

# Lessons from building a startup foundation team

A photograph of two dolphins performing in an aquarium pool. One dolphin is leaping out of the water, its mouth open, while the other stands behind it, also with its mouth open. In the background, there are spectators and staff members watching from behind a fence. The water is a vibrant blue.

Vinayak Hegde  
Independent Consultant  
[@vinayakh](https://twitter.com/vinayakh)

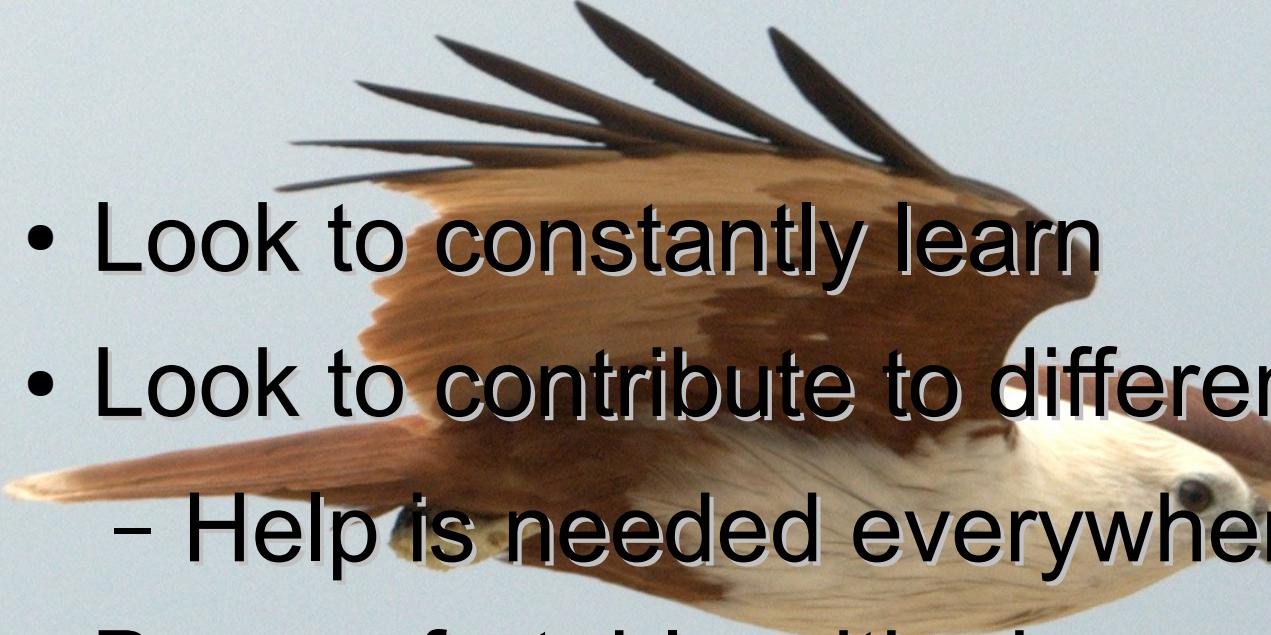
# Play in two acts

- Act 1
  - Experiences and advice as a startup employee
- Act 2
  - Experiences from building startup teams

A close-up photograph of a seal lying on a sandy beach. The seal has a light-colored body with dark brown spots and a darker, mottled pattern on its head. Its head is turned slightly to the right, looking towards the camera. The background is a textured, light-colored sand.

**So you want to be a  
startup employee ?**

# What do I do ?

- 
- Look to constantly learn
  - Look to contribute to different areas
    - Help is needed everywhere Always !!
  - Be comfortable with chaos
  - Understand the business
  - Take ownership & don't wait for instructions

# Adjust your attitude

- Disagree but commit
  - People around you are headstrong and will have strong opinions. Deal with it.
- Be ready to put in extra hours
- Don't say it's not my job.
- Aim to maximise learning and not salary / benefits
- Fasten your seatbelts - get ready for the emotional rollercoaster

# Where do I stand ?

- Understand ESOPs and maximise risks earlier in career (especially if you have an option)
- As the startup grows, roles will evolve and you will have choices
  - Choose wisely - do what you love rather than chasing status
- The dilemma of a growing startup employee
  - Should I specialise ?
  - Should I generalise ?



**So you want to build a  
startup team ?**

# Startup as a community

A startup is made of people & not product & not technology

- Think of your startup as a community and your customers as extended part of that community
- Mentor your employees and give them freedom to explore

Trust them (It will work wonders)

Spend time and effort to grow them

A photograph of two young boys, likely Buddhist novices or monks, sitting on a stone ledge outdoors. They are wearing traditional maroon robes. The boy on the left is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. The boy on the right is smiling broadly, showing his teeth. They are positioned in front of a white wall with a small window.

# On Hiring

- Hire from 2nd & 3rd Tier colleges as well
  - More loyal, hardworking people
- Hire for attitude and train for skills
- Encourage diversity in opinion and beware of monoculture
- Early employee are your greatest asset as they set your culture
- Link compensation to impact & contribution and not to experience/skillset

# Steer them and be steered

- Encourage people to work on different areas
  - Develops understanding of roles & empathy for colleagues
- Set clear goals and make people accountable
  - Make them visible to everyone
- Good ideas can come from anywhere especially in a market-discovery phase

# ESOPs in 5 minutes

- Types of stock
  - Preferred stock
  - Common stock
- Pricing & Taxes
  - Strike/Grant price & Exercise prices
  - Tax implications
- Vesting schedule
  - Grant date
  - Vesting date
  - Exercise date



# Thank you

- Twitter : @vinayakh
- Email : vinayakh@gmail.com
- All photos from my flickr