

# Marketplace Growth: A Winning Formula by Anna Cabrera

**Video:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AKhgPv6eBCA>

## Hello!

Thank you for such a warm and friendly welcome. I'm excited to be here today to share my perspective on the *winning formula* behind Bolt's phenomenal growth over the past few years.

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## About Me

I've been at Bolt for 2.5 years, leading and scaling the Growth Analytics team. Outside of work, I'm passionate about food—both cooking and exploring. At the moment, most of my exploration is through Bolt Food, but I do try to venture out in the real world as well.

Through my career in this industry and as a manager, I've developed a strong interest in human psychology—not only in organizational dynamics but also in how consumers think and behave.

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## The Growth Formula

Let's dive into the incredible growth Bolt has experienced. While it may appear simple, it's far from it. Growth at Bolt operates as a classic *chicken-and-egg* problem, with drivers and riders heavily dependent on each other.

1. **Drivers** want consistent earnings, which requires a steady flow of rides.
2. **Riders** expect availability and timely pickups, which demands a sufficient number of drivers.

This creates a delicate balance: drivers need rides to earn, and riders need drivers for demand to materialize.

## Breaking the Chicken-and-Egg Cycle

We discovered that *incentives* were the key to breaking this cycle. Early on, we offered:

- **High discounts** for riders: Encouraging them to return despite initial challenges like longer wait times.
- **Bonuses for drivers:** Motivating them to stay active on the platform despite lower ride availability initially.

This approach resulted in operating at an unprofitable level in the beginning. However, as markets matured and reached critical mass, we gradually removed these discounts, moving toward profitability.

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## The Role of Growth Analysts

Growth is not just about applying models; it's about human intervention, creativity, and adaptability. At Bolt, we expect our growth analysts to play **five key roles**:

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### 1. The Psychic

Forecasting future outcomes is critical. For example, planning any incentive strategy requires predictions about how rider and driver activity will respond to changes in spending.

While time series models are helpful, external factors like recessions, COVID, protests, floods, and wars require human insight. We found that predictions involving analysts consistently outperformed standalone models.

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### 2. The Strategist

Once forecasts are in place, analysts determine:

- **Who to target:** Riders vs. drivers, and which segments.
- **How much to spend:** Optimal incentive amounts for maximum ROI.

A segmented approach in one market, for instance, increased driver activity by 13-45% and led to ride growth of 27-80%.

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### 3. The Frugal Innovator

Knowing *when not to spend* is just as important as knowing when to invest.

In one top-performing market, growth stagnated whenever discounts were removed. By analyzing key metrics like **driver utilization** and **demand trends**, we identified a fundamental imbalance: drivers were over-utilized, and their online hours were declining.

Instead of increasing discounts, we tested raising prices to improve balance. The results were striking:

- Driver activity increased.
  - Customer conversion improved.
  - The market achieved all-time highs in rides.
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### 4. The Honey Badger

Our spirit animal at Bolt is the honey badger: small but fierce, relentless in overcoming challenges.

For example, in one market, a larger competitor—10x our size—launched aggressively, outspending us 2-3x on discounts and bonuses. Despite the odds, we used local market intelligence to:

- Allocate incentives effectively.

- Counter competitive moves strategically.

Not only did we survive, but we also thrived—eventually driving the competitor out of the market and reaching record-high ride volumes.

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## 5. The Detective

Growth is good—unless it's *too good*.

For instance, we uncovered a fraud scheme where a courier exploited a free delivery campaign. By ordering a single croissant 300 times, they earned €4,000 in just two weeks by manipulating the distance algorithms.

To resolve this, we:

- Fixed the campaign caps.
  - Aligned the algorithms calculating delivery fees.
  - Limited the number of times a user could exploit free campaigns.
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## The Winning Formula for Growth

In my view, growth boils down to three core elements:

1. **A strong analytical stack:** Tools for forecasting, segmentation, ETL, and reporting.
  2. **Skilled analysts:** People who know when to trust analytics and when to rely on human judgment.
  3. **Continuous improvement:** Learning from every case study to refine strategies and build better playbooks.
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Thank you! I'm happy to take any questions now.