in our career. I will have a deep sense of satisfaction if my work can help people experience joy, satisfaction and growth in career.

Through my Career Accelerator bootcamp, I help engineers grow their career and raise funds to support poor kids through Isha Vidya. In 2020, I sponsored 10 kids(Link). In 2021, I am raising funds to sponsor education for 50 poor kids.

My real reasons: First, I want my twin kids Achyuth and Ananth(now 4 year old) to know their father chose to do difficult and meaningful stuff. And did them well. Second, I want to create and ship useful stuff outside my day job(which I love) at Amazon. I want to have the satisfaction of educating poor kids by supporting Isha Vidya.



Because you are reading this, I will assume you are ambitious about your career. And that you have goals to grow fast in your career. Having career goals is crucial, but goals are only good for setting a direction. Setting goals just means setting the intention. Goals are not enough to achieve the results we want.

"Good intentions don't work; mechanisms work." - Jeff Bezos

Do you have mechanisms or the systems to grow your career?

Goals are useless and unachievable without systems or mechanisms to achieve those goals. For example, imagine your favorite sport. While the goal is to finish with the best score, you don't spend the whole game staring at the scoreboard. The only way to actually win is to have a system to get better each day. If you do that,

"The score takes care of itself."

This is true even for your career. If you want better results, then you need a system to grow your career.

Author: Krishna Kiran 🦸 Career Accele

I don't believe in specific goals. Scott Adams of dilbert fame famously said, "Set up systems, not goals."

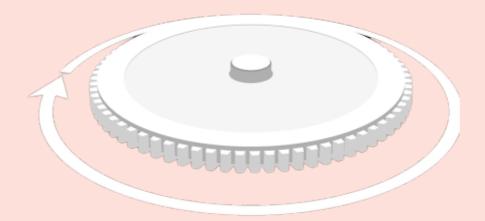


I'm not going to be the most successful person on the planet, nor do I want to be. I just want to be the most successful version of myself while working the least hard possible. - Naval Ravikanth

I create the Career Growth Flywheel system to help you be the most successful version of you with the least effort.



So, what is a flywheel and what is the flywheel effect?



A flywheel is simply a heavy machine designed to efficiently store energy. Imagine a giant 10,000 pound flywheel, 20 ft wide, and 2 ft high, and your job is to make it spin.

At first, you will have to put in a lot of effort to get the flywheel to move even an inch.

But if you keep pushing the flywheel in the same direction consistently, over time the flywheel starts to spin with its own momentum.



Jim collins introduced the concept of flywheel in his book, Good to great. He says - Creating a good-to-great transformation, feels like turning a giant, heavy flywheel. It's hard to start the flywheel but once it's spinning it starts building momentum. Then at some point—breakthrough! The flywheel flies forward with almost unstoppable momentum with very little help.

The real power behind the flywheel effect is in building a momentum machine. Creating a virtuous cycle that feeds on itself in order to create better and better results over time. Great companies like Google, Amazon, Facebook, have built themselves business flywheel working for them.

Let's understand the flywheel effect by studying the most famous flywheel in the world - the Amazon business flywheel.



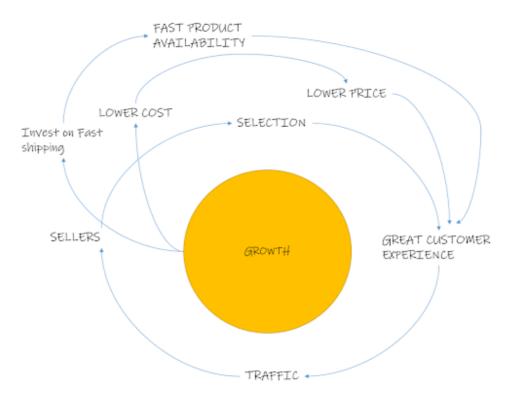






THE AMAZON FLYWHEEL

The three primary flywheels at Amazon are - Selection, Availability and Price.



You start with building a great customer experience. That will result in lots of traffic. Customer traffic attracts more sellers and more sellers bring more selection to the platform. More selection makes the customer experience great, forming a loop or a virtuous cycle.



THE AMAZON FLYWHEEL

When there is growth, and you have higher profits which you can use to lower the price. Lower price makes the customer experience even better creating the second loop. Now there are two loops accelerating growth and profit.

With this growth Amazon invests in faster shipping which is again a great customer experience creating the third loop.

More energy amazon puts in any of these loops will improve the customer experience. This is great for customers and in turn great for Amazons growth. This is the open secret to Amazon massive growth.

Amazon became great not just by having the goal to become "earths the most customer centric company". Amazon became great by creating a growth flywheel for itself by really identifying and key loops of its flywheel and doubling down on putting its energy on the flywheel.



THE AMAZON FLYWHEEL



Now, why did I tell you the story of Amazon's business flywheel in a career development book?

Because you are no different from a company.



THINK OF YOURSELF AS A BUSINESS

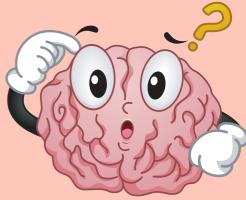
Businesses offer products and services in exchange for money.

You are the product you offer your employer. You offer your ideas, your service, your creativity, your time, your sweat and blood in exchange for your compensation. And if you treat yourself like you were a business, you'll be more successful, thinking about your growth and convincing others of your worth.

"If you want to be successful in business (in life, actually), you have to create more than you consume. Your goal should be to create value for everyone you interact with. Any business that doesn't create value for those it touches, even if it appears successful on the surface, isn't long for this world. It's on the way out."

- Jeff Bezos.

Amazon succeeds and grows, by delivering more for the customer than they take from the customer. Similarly, you will grow fast in your career, if you deliver more than anyone expects out of you.





THINK OF YOURSELF AS A COMPANY

More importantly you will have fun and feel great about yourself if you deliver more than is expected of you.

The core idea of my career growth flywheel framework is that - If I am no different than a company, I can grow fast in my career by copying the strategies from companies that grow fast.

With the career growth flywheel, I will teach you to apply the flywheel effect to grow your career.

Let's take your career from good to great.



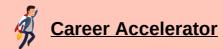


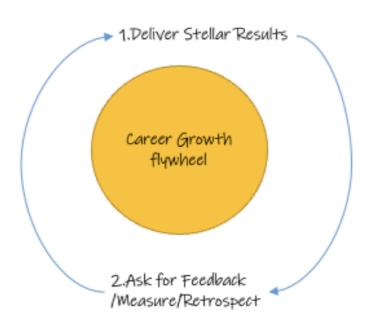
I have personally mentored hundreds of engineers. Most people are frustrated about not growing fast in their career. This is because they have goals without systems. They are overwhelmed chasing the goals.

I created the Career growth flywheel framework to demystify career growth. The core of the Career growth flywheel is to design yourself a system, to set you up to deliver stellar results.

The Amazon flywheel makes the customer experience better; the Career Growth Flywheel makes your deliveries better.

The career growth flywheel has 7 steps. Let's look at each of the steps.







Step 1: Deliver Stellar Results:

The first step of your growth flywheel is to deliver stellar results. You start by doing the best of your current capability at whatever you do and you upgrade yourself.

- a) Identify your innate strengths, your super powers. b) Develop a plan to double down on your strengths and to mitigate your blind spots. c) Become a super learner. Ask great questions.
- d) Improve your productivity by managing your state. Get into flow state everyday. e) Manage your time and energy.



Put first things first.

"What problems you pick to work on" is far more important than "Who is on your team" which in turn is far more important than "How much leverage you have built" which is far more important than "How hard you work"

- 1. Choose the right problems to solve.
- 2. Pick the right people to work with.
- 3. Build leverage.
- 4. Work hard.

Some leverage you can build are,

- 1. Time leverage Your time is your boss's leverage. Your Amazon prime memberships, is your time leverage. If you hire someone to do your chores, their time is your leverage.
- 2. Automation leverage. You build leverage when you automate repetitive steps in your workflow. You invest once and reap rewards many times over.
- 2. Skill leverage If your friend Ram is great at MS excel. What will take you hrs will take your friend 3 mins.



- 3. Friends/network leverage If you are friends with Ram, you get to leverage his skills.
- 4. Tools leverage If you have the right tool you probably don't need learn excel. Google has made tools leverage more accessible for everyone..
- 5. Domain knowledge Leverage: If you have domain knowledge you will ask better questions to get the results faster.

I run a career accelerator bootcamp where I take you through hands on activities on all of the above. Together we will create a plan to exceed expectations and then validate with your manager.

All the remaining steps in the career growth flywheel are designed to feed energy to delivering stellar results. As you incrementally add more loops, the quality and quantity of your deliveries get better.



Step 2: Ask for feedback, measure, retrospect.

There are two key activities in this step.

First, you will set up feedback loops for yourself. Ask for feedback from your manager and stake holders.



In the bootcamp I take you through hands-on activities to help you set up quick feedback loops. You will learn how to create allies, who are invested in your success and attract feedback from them. With your feedback loops you will catch issues before they blow up and fix proactively.

Second, you will learn to give powerful feedback. Giving feedback is one of the most underutilized super power. When you give feedback to others in a way that helps others, you start to develop influence. Others will want to reciprocate and will give you powerful feedback.

In the bootcamp you will learn how to become good at giving feedback though real world examples. You learn by doing. You will also learn mistakes to avoid in giving and receiving feedback.



STORY OF A POWERFUL FEEDBACK THAT CHANGED MY LIFE

My manager takes me to a conference room right after my presentation. I knew right away, that I had messed up something.

Krishna, You did a well with the demo and answering the questions. Nice job.

Thanks Salim I said, with a sense of relief.

And I want to share some feedback on something you did in the meeting. Are you open for the feedback now?

My breath stopped again.

[Salim]Krishna, I notice you have an unconscious response to compliments. You can be more graceful with compliments.

[Krishna]What? This does not sound serious. - I said to myself.

Salim sensed my thoughts from the weird look on my face, and shared why he thought this was a big deal, for him pull me into a room.

[Salim] Krishna, when Ramesh gave you a compliment on the demo, you got really uncomfortable and changed topic and brought up the bugs remaining to be fixed. I have noticed this pattern with you in two other instance. Many people do this when they get compliment - they start self-deprecating or criticizing themselves. They think they are being humble. If you don't let people give you compliment, you are making them look foolish in trying to give you a compliment. And everyone else around, picks up a subconscious signal that, you don't believe you deserve the compliment. People will naturally resist giving you compliment in the future.

Feedback is a gift. And compliment is a feedback. Receive it with grace. Next time maybe try a simple "thank you". Resist your urge to criticize yourself.

I got the seriousness of my behavior only after Salim's rant.

Google has 81 million results for "why do people get uncomfortable with compliments?". And to this day, 13 years after the instance, I still get uncomfortable with compliments. At times I still blurt a self-deprecating comment, but mostly I catch myself and switch to a "Thank you".. I have also seen this play out several times with my team mates. And I do pull them into a room and share the story.

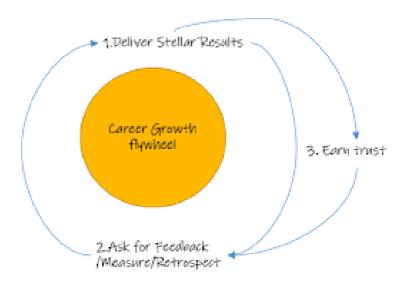
The irony is that most people get the feedback when they are not taking constructive feedback well. But rarely does anyone get feedback when they are not taking compliment well. Next time, if you notice someone not taking compliment well, please do them a favor, talk to them and help them build their confidence.

And the next time your heart pounds when you feel the spotlight of a compliment, remember a simple "thank you" is all you need to say. Resist your urge to self-deprecate.





Step 3: Earn trust



"Nothing is as fast as Speed of trust." - Steven covey.

Trust is the lubricant to your flywheel. If you spin the flywheel without trust, all the energy is wasted in the friction. You will break down the flywheel and burn yourself out.

"A brand for a company is like a reputation for a person. You earn trust by doing hard things well." - Jeff Bezos.



Once you earn trust from your manager, your team, your seniors, your work becomes easier and easier for you. For example, if you are developer, your code and design reviews go smoother, if you your team trusts you.

In the bootcamp, you will learn and implement hands-on techniques to manage expectations, to earn trust from your manager, to earn trust with your peers, to earn trust with customers. You will apply techniques to repair broken trust, techniques to recover from delivery misses.





Iterate first 3 steps

Before you add more loops, I encourage you to get the flywheel, spinning fast by iterating on the first 3 steps.

Every new iteration becomes easier and easier because of the momentum in the flywheel. Remember the hardest part is to get the flywheel started. Once in motion, the flywheel keeps going with its own momentum. Knowing this, you won't give up in the initial hard days where you are getting the flywheel to spin.

Your job then is to add more energy to get the flywheel spinning as fast as possible. You Deliver more stellar results on things you own. Then you retrospect and ask for feedback, measure your progress and then address the feedback. Then you apply techniques to earn trust.

Once you repeat these loops a few times, you start to see momentum getting built up. Things start to become easier at work for you.

You are now ready for something that only the top performers do. You are ready to "Step up and Ask for more".



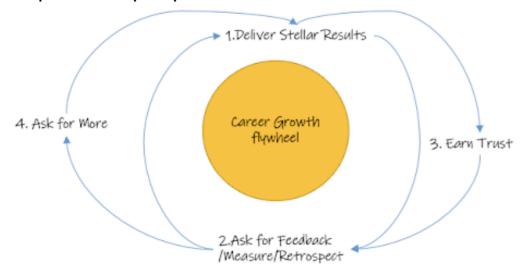








Step 4: Step up - Ask for more



You will not wait to be given more, you will step up and ask for more.

You will likely get what you want because, you have done the hard work to get the first three steps of the flywheel spinning. You have delivered, you have improved, you have earned trust. Now you can step up and elevate your game.

In the bootcamp I will teach you to assess what kinds of projects and assignments to ask for. You will learn how to make time for the stretch goals you took on. You will create a plan to exceed expectations on the stretch goal.





Step 4: Step up - Ask for more



You will learn techniques to go out of your comfort zone, increase your scope and impact by taking on more responsibility and ownership. You will learn how to make time on your calendar for stretch goals and what stretch goals to pick for highest ROI.





Warning on Step up and Ask for more

I have a big warning for you, step up and ask for more, only once you have the first 3 loops are running well.

If you ask for more when you are struggling to deliver on your current commitments, you are setting yourself up for failure. Please do not go there, however tempting it is. Trust the framework to get you ready to Step up.

You will know when you are ready for step 4, when the first 3 steps, frees you time to take on more. You are ready when the flywheel effect makes your work that was once hard, look easy and almost boring.





Step 5: Build your Influence

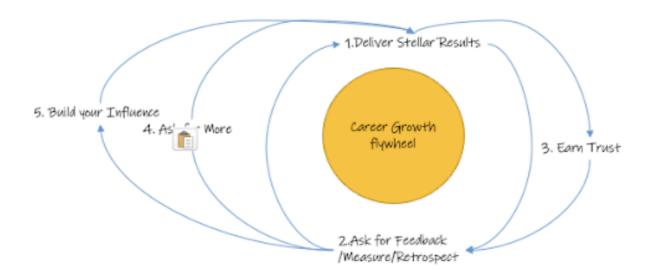
Here you develop influence on your team's technical and business roadmap and outcomes.

There are 2 parts to building influence. First don't compete, instead create. Create scope for yourself and your team.

In the second step you will learn power writing to build your influence. You will connect with influential people in your company and make things happen.

In the bootcamp. you will learn techniques to stop competing with peers for good projects and start creating scope and projects for yourself and your team. You will identify and create great opportunities for yourself and your team. You will create meaningful, impactful work for yourself and your team to establish yourself as a thought leader. You will get feedback from me and the community on how to polish your ideas. You will apply techniques to get attention and feedback from powerful people on your ideas, so that you can deliver bigger things by partnering with them.





You will also learn from each other in the bootcamp community when everyone shares their assignments. This is super powerful. I have seen so many light bulbs go up by learning from each other and the power of the community.



"HUNGRY SOLDIERS AND STONE SOUP"

Here is a Story on influence. "Hungry soldiers and stone soup"

Three soldiers returning home from war, were tiered and hungry. When they saw the village ahead their spirits lifted—they were sure the villagers would give them a meal. But when they got there, the villagers locked their doors and windows.

After many years of war, the villagers were short of food, and hoarded what they had.

Undeterred, the soldiers boiled a pot of water and carefully placed three stones into it. The amazed villagers came out to watch. "This is stone soup," the soldiers explained.

"Is that all you put in it?" asked the villagers. "Absolutely—although some say it tastes even better with a few carrots...." A villager ran off, returning in no time with a basket of carrots from his hoard.

A couple of minutes later, the villagers again asked "Is that it?" "Well," said the soldiers, "a couple of potatoes give it body." Off ran another villager. Over the next hour, the soldiers listed more ingredients that would enhance the soup: beef, leeks, salt, and herbs. Each time a different villager would run off to raid their personal stores. Eventually they had produced a large pot of steaming soup.

The soldiers removed the stones, and they sat down with the entire village to enjoy the first square meal any of them had eaten in months.

"HUNGRY SOLDIERS AND STONE SOUP"

There are a couple of morals in the stone soup story. The villagers are tricked by the soldiers, who use the villagers' curiosity to get food from them.

But more importantly, the soldiers act as a catalyst, bringing the village together so they can jointly produce something that they couldn't have done by themselves—a synergistic result.

Eventually everyone wins. Every now and then, you might want to emulate the soldiers.

You may be in a situation where you know exactly what needs doing and how. You know it's right. But ask permission to tackle the whole thing and you'll be met with delays and blank stares.

People will form committees, budgets will need approval, and things will get complicated. Everyone will guard their own resources. This is called "start-up fatigue."

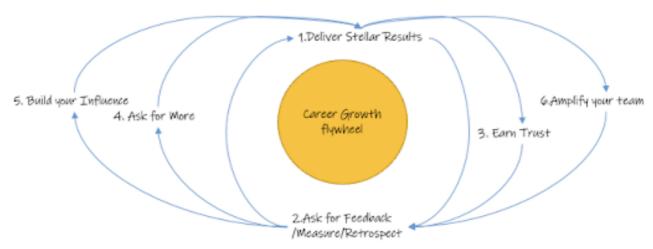
It's time to bring out the stones. Work out what you can reasonably ask for. Develop it well. Once you've got it, show people, and let them marvel. Then say "of course, it would be better if we added...." Pretend it's not important. Sit back and wait for them to start asking you to add the functionality you originally wanted.

People find it easier to join an ongoing success. Show them a glimpse of the future and you'll get them to rally around.

"It's easier to ask forgiveness than it is to get permission."



Step 6: Amplify your team



Software is a team sport. You can only win big, if you can amplify your teams work and get operation from your team. In steps 6, you do activities to amplify your team. There are 2 parts.

First you apply techniques to become a great team player. Second you learn how to lead others well. You become the person everyone loves to work with. You set yourself up to be picked on top priority projects. You setup your team members for success. You shine spotlight on your work without sounding like bragging. You shine light on other deserving peers on your team.

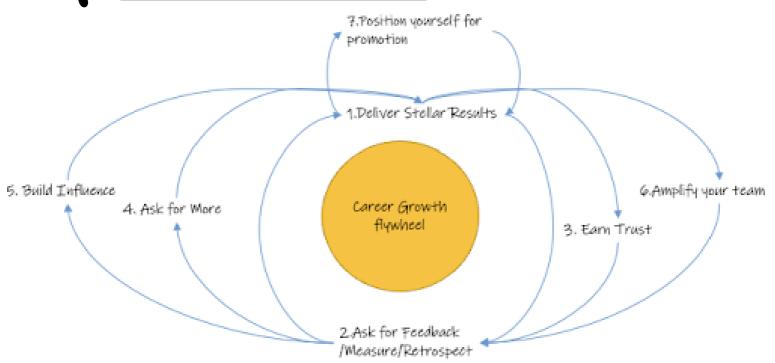


You influence without authority. You gain respect from the people you are leading. You lead by example. You earn trust as a leader.

In the boot camp, I take you through hands on activities to achieve the above. You will also learn to avoid common pitfalls when leading a team.



Step 7: Position yourself for promotion



Finally you position yourself for promotion - to operate at the next level.

In the bootcamp, you will learn what your management team wants to see before you are promoted. You will do activities to generate positive promotion feedback from stake holders. You will help your manager to promote you. You will gather data to demonstrate promotion readiness. You will create an action plan with your manager and work backwards from your promotion.

Notice that even this loop is working to deliver stellar results. Just that you will now work on delivering great results at your next level.

So what do I do after I get promoted? Once you get to the next level, you just keep repeating the framework to keep increasing your delivery, till you get promoted again.





"My manager is not promoting me." This is a common misconception I see.

I say misconception because,

1. It's in your manager's interest to promote you.

Your manager grows when they are able to take on more scope and project. Managers grow when a) their team size is growing or b)when they can deliver more because, the people in their team are growing. In fact, most manager promotions, have a criteria for candidate to have promoted people on their team.

2. Good managers take pride in promoting their team faster.

Good managers know that developing their people fast, is how they can build a reputation to attract and retain great talent.

Take aways:

- 1. If your manager themselves does not want to grow, or is lazy, run and find a better manager. You wont grow fast with that manager.
- 2. If #1 is not the case, clear the air with your manager, and find the real gaps and work together to close those gaps. Your manager is the single most important person who has influence on your career growth. And the good part is that your incentives are aligned. The better you partner with your manager, the faster you grow.



HACK TO GET MENTORS

Here is the hack I used to get my best mentors. And my mentors have changed my life.

When I'm struggling with a challenge and need their help, I write an email to them with a good description of my challenge. I summarize the context, the problem, my options, and thoughts on each. I know my mentors are really busy, so I make it as concise as possible so as not to waste their time.

With this added clarity, I then search google one more time to make sure I am not wasting my mentors time with something I could have found on google. If I am still in dilemma, even after the new research, I go back and update what I wrote.

Before hitting send, I try to predict what they'll say. Then I go back and update what I wrote to address these obvious points in advance. Finally, I try again to predict what they'll say to this, based on what they've said in the past and what I know of their philosophy.

Then, after this whole process, 95% of the time, I realize I don't need to bother them because the answer is now clear.

With the above, I hardly have to talk with my mentors. They don't know they are my mentors and have helped me so much.

And three of them don't even know I exist:).

And if you have unanswered challenges even after the above process, feel free to write to me krishna@krishnakiran.com. I try answer almost all the email I get every week.



YOUR SUPPORT SYSTEM ON YOUR CAREER GROWTH

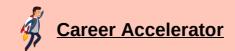
The framework is super simple(but not easy). That's the beauty of the flywheel. All you need to do is apply this 7 step framework.

You are not competing with anyone you only work on yourself and your system. Your flywheel, takes care of your career growth.

Simple is not easy.

Thats the reason I built the Career Accelerator bootcamp where I take you though hands on activities, and give you a team, which will be your support system. Your team has,

- 1. You.
- 2. Your manager.
- 3. Krishna Kiran(me) your coach.
- 4. Three other growth buddies. You will be part of a 4 person team who help each other. You learn from Krishna, and you learn from each other. You try things, you learn, you share lessons, you share feedback, you try again and get better as a team.
- 5. Career accelerator Slack community. You will also learn and share ideas from everyone in the career accelerator community.





Abhishek Jaitley in · 2nd Software Engineer at Google April 12, 2022, Abhishek was Krishna's client

I was part of Krishna's career accelerator bootcamp. I found the bootcamp to be excellent both in terms of the design and execution. The course content was very thorough and was built on Krishna's extensive experience as an Engineering leader. Having risen through the ranks and had a successful career himself he knows the pitfalls that are common amongst engineers. The course covered actionable ways to improve in these areas to thrive as someone in tech. The activities were really well thought out and helped me practice the new frameworks and ways of thinking that were introduced as part of the bootcamp. Krishna encouraged discussion during the course on all the topics which made it a highly effective learning experience as we learnt not only from Krishna's experience but also from other engineers and managers. There is a lot of generic advice on the internet but this is a highly effective course for people in tech looking to accelerate their growth. There are no quick tricks here, instead there are subtle changes in way of thinking and that makes the career growth long lasting and sustainable.

ABHISHEKH IS A
SOFTWARE
ENGINEER @





Sadhana N · 2nd Cloud | Security | Identity April 3, 2022, Sadhana was Krishna's client

The bootcamp gives a framework to think about one's career growth and gives a set of actionable steps one can take to grow in their career.

What I really liked about the bootcamp, is the activity based learning and the special attention Krishna gives to answer every question judiciously posted on the slack channel.

People of varied experience levels including managers participated in the bootcamp and the perspectives each one brings to the table is priceless.

I have also made a bunch of friends and we are continuing to work towards putting the lessons learnt to practice even after the boot camp.

I really wished I could have attended this bootcamp earlier in my career and would highly recommend this.

SADHANA IS A SDE @







Siddharth Srivastava · 1st Software Engineer March 25, 2022, Siddharth was Krishna's client

I came across Krishna's bootcamp from a personal connection who in my opinion was doing really well in her carreer, so I was very intrigued when she talked so highly about this program. Needless to say, I had pretty high expectations of the program, and to my pleasant surprise, my expectations were exceeded. I realized that I had some fundamentally wrong beliefs related to growth in general. In Krishna's bootcamp, they were all challenged and I am seeing a tremendous shift in my thinking and approach towards growth and career. The cohort has a mix of ICs and managers, people who have barely been in the industry for a couple of years to principals and staff. The experience and expertise of such a group combined with Krishna's insights are nothing less than a goldmine of careerimpacting information. Will recommend this program to anyone in a heartbeat!

SIDDHARTH IS A SDE @





akanksha mehrotra in · 1st
Senior Software Engineer at Dropbox
April 13, 2022, akanksha was Krishna's client

I took Krishna's bootcamp and it helped me overall to grow in my professional life.

We did many activities in groups during the bootcamp which helped me to identify my strength and weakness. I was also able to build some great connections during the bootcamp. His bootcamp is systematic where you learn how to do project estimates, how to do design a project, how to get a promotion faster and I would highly recommend Krishna bootcamp Software Engineer, managers.

AKANKSHA IS SOFTWARE ENGINEER @





WHY I WROTE THIS FREE MINI BOOK

Because I value your time. The free mini-book will introduce you to the career growth flywheel. I hope you apply it and achieve massive career growth. You are welcome to apply the framework on your own. And I know you will get results.

However, if you want accountability and positive peer group and my personal support, I welcome you to join the bootcamp based on the summary of the core framework. If you like building systems, and mechanisms over goals and wishful thinking, then this book and the Career Accelerator bootcamp hopefully resonates with you.

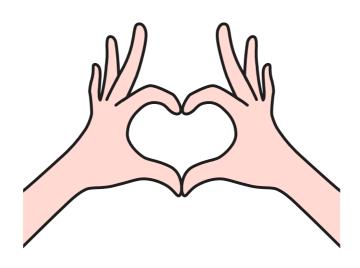
I wish you a successful, joyful, career.

Join <u>Career Accelerator Bootcamp</u>





I dedicate this humble attempt to my Amma, Acchan, Shilpa, Achyuth, Ananth and all the wonderful teachers and mentors I have :).





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