FORCENET
E-ZINE
Magazine of military veterans in the corporate
May 2025, Volume VII, Issue 05

The World of Consumer Internet Companies

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Message *From the* Editor

Lt Col Iqbal Singh
Editor, ForceNet E-Zine

In our post-service journeys, many veterans gravitate toward well-trodden paths: government roles, security, logistics, or defence contracting. These are comfortable, familiar, and honourable transitions. Yet, in our quest for purpose, growth, and financial independence, we often overlook one of the most dynamic and opportunity-rich sectors of the civilian world — the realm of Consumer Internet Companies.

From e-commerce giants to mobile apps, streaming platforms to food delivery services, the consumer internet is the backbone of modern life. It's not just about social media or entertainment — it's a multi-trillion-dollar ecosystem shaping how the world shops, learns, works, and connects. And here's the truth: this booming sector needs people like us — mission-driven, disciplined, resilient, and adaptive professionals.

Why, then, are veterans underrepresented here?

Part of the answer lies in awareness. Many transitioning service members simply don't know what roles exist in this space or assume it's all coding and tech wizardry. While technical skills are in demand, consumer internet companies thrive on operations, customer experience, project management, data analysis, logistics, and leadership — all areas where veterans naturally excel.

More importantly, this sector aligns well with the values we hold dear: impact, agility, and a sense of mission. These companies move fast, innovate constantly, and measure success by how much they improve lives at scale. Sound familiar? It's the same spirit we carried in uniform — just translated to a different battlefield.

The good news is, the barrier to entry isn't as high as you might think. With short-term online courses, veterans can quickly upskill in areas like digital marketing, product management, UI/UX, e-commerce strategy, or data analytics.

So, to every veteran reading this: don't sell yourself short. The consumer internet world may seem foreign now, but it is rich with opportunities for those willing to learn its language. You already have the grit and the values. Add some new skills to your toolkit, and there's no limit to what you can achieve.

This month, let this magazine be your launching pad. We have dissected the sector and also shared the story of a veteran entrepreneur in this space.
The civilian world is evolving fast. It's time we evolved with it — not just to keep up, but to lead.

Welcome to the digital frontier. Let's own it.

Iqbal Singh
Editor

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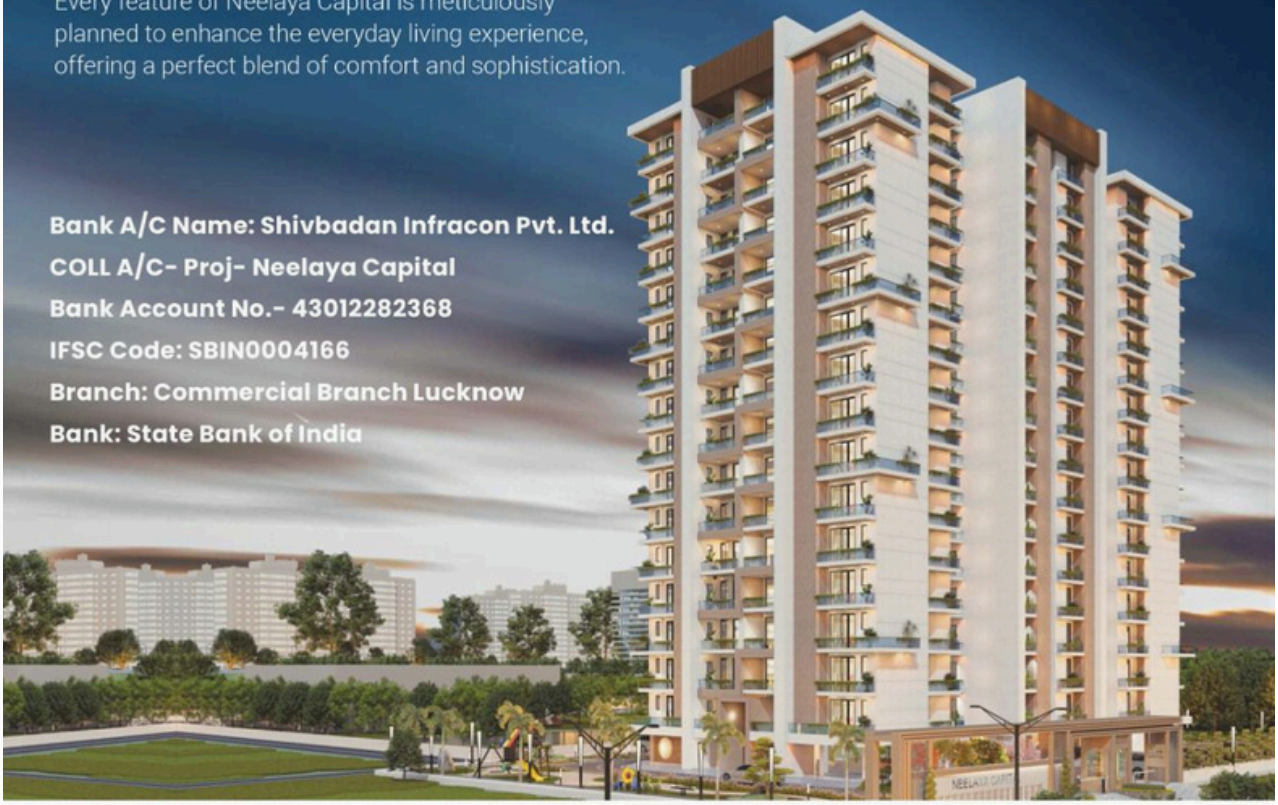

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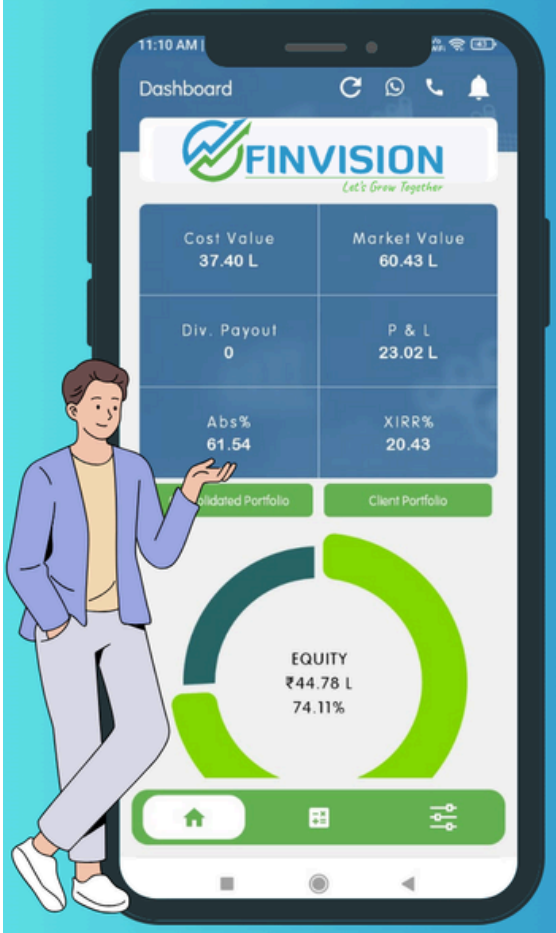

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For ease of providing feedback, such links have been provided at the end of the articles too.

Online Feedback / Review

We would be featuring Feedbacks received from users post clicking on the interactive active links of the e-magazine. These links can be used by just tapping or clicking on them. For ease of providing feedback, such links have been provided at the end of each articles.

Feedback on: **Last magazine By Col Surender Rohilla - Mar 2025**

An incredible effort. An absolute Collector's edition. Must say, it comes so naturally to Faujis. It's only the how part. Why and when will fall in place. And your edition lays the roadmap so beautifully... crystal clear.
And many of us would just love to do it.

Who else can I quote... I find you to be a leading example of what self help can be all about. Forces Network. The Network that actually works.

Gratitude and warm regards
🙏👍🙏

Additional Suggestions:
It's good

COL SURENDER ROHILLA

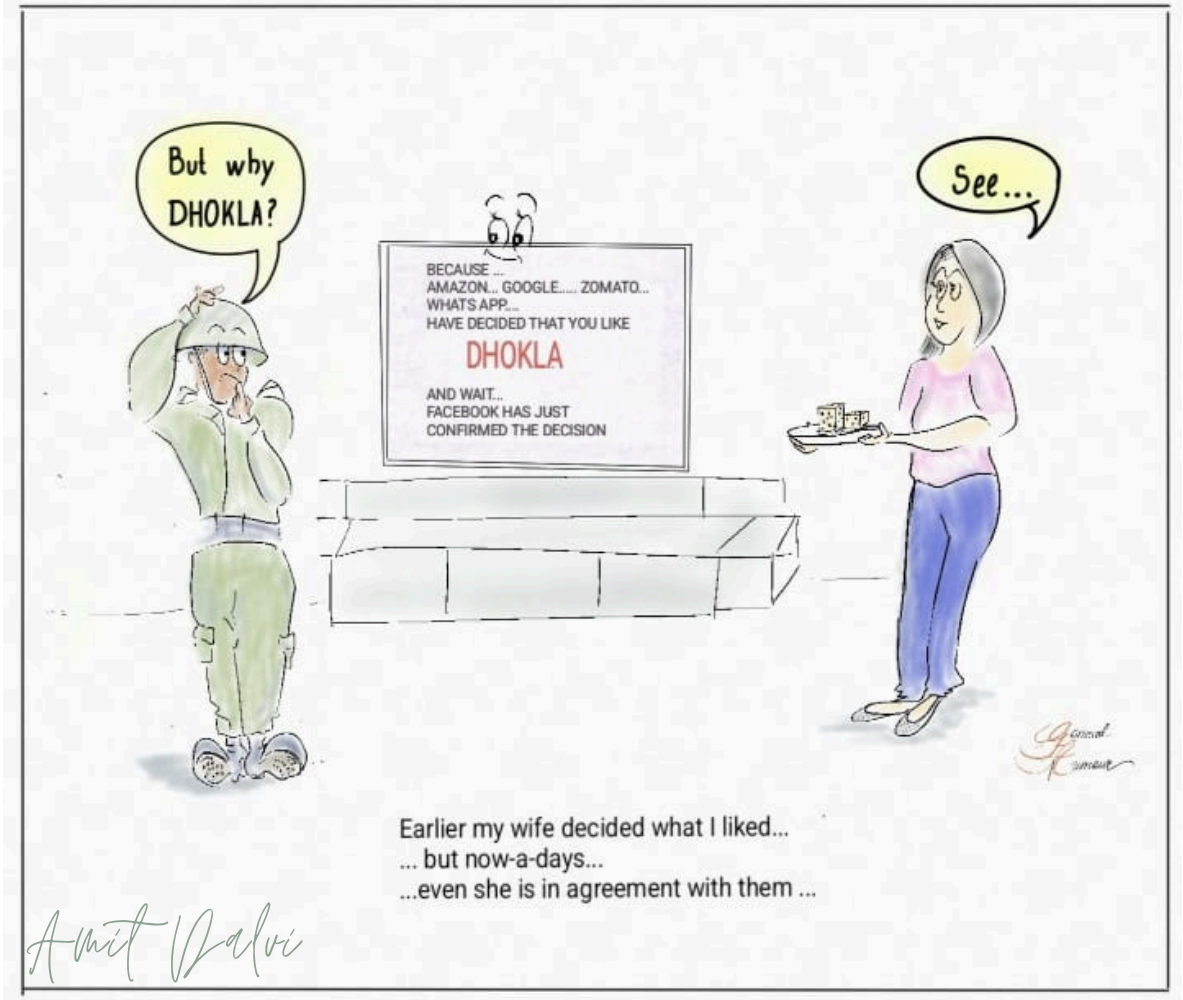
Feedback on: **From Bunker to Cloud: By Lt Col Iqbal Singh - Mar 2025**

Its really inspiring to see the journey from Infantry to Corporate. Gives a lot of inspiration for the future.
I am planning for my transition to corporate post 22 yrs of service. I am a selection grade Col and now planning for exit. May I kindly request you to join me in the forces network.

Additional Suggestions:
Wonderful magazine with lots of valuable inputs. Great Going !!

COL TS CHANDRA

Decisions Now a days



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The World of Consumer Internet Companies

Theme Articles

Theme Article

Unpacking the World of Consumer Internet Companies

BY LT COL IQBAL SINGH

Introduction

When you think of the frontlines, you probably imagine deserts, jungles, or distant conflict zones. But in today's economy, there's a different kind of battlefield — the race for attention, innovation, and impact in the world of consumer internet companies.

These aren't just tech giants selling gadgets or social apps for idle scrolling. They are platforms shaping how people connect, learn, buy, and live — at a scale of millions daily. From e-commerce powerhouses to social networks, from ride-hailing apps to online learning platforms, these companies are defining the modern digital ecosystem.

For military veterans, this world might seem foreign, even unwelcoming. The fast pace, the jargon, the casual office culture — it's a far cry from the structured environment of service life. But beneath the surface lies a surprising truth: consumer internet companies value exactly what veterans excel at — leadership under pressure, operational excellence, mission focus, and grit.

The Frontlines are Changing!

In this article, we'll demystify the consumer internet landscape, explain why these companies are such a rage the world over, attract billions in venture capital, and — most importantly — show how veterans can stake their claim in one of the fastest-growing sectors of the economy. A sector which most veterans sadly overlook.

What Are Consumer Internet Companies?

Consumer Internet Companies are businesses that use the internet to sell products, services, or experiences directly to regular people (consumers), instead of selling to other businesses or governments.

Think of the apps and websites you use every day:

- Shopping online? That's Amazon or Flipkart.
- Ordering food? That's Uber Eats or DoorDash.
- Watching videos? YouTube, Netflix, Zee-5.
- Social media? Facebook, Instagram, TikTok.
- Booking a cab? Uber, Ola, Lyft.
- Learning online? Coursera, Udemy.
- Buying Insurance? Policybazar

These companies make money by:

- Charging you for services (subscriptions, delivery fees)
- Charging businesses to advertise (like ads you see on social media)
- Charging sellers to use their platform (like shops on Amazon)

Their goal is simple: reach millions (or billions) of people, make their lives easier, and grow as fast as possible.

What makes them powerful is their ability to scale quickly — once the app or platform is built, they can add millions of new users without opening new stores or hiring thousands of staff. That's why they attract so much investment.

The Rise of Consumer Internet Companies

The history of consumer internet companies is a dynamic and multifaceted story that has evolved significantly since its early beginnings. Here's a breakdown of the key stages and developments:

The Rise of the Dot-com Era (Mid-1990s - Early 2000s):

- **New Tech Trends:** There were several trends that turbocharged the rise of these companies. The prominent amongst them being the explosion of ISPs, emergence of web browsers,- which made the internet accessible to the non-technical users. leaders.
- **Birth of Internet Giants:** This era witnessed the launch of many iconic consumer internet companies that are still prominent today, including
- Amazon (1994), eBay (1995), Yahoo! (1995), Google (1998), and IMDb (1990). These companies pioneered e-commerce, search engines, and online directories.
- **The Dot-com Bubble:** The late 1990s experienced a surge in investment in internet-based companies, often with unproven business models. This "dot-com bubble" burst between 2000 and 2002, leading to the failure of many companies but also setting the stage for more sustainable growth.

The Broadband Era (Early 2000s - Mid-2000s):

- **Always On" Internet:** The introduction of broadband transformed the online experience.
- **Growth of Online Media:** Faster speeds enabled the easier download and sharing of music, videos, and other media, leading to the growth of online media consumption
- **Social Media Begins:** The early-to-mid 2000s saw the rise of early social media platforms like LinkedIn (2002), Friendster, MySpace (2003), and Facebook (2004), fundamentally changing how people connected and shared information online.
- **User-Generated Content:** Platforms like Wikipedia (2001) and WordPress (2003) empowered users to create and share content, marking a shift towards a more participatory web (Web 2.0).

The Mobile and Social Era (Late 2000s - Present):

- **Mobile Internet:** The launch of the iPhone in 2007 and the subsequent rise of smartphones and mobile internet access revolutionized consumer internet usage. Mobile devices became the primary way many people access the internet.
- **Dominance of Social Media:** Platforms like Facebook, YouTube (2005), and Twitter (2006) became deeply integrated into daily life, influencing communication, news consumption, and marketing.
- **App Economy:** The rise of app stores (Apple App Store in 2008, Google Play Store) created a vast ecosystem of mobile applications catering to virtually every consumer need.
- **E-commerce Boom:** Online shopping continued its rapid growth, with mobile commerce becoming increasingly significant.
- **Streaming Services:** Platforms for streaming video (Netflix, Hulu, Disney+) and music (Spotify, Apple Music) disrupted traditional media consumption.
- **The Internet of Things (IoT):** The increasing connectivity of everyday devices (smart home devices, wearables) is expanding the reach of the consumer internet.
- **Data and Personalization:** Consumer internet companies increasingly rely on data analytics and algorithms to personalize user experiences, recommendations, and advertising.

How are they different from traditional businesses?

Traditional businesses build physical stores and serve people in a specific place.Consumer internet companies build apps and serve the entire world through a screen. That's why these companies grow faster, attract more venture capital, and sometimes seem like they're burning cash at first — because they're racing to build huge user bases before focusing on profits.

The Table below nicely captures the differences.

Aspect	Consumer Internet Companies	Consumer Internet Companies
Distribution	Primarily digital, global from day one	Physical or local distribution networks
Scalability	Exponential — serve millions/billions with incremental cost	Linear — scaling requires significant capital (factories, stores)
Customer Acquisition	Digital marketing, network effects, viral growth	Traditional advertising, foot traffic, word-of-mouth
Revenue Models	Freemium, subscriptions, ads, transaction fees	Sales of physical goods/services, markup pricing
Margins	Often high after scale (software has low marginal cost)	Lower, due to physical inventory, logistics, labour costs
Data Utilization	Core to the business — personalization, targeting	Limited use of data historically
Speed of Innovation	Fast, with A/B testing and rapid iteration	Slower, due to physical constraints and higher risks

Why Are Consumer Internet Companies So Profitable?

Even though they often lose money in the early years, once consumer internet companies "click," they can become extremely profitable. Here's why:

- **Low Cost to Serve Millions of Customers:** Once they build the app or platform, serving one customer or ten million costs almost the same.

➡ **Example**: Netflix spends a lot to create movies and shows, but once they're made, millions of people can watch them at no extra cost.

- **Massive Scale = Massive Revenue:** These companies go global quickly.

➡ A local store serves hundreds. An app can serve billions worldwide, 24/7, without opening new locations.

- **Data Power = Smarter Selling:** They gather huge amounts of data on customer behaviour, which helps them:

1. Improve services.
2. Predict what customers want.
3. Sell targeted ads (which brands pay big money for!).

➡**Example**: Facebook and Google make billions from advertising because they know exactly what ads to show you.

Multiple Ways to Make Money: They don't rely on just one thing:

- Subscriptions (Spotify, Netflix)
- Ads (Facebook, YouTube)
- Transaction fees (Amazon, Uber)
- Premium services (LinkedIn, dating apps)

One platform, many income streams.

Network Effects: The more people use the platform, the more valuable it becomes for everyone.

➡ **Example:** The more users on Instagram, the more appealing it is to advertisers and new users.

In short if I were to summarize- they spend big upfront to grow fast, and once they reach scale, the money flows in with far lower costs than traditional businesses.

Why VCs are Chasing these Companies?

In fact VCs are okay (even expect) big early losses in Consumer Internet companies. The reasons are as under:

Land Grab Mentality: Speed > Profits Early On

- Consumer internet markets are "winner-takes-most."
- Early losses are the price of fast growth: grab users, grab market share, lock down the category before competitors do.
- Example: Uber and Lyft both lost billions fighting for market dominance.

Customer Acquisition Costs (CAC) Front-Loaded

- It's expensive to get users early — ads, incentives, referral bonuses.
- But: once users are acquired, the cost of serving them is low.
- VCs are okay with burning cash upfront because the lifetime value (LTV) of customers, once loyal, can far exceed initial costs.

Building Network Effects

- Early losses fuel growth to critical mass.

Until you reach "escape velocity," you spend to acquire users and stimulate network effects.
After the network is established, organic growth kicks in and spend decreases.

Scale Economies Will Kick In Later

- Early: Building the platform, hiring, marketing = expensive.
- Later: Each new user costs almost nothing (software is infinitely scalable).
- Investors look at the future margin potential, not just current losses.

Growth is the Signal" for Valuation

- In VC-backed startups, growth rate > profitability (at least early on).
- High growth = market leadership potential = higher valuation = bigger returns for VCs.

Market Education & Behaviour Change Cost Money

- Many consumer internet startups are creating new behaviours.
- Example: Before Uber, people didn't expect to hail a cab with their phone.
- Startups spend early to educate and shift consumer habits.

Future Monetization is Highly Leveraged

- Early users might not pay much (or at all), but later monetization can explode.
- Example: Facebook was free for years, then advertising revenue exploded.

Early losses in consumer internet startups are seen as an investment in future dominance. VCs are betting on category ownership and long-term scalability, not short-term profit.

Why Are these Companies So Popular Amongst Its Users/ Customers?

Consumer internet companies enjoy immense popularity among their users for a multitude of compelling reasons, all

centred around enhancing convenience, providing value, and fostering connection in the digital age. Here's a breakdown of the key factors driving their popularity:

Their consumers love them

Unparalleled Convenience:

- **24/7 Accessibility:** Users can access services and products anytime, anywhere with an internet connection, breaking free from the constraints of physical store hours or traditional service availability. For example, e-commerce platforms allow shopping at any hour of the day or night.
- **Ease of Use:** Consumer internet companies prioritize user-friendly interfaces and intuitive navigation, making their platforms accessible to individuals with varying levels of technical expertise. Think about the simplicity of searching on Google or scrolling through a social media feed.
- **Mobile Integration:** With the widespread use of smartphones, mobile apps offered by these companies provide seamless access to services on the go, further enhancing convenience. You can order food, book a ride, or manage your finances directly from your phone.

Vast Information and Choice:

- **Information at Fingertips:** Search engines like Google provide instant access to a global repository of information, empowering users to learn, research, and find answers to their queries effortlessly.
- **Extensive Selection:** Online marketplaces and e-commerce platforms offer a far wider array of products and services compared to traditional retail, providing users with more choices and the ability to find niche items.
- **Comparison and Reviews:** Users can easily compare prices, features, and read reviews from other consumers, enabling them to make informed decisions before committing to a purchase or service.

Cost Savings and Value:

- **Competitive Pricing:** The online marketplace often fosters price competition, leading to potentially lower prices for consumers due to reduced overhead costs for online businesses and increased transparency.
- **Deals and Discounts:** Online platforms frequently offer promotions, discounts, and loyalty programs, providing users with opportunities to save money.
- **Free Services:** Many popular consumer internet services, such as email, social media, and basic search, are offered for free, supported by advertising or other revenue models, providing significant value to users.

Enhanced Communication and Connection:

- **Social Networking:** Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter allow users to connect with friends, family, and communities worldwide, fostering social interaction and a sense of belonging.
- **Instant Communication:** Messaging apps and email services enable quick and easy communication across distances, facilitating personal and professional interactions.

- **Community Building:** The internet allows people with shared interests to find and connect with each other, forming online communities and support networks.

Personalization and Relevance:

- **Tailored Content:** Many consumer internet companies utilize algorithms to analyze user data and preferences, delivering personalized content, recommendations, and advertisements that are more likely to be relevant and engaging. For instance, streaming services suggest movies and shows based on your viewing history.
- **Customized Experiences:** Some platforms allow users to customize their settings and preferences, tailoring the online experience to their individual needs and interests.

In essence, consumer internet companies have become deeply ingrained in users' lives by offering solutions that save time, provide vast resources, potentially save money, and enhance social connections, all within a user-friendly and increasingly personalized digital environment. This powerful combination of benefits has made them indispensable tools and platforms for billions of people worldwide.

Employment Opportunities in Consumer Internet Companies

A Snapshot of employment Opportunities in these Companies

Source: AI Generated

Consumer Internet Companies need all kinds of talent, not just tech experts. Their operations are huge, and they value diverse skill sets — especially leadership, discipline, and problem-solving, which veterans have in abundance.

Technology & Engineering

- **Software Developer / Engineer** (build apps, platforms)
- **Data Analyst / Data Scientist** (analyze user data for insights)
- **Cybersecurity Specialist** (protect platforms from threats)
- **Product Manager** (guide the development of new features)
- ➡ **Veteran Advantage:** Strategic thinking, risk management, systems operation.

Operations & Logistics

- **Supply Chain Manager** (for e-commerce companies)
- **Operations Manager** (ensure smooth daily operations)
- **Customer Experience Lead** (optimize user satisfaction)
- ➡ **Veteran Advantage:** Operational leadership, logistical expertise, handling complexity under pressure.

Sales & Marketing

- **Digital Marketer** (social media, ads, content creation)
- **Partnership Manager** (build relationships with brands and vendors)
- **Growth Hacker** (find creative ways to attract users fast)
- ➡ **Veteran Advantage:** Communication skills, teamwork, mission-focused mindset.

Customer Support & Community Management

- **Customer Success Manager** (help users get value from products)
- **Community Manager** (build loyal user communities)
- ➡ **Veteran Advantage:** Conflict resolution, people skills, service mindset.

Business Strategy & Leadership

- **Strategy Analyst / Consultant** (map growth plans)
- **Program Manager** (manage big projects across teams)
- **Founder / Entrepreneur** (start your own consumer internet venture!)
- ➡ **Veteran Advantage:** Leadership, big-picture thinking, adaptability.

Creative & Content Roles

- **Content Creator / Writer** (blogs, scripts, ads)
- **UI/UX Designer** (design user-friendly experiences)
- **Video Producer / Editor** (create engaging content)
- ➡ **Veteran Advantage:** Storytelling, creativity, mission-driven messaging.

Whatever your background — tech, logistics, leadership, or communications — there's a place for veterans in Consumer Internet companies. What matters is understanding the digital landscape and upskilling for the civilian mission.

Entrepreneurial Opportunities for Veterans in Consumer Internet Companies

Source : AI generated

An Wide Array of Entrepreneurial Opportunities Exist in the Sector

Veterans have natural leadership, discipline, and resilience — all crucial for entrepreneurship. Here's how they can build ventures in this booming sector:

1. E-Commerce Store Owner 🛒

- Launch a niche online store (apparel, tactical gear, fitness equipment, etc.)
- Leverage platforms like Shopify, Amazon, or direct-to-consumer models.

Veteran Edge: Operational skills, supply chain experience, and mission-driven branding.

2.Digital Services Agency 💻

Start an agency offering services like:

- Digital marketing
- Social Media mangagement
- Web development
- SEO and Content writing

Veteran Edge: Team leadership and discipline to run client-driven businesses.

3. App or SaaS Product Founder 📲

Build apps or software solving specific problems:

- Productivity tools
- Fitness or wellness apps
- Community platforms for veterans

Veteran Edge: Identifying real-world problems and executing solutions.

4.Online Education & Coaching 📚

- Launch online courses, webinars, or coaching services.
- Topics: leadership, resilience, cybersecurity, or transition skills.

Veteran Edge: Teaching from real experience and authentic authority.

5. Content Creation & Media Ventures 🎥

- Start a YouTube channel, podcast, or newsletter.
- Focus on topics like veterans' affairs, entrepreneurship, or tech reviews.

Veteran Edge: Storytelling, authenticity, and strong communication.

6. Marketplace Founder 🔁

Build a niche marketplace connecting:

- Veterans with job opportunities
- Veteran-owned businesses with customers
- Specialty goods or services

Veteran Edge: Community-building and trusted networks.

7. Affiliate Marketing & Influencer Brand 🤝

- Promote products/services and earn commissions.
- Build a personal brand as a veteran entrepreneur.

Veteran Edge: Trustworthiness and strong personal narrative.

8. Franchise-style Digital Models 🧩

- Operate multiple drop shipping or print-on-demand stores.
- Manage virtual assistants and automation tools.

Veteran Edge: Strategic planning and operational scalability.

Veterans bring leadership, resilience, and mission-focus to any entrepreneurial venture. In the Consumer Internet world, these qualities fuel growth — from solopreneurship to building teams and scaling fast.

Why Are Veterans Often Hesitant About Joining Consumer Internet Companies?

Lack of Awareness:

- Many veterans simply aren't exposed to the world of consumer internet businesses.
- Military careers don't typically intersect with tech startups or digital marketplaces
- The "Consumer Internet" term itself feels abstract or unfamiliar.
- ➡ Solution: Clear education and exposure through veteran transition programs.

Perceived Skill Gap:

- Veterans may feel they lack the "tech" skills needed (like coding or digital marketing).
- Even though many roles don't require deep tech skills, this perception persists.
- ➡ Solution: Upskilling in specific areas like digital tools, analytics, or e-commerce platforms.

Risk Aversion:

- Startups (many consumer internet companies are) are known for instability and fast pace.
- Veterans, trained for structured environments, might view this unpredictability as risky.
- ➡ Solution: Emphasize veterans' adaptability and appetite for challenge — qualities ideal for dynamic environments.

Why Most Veterans Hesitate to Join the Sector
Source : AI gGnerated

Cultural Misalignment:

Startup culture: casual dress codes, flat hierarchies, open debate.
Military culture: formal structures, clear chain of command, strict protocols.
➡ Solution: Bridge understanding that consumer internet companies value leadership, discipline, and mission-focus — all military strengths.

Undervaluing Transferable Skills:

- Veterans might not realize their skills in logistics, operations, crisis management, and leadership are highly valuable.
- They underestimate their fit for roles in operations, customer success, or strategy.
- ➡ Solution: Highlight transferable skills during transition coaching and mentorship.

Lack of Veteran Networks in Tech:

- Compared to sectors like defense, logistics, or security, consumer internet has fewer visible veteran leaders.
- ➡ Solution: Build communities and mentorship pipelines specifically for veterans in tech startups.

It's not about ability — it's about awareness, mindset, and support systems. Veterans have exactly the resilience, leadership, and mission-focus that fast-growing consumer internet companies need. They just need the right bridge to cross into this thriving space.

Veterans the Sector is Calling, Where are You?

These companies are shaping the future of how we shop, communicate, learn, and entertain ourselves. With your background in leadership, resilience, and operational excellence, you bring an unbeatable advantage to this sector.Whether it's running complex logistics, managing dynamic teams, or staying calm under pressure, the qualities you honed in uniform directly apply to roles across e-commerce, digital services, SaaS, and more.

Veterans do NOT Ignore this Sector for a Successful Career

Source: AI generate

What makes veterans a natural fit? First, you're mission-driven — a trait prized in the fast-paced, goal-oriented environment of consumer internet firms. Second, you're agile and adaptable, ready to navigate rapid changes and solve problems in real time. Third, you understand teamwork and leadership better than most — essential for scaling startups and customer-centric platforms. And importantly, your unique perspective and diverse experiences enrich company culture and strategy, making you invaluable assets in a competitive space.

So here's your call to action: start by building your awareness, plan your transition, upskill in areas like digital tools or marketing, and connect with mentors already in the industry. The consumer internet space isn't just for coders — it's for leaders, operators, and visionaries like you. Step into this new arena with confidence and build not just a career, but a thriving future.

About the Author

Lt Col Iqbal Singh was third generation in his family to join the Indian Army. An Ex-NDA officer he was commissioned into the Garhwal Rifles in Dec 1987. Iqbal had an illustrious career in the Army he was selected on an infantry vacancy to undergo the EME Officers Degree Engineering Course in 1993 and followed it up with an MTech. He is an alumnus of DSSC, Wellington and has served as the Brigade Major of an Infantry Brigade. He took Premature retirement in 2008 and joined the IT industry. His first job was with Satyam Computers at Hyderabad starting in 2008. He is currently working with Google. He is also the founder of Forces Network – the Network of the military veterans in the corporate with nearly 7000 members.

Theme Article

FAUJI VOYAGE ON OTT

By Brig Krishna Raj Nambiar (Retd)

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness…

Opening paragraph of Tale of Two Cities by Charles Dickens

For most of us uninitiated veterans contemporary media is of immense incredulity, while for the wizened lot it is a sea of opportunity and a source of connectivity to boundless opportunities. Faujis have some very compelling stories to tell, the world is waiting to hear, provided one can put it in the way it can be likeable. The perspective the charisma and incredible relatable and powerful stories of lessons learnt- very much within Fauji officer's reach. It all lies beyond a traditional Job and we will see how..

OTT and why it is called so?

Over The Top streaming service is called so as it bypasses the Cable networks, the broadcasts and TV networks and brings media directly to the streaming device. This content may include shows and movies for which the OTT acquired licensed rights from the content owner. Programming may also include original content produced by the service or specifically for it. OTT services include paid services such as Amazon Prime or Netflix whereas free services such as FAST (Free Ad streaming Television) are also available, examples are Pluto TV or Tubi.

OTT refers to content from a third party that is delivered to an end-user, with the ISP simply transporting IP packets. OTT content is delivered via the public Internet instead of a closed, private network system that uses exclusive equipment like Set Top Boxes.

Businesses Available In This Line

- Platforms like Uscreen and Muvi: offer solutions for small businesses to create and manage their own streaming services.
- These platforms provide tools for building custom apps, managing content, and monetizing through subscriptions, ads, or hybrid models.
- Small businesses can use these platforms to offer exclusive content, build a community around their brand, and generate revenue.

The bedrock of any business is the core competence. For the extroverted entrepreneur variety of Guys one can explore other options to develop and grow the interest in OTT.

Leveraging Existing OTT Platforms:

- **Platforms like VHX and Vimeo OTT:** Allow businesses to sell video content directly from their own apps and websites. This is where you may set up your own small low cost homemade film production venture and upload on OTT Platforms. While they get popular you can charge for thee advertising tariffs therein.

- **Platforms like Brightcove, Kaltura, and Dacast:** If you are more of a network oriented man and have a reasonable following on platforms of social nature you may be able to convince the milieu to connect with you while their content is uploaded on OTT. You may use the Platforms; they provide tools for managing and distributing video content across various platforms.
- Small businesses can use these platforms to host their own channels, connect with audiences, and build a direct relationship with their fans. In order to connect with the interested parties, one may have to do the Google my business Jig of the 10 KM radius! Remember VHX, it's an important platform which will crop up again!

Whenever you hear something interesting and workable, scepticism creeps in. The un-surety of something that could make you lose your hard earned moolah looms high. So let's see examples of Small Businesses Using OTT Platforms:

- **ClassPass:** A fitness OTT app where users can connect with trainers live or watch on-demand videos.
- **Corepower Yoga, Dancebody, OBE Fitness:** Other examples of fitness-related OTT platforms.
- **Individual creators:** VHX allows artists and creators to sell their video content directly to fans.

CREATIVE WRITER/ YOUTUBE INFLUENCER

It would be advisable for the WhatsApp Warriors to try some creativity and let off some steam where they can make a genuine difference. We You Tube and its reach. What is Social Media and How to be an influencer?

Step 1 - Identify Your Niche Platform:

Find Your Passion:
Choose a topic or area you're genuinely passionate about and knowledgeable in, as this will make content creation more enjoyable and authentic. Battlefield stories, Jungle adventures and Treasure hunts, Ghost stories in dilapidated palace ruins. Ranthambhor or Itarana palace etc.

Select a Platform:
Determine which social media platform best suits your niche and target audience (e.g., Instagram for visual content, YouTube for video, TikTok for short-form content). You may start on small stories on You Tube and let it bounce back as trial.

Focus on Specificity:
Instead of being a "general influencer," specialize in a particular area within your niche to attract a more engaged audience. Guardian of integrity and probity in Public Life etc.

Step 2. Create High-Quality Content:

Invest in Equipment:
Invest in a good camera, microphone, and editing software to produce professional-looking content. To start with for stills a Nikon Coolpix P 1000 Digital would do. For Microphones sensitive Boya BYBlimp Wind Mic would suffice your need.

Be Consistent:
Regularly post high-quality content to maintain audience engagement and build a strong following. This has to be achieved with practice. High quality content such as newspaper editorials would be a good start.

Above :High quality Content and engaging the audience…

Engage with Your Audience:
Respond to comments, stories, and direct messages to foster a sense of community and build relationships with your followers. Be active on Linked in with your activities and you will find response from the audience.

Step 3 : Build Your Audience

Promote Your Content: Share your content across multiple platforms and engage in online conversations to increase visibility.

Collaborate with Other Influencers: Partner with other influencers in your niche to reach a wider audience and build credibility.

Run Contests and Giveaways: Offer incentives to attract new followers and encourage engagement.

Step 4: Monetize Your Platform- This is a Plus Plus aim but none the less…

Sponsored Posts: Partner with brands to create sponsored content and promote their products or services.

Affiliate Marketing: Earn a commission by promoting products through affiliate links.

Sell Products or Services: Create and sell your own products, such as merchandise, digital courses, or coaching programs.

Brand Ambassadorships: Represent a brand and promote their products or services consistently.

Exclusive Content: Offer exclusive content or early access to followers in exchange for a subscription or membership.

Consulting: Offer your expertise and experience as a consultant to other businesses or individuals.

How to write for Movies and TV shows?

Get to the Meat - learning Screenwriting and Movie Story Structure. The superstructure of a script and story should follow the below aspects:-

- Protagonists and Antagonist - generally in focus 30-40 years age Rags to Riches.
- Terminologies – Jargon hunting and setting- Gangs of Wasseypur.
- Formatting a screenplay – Village or City. Lagaan as example.
- Setting up your story - Read – "Man with a thousand faces"- J Campbell
- Incidents of Hero hesitation – a k a – The Gita – "Arjun Vishaad Yog"
- Embracing change – Film Laksya theme.
- Exploding entertainment – Satte Pe Satta – post interval Everyone finds a mate.
- Midpoint crisis -prelude to climax – "Chashme Baddoor" _ heroine's kidnap.
- Up the stakes – No info and bad weather.
- Climax and the Big event – All arrive as hero vanquishes foes
- Wrap it up ; curtains or trail off for a sequel – Police catch up and arrive…

Writing the Story

Modus Operandi -It would be ideal to understand Story Structure. The soldier now a learner has to master the three-act structure and learn how to outline their movie effectively from beginning to end. Also when watching successful Films one can dissect the story structures of iconic movies to understand what makes them resonate with audiences. As we go by we need to learn Story Pacing. As to how to maintain a rhythm that builds tension and releases it effectively over the course of the film. Through the entire stretch one need to understand Protagonist Goals: You will develop a deep understanding of the protagonist's desires and conflicts, creating a focused and impactful story.

Prologue Writing a movie script is a creative process that requires patience and practice. Stay flexible, be open to feedback, and enjoy the journey of bringing your story to life! Focus on topics like veterans' affairs, entrepreneurship, or tech reviews.

Veterans bring leadership, resilience, and mission-focus to any entrepreneurial venture. In the Consumer Internet world, these qualities fuel growth.

An out of way and unique opportunity related to the OTT platforms and the Film world are the Heritage hinterland options. While the soldier has an ancestral land or property he can leverage that to create a heritage location or a niche activity centre.Some of the traditional and rural films such as Kantara would show deep and rich cultural settings, these locations are hard to come by. Many quick thinking souls have developed the village areas into such spots that are much in demand by the Movie makers. There are famous Kerala bath ritual tanks in old pristine households. Where the terracotta tiles and stone cut steps leading into the Bath tanks are a sight to behold. There is a requirement of the local Gaon Boodhas to be on board with the activity as we all are aware of the rural factor on local opinion.

Conclusion

The other half of the opening lines of "*Tale Of Two Cities*" cites the best closing for the article above-
It was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way--in short, the period was so far like the present period that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only."

Brig Krishna raj Nambiar (Retd)

Commissioned into the Army in 1987 into the Artillery, he opted for Aviation training and joined Army Aviation as a helicopter pilot. He flew for 12 years with 1500 hours of operational flying. After DSSC, he was Grade 1 Operations in a Mtn Div. in 2006-09 he commanded his unit in CT Operations followed by a stint as DS in SC Wing Army War College. He commenced his preparation to civvy street in 2011 about six years prior to release. He got an HR qualification, an L.L.B degree and he cleared UGC NET for professor Grade. He also did an Independent Director course from MDI Gurgaon before stepping out. After commanding two operational Brigades, he took early release to pursue a corporate exposure. In the corporate, he has handled a Real estate firm as a Vice president, an NGO as the senior-most employee, a Port in south India as the VP and presently he is in an MNC manufacturing textiles and flooring as Vice President located at Hyderabad. He can be reached at krishnaraj1812@yahoo.com.

Theme Article

The Life of Kabby Founder : Building an Intercity Ride-Hailing Startup in India

An Entrepreneurial Journey of a Veteran Creating a Ride Hailing Company

BY LT COL RAJESH VIJ (RETD)

Introduction

The ride-hailing industry in India has seen explosive growth with companies like Ola and Uber dominating intracity travel. Along came Makemytrip , ease my trip and other such companies who started offering everything – ticketing , hotels , trains , flights ,etc . However, **intercity travel** remains a largely untapped market with immense potential. In India itself the intercity market has been assessed at $ 6 billion. This is where enters **Kabby,** a hypothetical intercity ride-hailing startup aiming to revolutionize how Indians travel between cities.

But what does it take to build such a company? The life of a Kabby founder is a thrilling yet gruelling journey—filled with sleepless nights, fundraising struggles, regulatory battles, and the relentless pursuit of growth. This article gives a gist of what to expect and the challenges, daily grind, and potential rewards of founding an ride-hailing startup in India.

1. The White Space: Where Kabby Fits In

With the above in view, I planned on launching Kabby for intercity travel only. It took 6 months of data collection, planning, getting the team together which were all were put in place.

Kabby's value proposition had to be in offering a **hassle-free, door-to-door, premium yet affordable intercity cab service** that solves these pain points.

Financial Planning: Before everything, the most important aspect is finance. Detailed costing for Kabby had to be worked out and cash flow spread over a period of 18 months. Here , it is pertinent to mention that one must plan for funds for at least a year plus depending on the product. Seed funding is a major sore point when it comes to actuals. All state governments also provide seed funds but that is very less and often takes 6 to 8 months to materialize. Venture capitalists would only touch you if your product has something unique or your pitch is great and you are ready to part with equity – often to the tune of 25-30 %. Keeping all these in view, I decided to go bootstrapped.

A. Key Differentiators

To launch any new product or service for that matter, it should have its own niche'. It should be different from the existing, solve an existing problem and that to economically. Today, whether launching a service or a product most important is reliability.

This does not come in a day. It takes time and also at times is a drain on the pocket. To just become a reliable partner of a particular service or the most wanted product – one has to be reliable and consistent. It may take months or even a few years due to which most of the startups fail as they close down due to lack of funds and if bootstrapped- force a founder to seek other sources of income rather than pursuit the original.

With Kabby, once the problem had been identified- the solution blackboarded and the flow of design started taking shape. Below are the few problems we identified and their solutions ….

Problem in Current Market	Kabby's Solution
No on-demand intercity cabs	Instant bookings via app, like Uber but for long distances. Also give option of booking on call/ WA.
Uncomfortable buses/trains	AC cabs with spacious seating, clean & hygienic.
Safety concerns for solo travellers	Verified drivers, live tracking, SOS button
No flexibility in schedules	24/7 availability, multiple pickup/drop points providing flexibility laterally.
Hidden costs (luggage fees, tolls, taxes, GST)	Transparent upfront pricing all-inclusive of tolls and taxes shown during booking stage itself.
Pre-paid service	Post paid service.

B. Target Audience

It is imperative to choose the target customers who would avail the services. The fragmented market today has led to segmentation and further redefining roles. For Kabby, we chose carefully as the minimum spend size was 3k. Inspite of that, our target passengers are a wide array as given below . Hence , customisation had to be done accordingly for each segment.

1. **Business Travelers** – Professionals needing punctual, reliable & clean rides.

2. Families & Groups – Cheaper than booking multiple train/bus tickets.

3. Women & Solo Travellers – Safer than buses or random carpooling. All cabs of Kabby with women passengers and senior citizens were to be specially tracked.

4. Emergency Travellers – Last-minute trips (e.g., medical, family emergencies). This segment of customer does not depend on cost / fare. He needs prompt service, often leading to late night / or early morning demand .

C. Market Validation:

Proof of Demand – Another aspect ,one had to give a lot of time and effort was to the proof of demand. There is no point in launching a product or service which does not have a regular and consistent demand structure. In my case, had I launched Kabby as a intracity ride hailing app, it would have died its own death. The market had to therefore be studied in detail, data collected and authenticated from multiple sources and only then gone ahead with. I have jotted 02 examples below of the same:-

- **Rise of Intra-City Ride-Hailing:** Ola/Uber proved Indians prefer cabs over autos/taxis. The Kali -pilli of Mumbai and Delhi were the not so preferred cabs as they were of old vintages, with non-functional AC's, rude drivers and mechanically unfit vehicles.
- **Premium Bus Services :** Show willingness to pay for comfort. However, the target segment of Kabby did not prefer travelling by buses as the pickup and drop points were not door to door.

Failed Attempts (e.g., Uber Intercity shut down in 2020) – Not due to lack of demand, but **unit economics and operational challenges** that they were facing . However , they have reopened at a much higher cost.

D. Building the MVP (Minimum Viable Product)

Before one could think of scaling, as a founder one must and had to test the concept with a **basic app.** Multiple locations had to be earmarked for placement of personnel, time check of all had to be done and bookings made by all (approx. 100) had to be done simultaneously. This was the easy part. There arose many challenges as the app would not take the strain or hung up. That sorted, next came the tracking of the bookings till the very end till payments by all.

I remember we used to sit whole nights , with chai or beers – cajoling, trying and then again retrying. Here I would like to mention that since Kabby's concept was of intercity – finding the right people for testing in different cities was not only time and money consuming but also at times frustrating as all the testers were freelance people who were chosen only because they could devote time at late hours.

Once the customer App was sorted, then came a similar exercise for the drivers app. The same set of people some who were unavailable at times and finding their replacements kept the HR team on their toes. We were to do a similar test over 10 days with 100 mobiles in different cities, at different times demanding different vehicles on different routes – all synchronised as one. What an energy drain!!!

The next stage was the **implementation stage or the beta phase** where we were to get early adopters. These were mostly colleagues, family friends and known corporate travellers who were given incentives like free rides, etc. Parallelly, the onboarding of drivers was taking place. This was again by dishing out incentives like zero commissions, small gifts and assurances which were a drain on pocket and trust-building which again does not happen overnight .

Slowly and steadily data collection of both drivers, vehicles and customers started taking shape, with a few additions every day. As the data rolled , came the demands on the App. It was indeed a eureka moment when our first guest booked a cab on the App. All the hard work and SOP's came into play and due to intense training all went smoothly. Once the initial acceptance started taking place , it was again time to get into the grind of tech guys who everyday would have a bucketful of bugs to sought out.

2. The Operational Grind: Running Kabby Day-to-Day

A. Fleet and Driver Management - Unlike intracity cabs, intercity trips require longer driver commitment (4–8-hour trips), going to different cities, sleeping at a new place every night. Thereafter, return trip assurance or another destination after a 4 hours rest has to be planned or it becomes a deadhead mile = lost revenue for the driver. Also, since the vehicles run almost 300 km on an average every day, there is a higher vehicle maintenance (more wear and tear) which has to be taken care of in pricing. Many drivers avoid all this. That being so, we formulated a few inhouse solutions to overcome this and thereby ensure all round availability like driver incentives and bonuses for completing certain number of trips.

B. Customer Acquisition and Retention – There are many Marketing strategies like Referral discounts (e.g., "Get ₹200 off for inviting friends") or Corporate tie-ups (business travellers, IT companies) or Social media campaigns (targeting millennials who prefer comfort). We chose none. We wanted to be different and therefore look the line of organic growth. Let there be growth by recommendations, spread by word of mouth and reviews by those who had travelled with us. This though a slow process , we decided to go ahead like Zudio – and why not. This path had certain challenges be it like **Price sensitivity** wherein our community compared Kabby with trains/buses or Trust issues or Safety concerns for solo travellers, especially women. To counter this , we were prepared with our SOS buttons and deep vetting of drivers and vehicles by our Ops team and our guest support centre tracking and calling each ride – checking on the progress and taking an OK report.

C. Technology & Real-Time Challenges – Existing gaints like Ola and Uber have Dynamic pricing i.e surge during weekends/festivals or even during the day time. Even during rush hours, there are escalated figures than those compared during the afternoons in summer. Similarly, the choice to take a longer, older route as compared to a smaller, well maintained route ,having tolls is the normal pattern in vogue. However, with Kabby we came to a strategic decision to have none of it . There would be NO dynamic pricing and certainly No surges. Fares would be fixed and transparent inclusive of all tolls and taxes and no surprises were to be sprung on the customer at the end of the ride. As regards technology, the app stability is a major factor as downtime = lost customers.

The journey till now: Kabby has emerged as a formidable player in India's intercity mobility sector, demonstrating consistent growth since its launch. The company has strategically expanded its operations to 12+ high-demand city corridors, with initial focus on routes like Delhi-Chandigarh and Delhi–Dehradun before methodically penetrating underserved markets. This measured expansion approach has enabled Kabby to establish a strong operational foundation while maintaining service quality standards.

Currently handling over 600 monthly rides, Kabby has built a reliable network of 4000+ verified driver-partners. The platform boasts an impressive 85% customer retention rate among frequent travellers, indicating strong market acceptance of its value proposition.Technological advancements have been a key differentiator, with the implementation of transparent and fixed ,

pricing algorithms enhanced safety protocols, and optimized driver-rider matching systems contributing to improved service reliability.

The Way forward: Looking ahead, Kabby's leadership has outlined clear strategic priorities: achieving route-level profitability, developing premium service offerings, and establishing partnerships with complementary travel service providers. With India's intercity travel market valued at over $2 billion and plagued by service quality issues, Kabby's focus on operational excellence and customer-centric solutions positions it favorably for continued market expansion. The company's ability to maintain its growth trajectory while addressing sector-specific challenges will determine its potential to become the market leader in this emerging mobility segment.

Conclusion

The life of a Kabby founder is **not for the faint-hearted.** It demands relentless execution, financial discipline, and the ability to navigate India's complex transportation landscape. Yet, for those who succeed, the rewards—both financial and societal—are immense.

It is heartening to mention that in Dec 2024, just 7 months after launch – Kabby was awarded by PHDCCI, a 105 years old organisation recognising Kabby as the **Best Technology Partner.**

Intercity ride-hailing is the next frontier in Indian mobility, and Kabby's founder is at the forefront of this revolution. **Will he survive the storm and emerge as a market leader? Only time will tell….**

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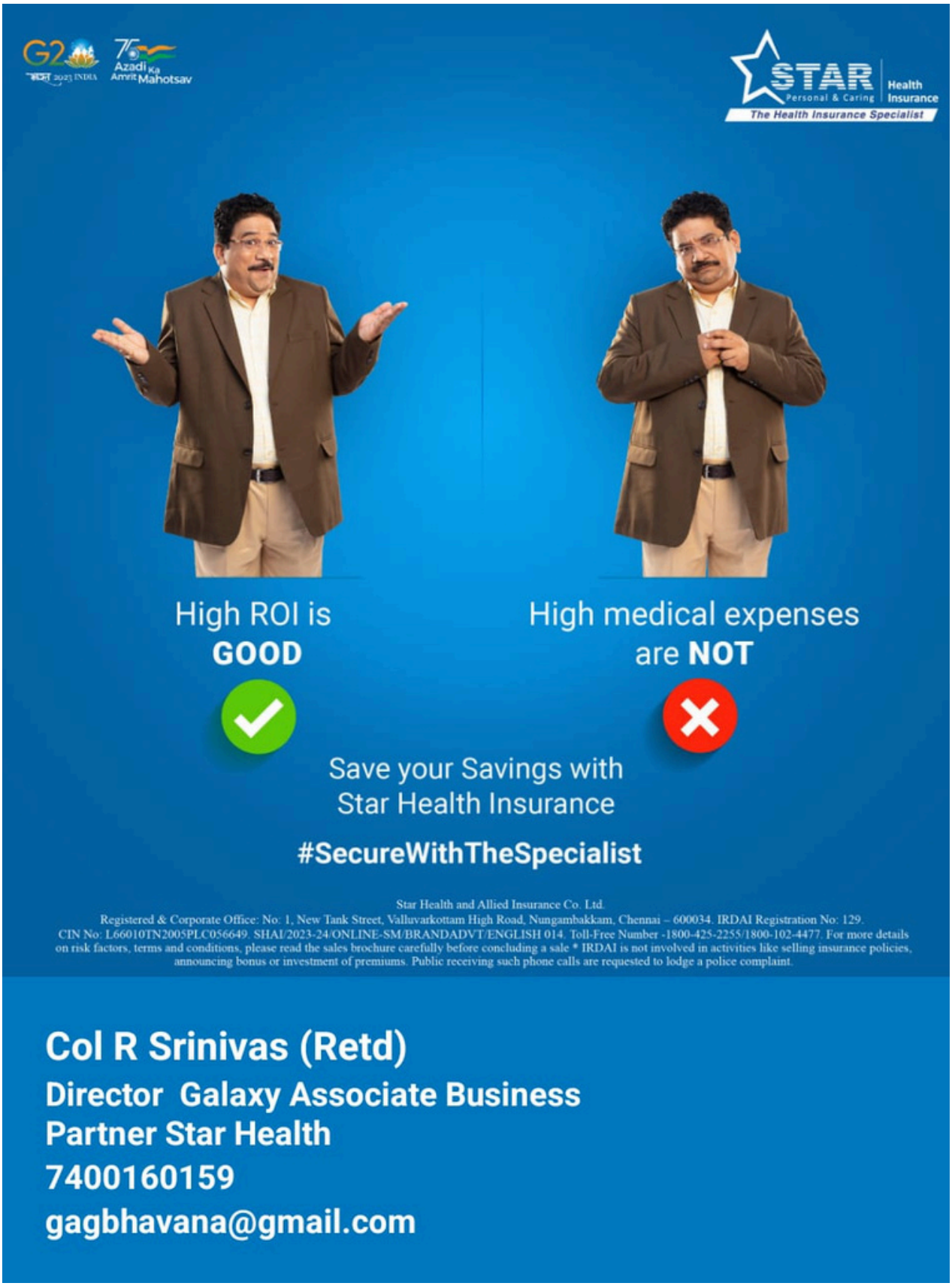
About the Author

Lt Col Rajesh Vij (Retd), MBA, PMP, CPCM, CPPP is an alumnus of the NDA,

Khadakvasla having served in the Indian Army for more than 02 decades. His corporate experience spans in leading companies in India and abroad. Rajesh has worked abroad in Singapore and Hong Kong and has founded 02 companies before- Kabby being his third. He is passionate about technology and travelling. Rajesh is based in Panchkula and spends time planning new initiatives.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Star Of Forces Network

A Forces Network Star is a member of the Forces Network who has gone on to achieve glory in the his/her corporate/civilian avatar as a corporate employee. The aim of this series in not just to celebrate our successes from the veteran community, which unfortunately we do not do enough, but also to inspire others. The ultimate goal is to set up a virtuous self-sustaining cycle of inspiration leading to more successes in turn inspiring many more.

Captain Hamendra Kumar Sharma (Retd.) is a decorated ex-Army officer and accomplished corporate leader with over two decades of experience in security, administration, and facilities management. A graduate of IIM Indore and a Certified Crime Prevention Specialist, Capt. Sharma has led safety and risk operations at top-tier companies like Battery Smart, Zomato, and MakeMyTrip. Known for his crisis leadership and infrastructure planning, he brings military precision to corporate governance. His contributions to national security and corporate resilience make him a standout force in both sectors. Off-duty, he actively supports social initiatives and remains an advocate for community safety.

Q Please tell us something about your background prior to joining the OTA and the Army, and your subsequent Army career.

Prior to joining the OTA, I completed my Post Graduation in Clinical Psychology from the University of Rajasthan. During my academic journey, I was actively involved in the NCC, where I earned the C certificate with an A grade, and I also pursued martial arts—completing my Black Belt in Shorin Ryu in just four years. My formative years in Ajmer and Jaipur were enriched by active participation in sports such as cricket, hockey, football, and cycling.

In addition to my academic and athletic pursuits, I prepared for competitive examinations, including the UPSC and State Services examinations. Although I cleared all the CDS written tests multiple times but never attempted SSB. I made my decisive move during my final attempt by successfully clearing the SSB interview at 18 SSB Allahabad.

My career took a definitive turn in 2004 when I joined OTA Chennai training as an SSC 79 cadet with Naushera Company—a period that proved to be transformative.

I was commissioned into the 62 Cavalry on March 19, 2005, and have since had the honor of serving our nation in various postings, including Roorkee (Uttarakhand), Nabha (Punjab), and Akhnoor (Jammu & Kashmir). Following my retirement, I furthered my professional development by completing a course at IIM Indore in 2010.

This diverse background has equipped me with a unique blend of academic insight, leadership skills, and operational experience, all of which have been pivotal throughout my career.

Q You were an Armd Corps officer. What were the reasons for quitting the Army?

I had a deeply fulfilling tenure with 62 Cavalry and had the privilege of serving in various roles that enriched my professional and personal growth. I wouldn't say I 'quit' the Army—because it's not something one can truly leave behind. The values, discipline, and spirit stay with you for life. In 2010, I took a difficult but necessary decision to step away from active service due to personal circumstances. My father's health had started to decline, and as the only child, I felt a strong sense of responsibility to be there for my family. I lost him in 2012, but the 'Josh' of being an Army officer still lives within me and continues to inspire everything I do.

Army days

Q Give us an understanding about your current role and what you are presently engaged in. Also please share in chronological order the roles and companies in your corporate career?

Currently, I am serving as the Vice President – Administration, LERT, IT Infrastructure, SOC & Real Estate at BatterySmart.

Corporate Avatar

In this role, I lead multiple verticals across PAN India, overseeing warehouses, corporate offices and Partner Stations. My responsibilities include setting up systems and processes for new initiatives, mitigating risks to business continuity —ranging from fraud investigations to liaison with government authorities—and supporting organizational expansion at a national level.

My corporate career trajectory includes:

- **BatterySmart** (July 2024 – Present): VP – Administration, LERT, IT Infra, Projects & Real Estate
- **DealShare** (Jan 2022 – June 2024): VP – Administration, LERT, IT Infra, Projects & Expansion
- **Zomato Ltd.** (Jul 2018 – Dec 2021): VP – Threat Operations, SCM, Workplace & Facilities
- **Pathways School, Gurugram** (Jul 2017 – Jun 2018): General Manager – Administration
- **Fareportal India Pvt. Ltd.** (Feb 2017 – Jul 2017): Director – Corporate Development (Pan India)
- **MakeMyTrip India Pvt. Ltd.** (Sep 2015 – Feb 2017): Associate Director & Head of Administration – PAN Indiatext

Indus International School, Pune (Sep 2012 – Sep 2015): Director – Administration, Pastoral Care, Sports, and CSO
Marriott International, Ahmedabad (Aug 2011 – Sep 2012): Head – Loss Prevention
Indus International School, Bengaluru (Jul 2010 – Aug 2011): Director – Sports and HOB

The spirit of service, strategic thinking, and operational excellence developed during my Army tenure have consistently driven results in every organization I've been a part of.

Q How did you prepare yourself for the Military to Corporate transition? Did doing certifications help you ?

The transition from the military to the corporate world is both a challenge and an opportunity. While the Indian Army equipped me with invaluable leadership, discipline, and crisis management skills, I was fully aware that adapting to the corporate environment would require me to realign these strengths to business contexts.

To prepare myself for this transition, I took a structured approach. One of the most impactful steps was enrolling in the Certificate Course in Business Management for Defence Officers (CCBMDO) at IIM Indore. This program was instrumental in bridging the gap between military leadership and corporate management. It gave me formal exposure to areas like operations, project management, finance, marketing, and organizational behavior, helping me understand business functions from a strategic perspective.

In addition to the IIM program, I pursued certifications that complemented my operational experience. Notably, I became a Certified Crime Prevention Specialist from CIISCM, Singapore, and completed Safety & Security training from Marriott Global Safety Academy, as well as courses in CPR, First Aid, and AED. These certifications were directly aligned with roles I took on in the corporate world, particularly in Threat Operations, Risk Management, and Facility Administration.

The combination of structured academic training and targeted certifications gave me the right mix of credibility, confidence, and adaptability. More importantly, it signaled to potential employers that I was serious about the transition and willing to invest in upskilling myself to add value from day one.

Q You have worked in a wide variety of industries ranging from Schools, online travel portal, a food delivery company and more. What were some typical difference that you noticed in these industries? Do you need different skills sets in different industries for an Administration role?

Yes, I've had the opportunity to work across a range of industries—from education and hospitality to e-commerce, online travel, and food delivery platforms. While the core principles of administration—such as operational efficiency, compliance, safety, vendor management, and team coordination—remain consistent, each industry presents its own set of challenges and nuances that require adaptability and a tailored approach.
In educational institutions like Indus International and Pathways, the focus was more on child safety, pastoral care, regulatory compliance, and building a nurturing environment. Administration here required sensitivity, strong communication with parents, and a high level of vigilance around child protection and well-being.

In contrast, online travel platforms like MakeMyTrip and Fareportal were fast-paced, customer-driven, and expansion-focused. Here, the emphasis was on cost optimization, real estate management, and ensuring seamless backend support for tech teams and customer service functions spread across global locations.

At Zomato, and now BatterySmart and DealShare, the scale and complexity increased even more. These industries are extremely dynamic, driven by logistics, hyperlocal operations, and rapid scalability.

In such environments, administration goes beyond facilities management—it involves crisis response (like LERT/Threat Ops), business continuity planning, liaising with local authorities, managing compliance across geographies, and leading major expansion projects under tight timelines.

So yes, while the core competencies in administration remain universal, successful execution requires industry-specific awareness and adaptability. The key is to be a fast learner, understand the business priorities, and align administrative strategies to support them proactively. My experience across these varied sectors has helped me build a versatile skill set and a broader strategic vision.

Q How as your experience working with Zomato? Did you have to learn some technology related subjects? How did you do so ? What would your advice be to fellow veterans on this front ?

My experience at Zomato was extremely enriching and transformative. It was a high-energy, fast-paced environment where decisions had to be made quickly and operations scaled rapidly across 500+ cities. I led multiple verticals including Threat Operations (LERT), Workplace & Facilities, Supply Chain, and Loss Prevention. It gave me a front-row seat to how technology drives modern business operations—right from real-time tracking, command center surveillance, and automation of SOPs, to system-based inventory controls and centralized risk management.

Yes, there was definitely a technology learning curve, especially transitioning from traditional methods of administration to tech-driven platforms. For instance, setting up a Central Command Center required familiarity with surveillance tech, analytics dashboards, and IoT devices. Similarly, working on supply chain and workplace solutions meant understanding tools like SAP, cloud-based facility management systems, and digital vendor portals.

To adapt, I followed a hands-on learning approach. I engaged directly with internal tech teams, asked questions without hesitation, and took time outside of work hours to explore tutorials and training modules. I didn't try to become a tech expert overnight, but I made sure I understood the tools well enough to leverage them for operational excellence and decision-making.

My advice to fellow veterans is simple—don't shy away from technology. The foundation we build in the forces—discipline, structured thinking, and adaptability—is more than enough to pick up tech skills. You don't have to be a coder, but you do need to be comfortable with systems, dashboards, and digital workflows. Be open to learning, take short courses if needed, and most importantly, collaborate with your teams. The corporate world respects initiative and curiosity.

Q If you were to Transition from the military to the corporate today with the benefit of all the insights and wisdom that you have gained in the corporate today what would you have done differently?

If I were to transition from the military to the corporate world today, armed with all the experience and wisdom I've gained over the years, I would do one key thing differently: I would prepare not just to adapt—but to strategically position myself as a bridge between operational excellence and business innovation.

Back then, my approach was focused on learning the ropes—understanding corporate structures, aligning with business language, and picking up domain knowledge. While that was necessary, today I realize the real value veterans bring isn't just in their discipline or work ethic—it's in their ability to lead under uncertainty, drive mission-oriented outcomes, and build high-trust teams in complex environments.

So, if I had the opportunity to do it over, I would have:

- Started building my business acumen earlier, perhaps through targeted micro-courses in strategy, tech adoption, and financial literacy.
- Networked more proactively—not just within my industry, but across diverse sectors to better understand how leadership translates differently in various ecosystems.
- Positioned myself as a transformation leader, leveraging my military background as a strength in managing change, crisis, and scale—not just as someone adapting to the corporate world, but as someone enhancing it.

More importantly, I would remind myself—and other transitioning veterans—that you're not starting from scratch; you're starting from experience. The key is to combine that experience with empathy, a learning mindset, and the courage to lead even when the terrain looks different.

Q Any important lessons you learnt while switching jobs and companies in your corporate career? What about the art of graceful exit? Any advice for transitioning military personnel on this front?

Yes, every transition in my corporate career—from education to hospitality, from online travel to hyper-growth tech startups—has taught me valuable lessons. One of the most important is this: changing roles or companies isn't just about moving forward—it's about leaving behind a legacy of trust, professionalism, and relationships.
When you're in the military, your identity is tied to service, duty, and continuity. In the corporate world, however, transitions are more common—and navigating them with grace and strategic intent is an art in itself.

Some key lessons I've learned include:

Align your exit with your values. I've always believed in being transparent with leadership and teams, giving ample notice, and ensuring a smooth handover. The way you leave often speaks louder than how you entered.

Don't burn bridges—build networks. Each organization I've worked with, from Zomato to MakeMyTrip to BatterySmart, has shaped me. I've made it a point to leave on good terms, and many of those relationships continue to open doors even today.

Make every role count. Whether I stayed for years or just a few quarters, I focused on delivering impact. That's what people remember—and that's what becomes your professional signature.
For transitioning military personnel, my advice would be: approach corporate roles with the same integrity, accountability, and camaraderie you practiced in uniform. But also recognize that flexibility, empathy, and emotional intelligence are just as critical in the civilian space. And when it's time to move on, do so with dignity. Ensure you leave behind systems that work, teams that respect you, and an impression that lasts.

Because ultimately, your reputation is your rank in the corporate world—and it travels with you, long after your designation changes.

Q How important is it to understand your own passion and expertise and then to work towards upskilling in that domain so as to have a better innings in the corporate? What are your views on this? How does one identify one's passion?

Fun

Understanding your passion and aligning it with your professional expertise is not just important—it's foundational for building a meaningful and sustainable corporate career. In my journey from the Armed Forces to the boardroom, I've seen firsthand how clarity of purpose combined with continuous upskilling can completely transform your trajectory.

Passion is your internal compass; expertise is your toolkit. When both are in sync, work becomes more than just a job—it becomes a mission. In my case, I've always been passionate about structure, discipline, and impact at scale. That naturally translated into domains like administration, operations, and risk management in the corporate space. But passion alone wasn't enough. I had to upskill—be it through the CCBMDO program at IIM Indore, specialized certifications, or staying current with digital tools and technologies.

As for identifying passion, I believe it's often found at the intersection of three things:

- What energizes you? The kind of work you'd do even when no one's watching.
- What problems do you enjoy solving? That's usually where your curiosity lies.
- Where do people consistently seek your input or leadership? That's a reflection of your natural strengths.

Once you identify that zone, the next step is to invest intentionally in upskilling—formally and informally. That could be certifications, on-the-job learning, mentorship, or cross-functional exposure. It's a cycle—passion drives learning, learning builds competence, and competence fuels confidence.

For transitioning professionals—especially veterans—this clarity is even more crucial. The corporate landscape is vast. But when you align your passion with a purpose, and then back it with the right skills, you don't just survive in the corporate—you thrive.

Q You have had a long stint in the corporate. To be successful what typical traits from the military must be give up and what must we imbibe?

That's a very relevant and reflective question—because transitioning from the military to the corporate world isn't just about changing uniforms; it's about adapting mindsets while preserving core strengths.

There are certain traits from the military that are absolutely invaluable and should be carried forward without compromise—discipline, integrity, mission focus, resilience under pressure, and the ability to lead teams in uncertain, high-stakes situations. These qualities are timeless and universally respected in any professional setting.

However, to truly thrive in the corporate ecosystem, there are also some aspects we must consciously evolve or let go of:

- Command-and-control leadership style: In the corporate world, influence often matters more than authority. You need to collaborate across functions, persuade rather than command, and lead through empathy, not just hierarchy.
- Black-and-white thinking: Military decision-making is often binary and structured for clarity and speed. Corporate decisions, however, often operate in gray zones—where ambiguity, negotiation, and long-term impact take precedence. Embracing flexibility and nuanced thinking becomes key.
- Waiting for orders: In the forces, hierarchy is respected and followed to the letter. But in corporate life, initiative and innovation are expected at every level. It's important to proactively seek solutions, challenge status quo constructively, and embrace ownership beyond formal roles.

Over the years, I've learned that success in the corporate world comes from balancing the precision of the military with the agility of the business world.

When we retain our core values but learn to speak the language of collaboration, innovation, and business strategy, we don't just fit in—we stand out.

To fellow veterans: don't dilute your strengths—translate them. Adapt your leadership style, stay open to learning, and remember that your operational excellence and character are powerful assets when blended with humility and curiosity.

Q What message would you like to give to transitioning military officers who wish to make a career in administration in consumer internet companies?

My message to transitioning military officers is this: you are far more prepared than you think—you just need to translate your skills into the language of business. Administration in consumer internet companies isn't just about managing facilities or operations. It's about enabling scale, ensuring continuity, driving compliance, and supporting rapid innovation—all of which align perfectly with the core competencies of a military officer.
In these high-growth, fast-paced environments, agility, crisis management, and structured execution are critical. Your experience in leading teams, operating under pressure, and maintaining order in chaos is exactly what these companies need—especially as they expand into new geographies, build complex supply chains, and navigate risk in real time.

However, success lies in how well you adapt your style. Be ready to embrace technology, data-driven decision-making, cross-functional collaboration, and a more democratic leadership approach. Take the time to upskill—whether it's through certifications, business management programs, or simply learning from peers.

Consumer internet companies value outcome-driven thinking, execution speed, and trustworthiness—all qualities deeply ingrained in a military background.

But to truly thrive, you must be open, curious, and humble enough to learn the business nuances that drive these organizations.

So, my message is this: walk in with confidence, but not with entitlement. Let your actions speak, not your rank.Blend your operational excellence with business empathy, and you'll not just transition—you'll become a catalyst for excellence.

Q Tell us about your family including your parents. How did they shape your value system. Also share the role played by your family including spouse in your successful Transition?

With the Family

I come from a humble and grounded family that has been the bedrock of my value system. My father was a man of discipline, integrity, and quiet strength—qualities he lived by every day. When he fell critically ill during my Army tenure, I made the difficult but necessary decision to step away from active service to support him. Losing him in 2012 was deeply personal, but his resilience and unwavering sense of duty continue to shape my professional compass even today.
My mother taught me empathy, humility, and the importance of treating people with respect—values that have played a central role in how I lead teams, manage stakeholders, and build lasting professional relationships.
A significant part of my successful transition also goes to my spouse, who has been my pillar of strength.

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Women POWER

This feature is about celebrating the successes of women from the Forces Community. These women could be Defence officers, spouses or even Fauji wards. They could be an employee, entrepreneur, artist, freelancer, social worker and even more. We carefully select profiles to feature. Typically these are women who have made a mark for themselves in their chosen career and vocation.

Puneet Kanwar Kaur is an accomplished engineering professional currently working at Intel Corporation. Hailing from Patiala, Punjab, she has consistently excelled in academics—graduating with a Gold Medal in B.Tech (ECE) from Punjabi University and later earning her MS with Summa Cum Laude honors from POSTECH, South Korea, through the prestigious Korean Government Scholarship Programme. She has previously worked at the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) as a Scientific Officer, where she was involved in advanced research projects. Passionate about learning, technology, and storytelling, Puneet considers books her first love and libraries her second home. Her journey reflects a blend of curiosity, resilience, and dedication to both science and personal growth.

Q Please tell us something about your background prior to your marriage. Thereafter share with us your life in the Indian Navy ?

I was born and raised in Patiala, Punjab—a city that is as rich in history as it is in culture. My early years were marked by a deep love for books and science. In fact, books were my first love, and the library quickly became my second home. I was a curious and hardworking student, always among the top performers in my class, eventually graduating with a Gold Medal in my B. Tech in Electronics and Communication Engineering from Punjabi University.

Even during my school and college days, I was always striving to go beyond the syllabus to truly understand the concepts. While I initially started preparing for the Indian Engineering Services (IES), a remarkable opportunity came my way: a position at the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR), Mumbai. The learning environment and hands-on experimental work there were simply fascinating.

My journey as a Naval spouse began when I married Cdr Harpreet Singh in Feb 2019. Life in the Indian Navy is both dynamic and disciplined. Living in diverse naval bases and engaging with families across the country enriched my worldview and cultivated in me a sense of gratitude, service, and humility. On the personal front, my husband's naval postings bring their own set of changes and challenges. But they've also made me adaptable and resilient.

Sunshine, sea breeze and solo adventures – before life got beautifully chaotic!!

I now view each transition as an opportunity to grow not just professionally but emotionally and mentally. Being part of the Navy community has taught me patience, and the ability to thrive in uncertainty.

Q You are a hardware chip engineer at Intel. That is quite a rare profile for a military wife. Tell us how did you get interested in the Silicon chips industry?

My fascination with electronics began during high school when I was introduced to basic circuit theory. There was something almost magical about how tiny components could perform such powerful tasks. During my undergraduate studies in Electronics and Communication Engineering, I gravitated towards subjects like semiconductor physics and analog circuit design.
What truly cemented my passion for hardware design was my role at TIFR, where I worked as a Scientific Officer. Designing specialized electronics for experimental physics deepened my appreciation for the precision and creativity involved in building hardware systems from the ground up. Later, while pursuing my MS at POSTECH in South Korea, I had the privilege of working under a professor with a PhD from MIT. This allowed me to delve into state-of-the-art analog and mixed-signal designs, preparing me to work in cutting-edge industries.

Joining Intel in 2019 was a dream come true. Working on silicon chips that go into millions of devices around the world is both humbling and exhilarating. It's an honor to contribute to an industry that is shaping the future of technology.

Q You have undertaken your Post Graduation from Pohang University in South Korea? Again, it is an off-beat country to study for Indians and a non typical subject to specialize in. What were the factors behind your decision?

After spending three fulfilling years at TIFR, I realized that I needed a steeper learning curve and global exposure to truly advance in my field. I applied to several reputed universities in the US and UK and was fortunate to receive multiple admission offers. However, being from a humble financial background, funding my international education was a challenge. Despite my best efforts, I couldn't secure the full financial aid required for those options.
That's when I discovered the Korean Government Scholarship Program (KGSP) through the Ministry of External Affairs. It seemed like a perfect fit—fully funded, merit-based, and supported by a country investing heavily in science and technology. POSTECH (Pohang University of Science and Technology) stood out due to its excellent global ranking and focused research in electronics and semiconductors. What sealed the decision for me was the chance to work under a young, brilliant professor Dr. Byungsub Kim. The research atmosphere, combined with cultural immersion, was truly rewarding and shaped me into a more resilient and globally aware professional.

Q Please share with us your professional journey in terms of the organizations that you have worked with. Narrate them in the chronological sequence. Also briefly explain your role in each of them before you joined Intel

My professional journey began at TIFR, Mumbai, where I joined as a Scientific Officer. TIFR is one of India's premier research institutes and working there gave me a strong foundation in applied electronics. I was part of the High Energy Physics department, and my role involved designing precision electronics and instrumentation systems for particle detectors. It was a unique blend of hardware design and scientific exploration that honed both my analytical and creative skills.

After three years at TIFR, I pursued my MS at POSTECH, South Korea. My research focused on analog and mixed-signal circuit design, particularly for biomedical applications and high-speed data transmission. I designed low-noise, low-power amplifiers for biosignal acquisition—circuits that form the heart of modern wearable health monitoring systems. My work was both theoretical and hands-on, involving simulations, chip design, and lab testing.

These experiences laid the groundwork for my transition into the semiconductor industry. Each phase of my journey enriched my understanding of electronics and instilled a deep appreciation for both scientific research and industrial application.

Q Explain your current profile in detail? What excites you about the current role ?

At Intel, I work as an Analog Design Engineer in the Design Enablement division, and my responsibilities are both technical and strategic in nature. The Design Enablement division serves as a crucial bridge between the technology development teams and the product designers. We ensure that the technology platforms being developed are ready and optimized for real-world applications, and my role is at the heart of that process.

One of my primary responsibilities is designing and validating analog and mixed-signal circuits

Suiting up for the 9-to-5 hustle

that support process characterization and enable product development across different nodes

These circuits include foundational IPs in early nodes and also test structures that help evaluate parameters like device performance, leakage, variability, and reliability in silicon. In other words, my work enables silicon engineers and product designers to understand the performance of new technology nodes and tailor their designs accordingly.

What makes my role particularly interesting is that I work on the foundational blocks that don't end up in the final product directly—but are essential to ensure that the final products work as intended. I design specialized circuits that serve as "eyes and ears" into the silicon, helping process engineers fine-tune parameters for maximum efficiency and performance. This involves a deep understanding of device physics, layout strategies, simulation techniques, and testing methodologies.

Another important aspect of my role is cross-functional collaboration. I work closely with process engineers, device modeling teams, layout designers, and verification experts.

This inter-disciplinary environment ensures that I am always learning and contributing beyond just circuit design. I also create documentation and guidelines to help other design teams effectively use the IP and methodologies we develop.

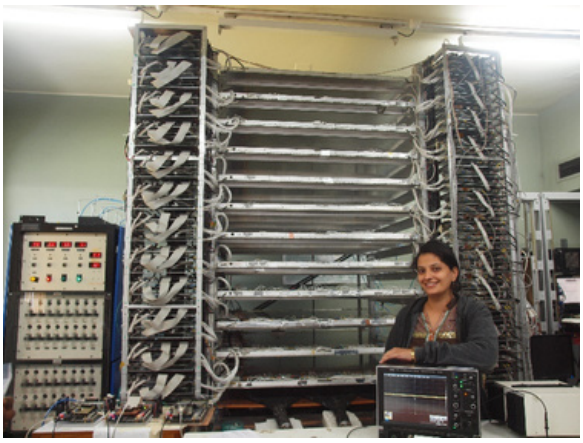
The complexity of modern chips also requires robust validation techniques. I use industry-standard EDA tools to simulate and verify the performance of my designs under various operating conditions. Post-fabrication, I work with lab engineers to evaluate silicon data and ensure it correlates with simulation results. This complete loop from idea to silicon and back is incredibly satisfying.

Lastly, being a woman in this niche field also carries a silent responsibility—to represent, inspire, and pave the way for others. I take part in diversity and inclusion initiatives at Intel and mentor young professionals, especially women aspiring to join hardware engineering.

In essence, my role at Intel is not confined to just building circuits. It's about enabling technology innovation, fostering collaboration, and constantly learning to stay ahead in a fast-evolving semiconductor landscape. The joy lies in knowing that the work I do today will ripple through devices and technologies that millions of people around the world use tomorrow.

Q You have also authored some research papers and undertaken several projects. Please explain in simple terms what exactly you did and what is the significance of the same from an application point of view.

Over the course of my academic and professional journey, I have worked on several research-intensive projects that bridge the gap between theoretical design and real-world application. My primary area of specialization is analog and mixed-signal circuit design—these are the circuits that connect the analog physical world with the digital processing world, such as sensors in medical devices, wearables, or smartphones.



Standing beside muon particle detector: A glimpse from my time at TIFR

During my MS at POSTECH in South Korea, my first project involved designing low-noise, low-power amplifiers for biomedical signal acquisition. Let me break that down: imagine you're wearing a health-monitoring device on your wrist that is tracking your heartbeat or brain activity. The signals your body produces are extremely weak—sometimes in microvolts (a millionth of a volt). These tiny signals can easily get lost in noise or distortion. The amplifier I designed helps boost those weak biosignals without adding extra noise, which is crucial for accurate medical readings.

My design focused on optimizing performance for power-constrained environments, which is important because wearable devices need to last longer on a single battery charge. This has direct implications for modern-day fitness trackers, medical implants, or remote patient monitoring systems. I also incorporated techniques to minimize interference and reduce silicon area, which makes the circuit suitable for integration into compact chips used in commercial health tech products.

In addition, I was part of a research group that collaborated on projects related to neural interface circuits, which are used to record signals from the brain. These are key building blocks for brain-computer interfaces and prosthetic control systems.

I co-authored a paper on signal conditioning techniques for neural amplifiers, which was later presented at an international IEEE conference.
Earlier, during my time at TIFR, I worked on the design of front-end electronics for particle detectors. These were used in high-energy physics experiments. The key challenge here was to capture very fast and small signals generated by subatomic particles and process them in real time. My contribution involved designing the analog signal processing chain which helped scientists accurately reconstruct collision events—this plays a vital role in fundamental research such as understanding the universe's building blocks.
Every project I have taken up has centered on making electronics more efficient, precise, and scalable. Whether it is helping a physicist study the neutrinos or enabling a patient to monitor their heart rate from home, the common thread is using technology to solve meaningful problems.
These experiences have not only deepened my technical knowledge but also shaped my belief in engineering for impact. I see every circuit as more than just a schematic it is a potential solution, a tool to make lives better.

Q It is an exciting time to be in the Silicon hardware industry. What do you think are the demand drivers for the industry ?

Absolutely—it is a very exciting time to be in the silicon hardware industry. We are witnessing a massive transformation driven by the convergence of artificial intelligence, ubiquitous connectivity, sustainability needs, and edge computing. The silicon industry is no longer just about making faster processors, it is about enabling smarter, more energy-efficient systems that power everything from smartphones and servers to autonomous vehicles and wearable health devices.
From my vantage point, I see several key demand drivers shaping the future of this industry:
Artificial Intelligence & Machine Learning, Data Explosion & Cloud Infrastructure, The Edge & IoT Revolution, Automotive & Autonomous Systems, Sustainability & Energy Efficiency, and Geopolitical & Supply Chain Realignment.
The demand drivers today are more diverse and dynamic than ever before. We are no longer just building chips, we are building the backbone of tomorrow's intelligence-driven society.

Q Since the industry is set for an explosive growth it would also lead to lots of career opportunities both as an employee and as an entrepreneur. Please help our readers understand the roles available in the industry and what skill sets they demand?

Indeed, the silicon hardware industry is on the brink of unprecedented growth. With global digitization, AI proliferation, electrification of vehicles, and the expansion of smart, connected devices, the demand for silicon chips is at an all-time high and so is the demand for talent. India's semiconductor industry is witnessing significant momentum too, driven by the government's "Semicon India" initiative, which has attracted multi-billion-dollar investments from big players like Tata Group. The industry is no longer confined to traditional roles like logic design or layout engineering. It has evolved into a vibrant ecosystem offering diverse opportunities across the stack from atoms to algorithms and from startups to semiconductor giants.
There's a wide spectrum of roles – analog/digital design, verification, physical design, test engineering, supply chain & operations, business & strategy roles and more. Core skills include strong fundamentals in electronics, proficiency in hardware description languages, circuit simulation tools, cross domain knowledge in machine learning, understanding supply chain & ecosystem and project management.
As silicon demand diversifies, there is immense scope for entrepreneurs as well to start ventures in chip IP, design services, AI accelerators, edge devices, and design automation.

To our readers who aspire to pursue career in semiconductor industry, I would be glad to help and connect.

Q How important is it to understand your own passion and expertise and then decide to venture in that space? What are your views on this? How does one identify one's passion?

Understanding your own passion and aligning it with your expertise is, in my view, the most crucial step toward building a fulfilling career or starting a meaningful venture. It acts as both compass and fuel—it tells you where to go and gives you the strength to keep going, even when things get hard (and they do!).

Balancing equations on weekdays, balancing on snowboard on weekends

In my own journey, I was always drawn toward science and engineering. I wasn't just interested in how things work—I wanted to know why they worked. This curiosity led me from a childhood in Patiala to pursuing a B. Tech in ECE, working in fundamental physics research at TIFR, studying in South Korea, and finally working at Intel. Each transition was guided not by prestige or pay, but by my core love for learning and problem-solving.

But passion alone is not enough. Expertise is what refines that passion into something powerful and productive. For instance, I loved electronics, but through education and real-world projects, I discovered that my strength lies in analog and mixed-signal design. I also learned I thrive best when I am both learning and enabling others to build.

So, how does one identify their passion?

It's not always a single "aha" moment. Often, it reveals itself over time through consistent patterns in what excites you, what challenges you in a good way, and what gives you a sense of meaning.

Here are a few tips that helped me and might help others:

1. Observe What Energizes You: Notice when you lose track of time. Is it while building something? Solving puzzles? Teaching others? Writing code? Reading research?
2. Track Patterns in Your Curiosity: What topics do you keep coming back to? What kind of books or articles do you read in your free time?
3. Explore Broadly, Reflect Deeply: Don't be afraid to try different things early in your career. But always take a moment to reflect—did that experience resonate with you?
4. Accept That Passion Evolves: What excites you at 20 may not be the same at 30. That's okay. Passion isn't static; it grows as you grow.
5. Balance Passion with Practicality: The sweet spot is where what you love, what you are good at, and what the world needs all overlap. That's where impact happens.

In the end, when your passion becomes your purpose, work doesn't feel like work. It becomes a way to express who you are and that, to me, is the most beautiful thing.

Q Tell us about your family including your parents and spouse. How did they shape your value system. Also share the role played by your family including spouse in your successful career

My family is the bedrock of who I am not just as a professional, but as a person. Born and raised in Patiala, Punjab, , I grew up in a home where values weren't just taught—they were lived.

My father, a man of few words but deep principles, taught me the value of sincerity in everything I do. He never measured success in material terms but in effort, character, and perseverance. Watching him quietly support the family through every storm gave me a deep respect for resilience and emotional strength. My mother, warm, wise, and nurturing, instilled in me a love for learning. She made sure I had access to books, regardless of the cost. In fact, she would often say, "A book in your hand is a doorway to anywhere." That belief turned me into someone who found solace and excitement in libraries.

Even in tough financial times, my parents stood firmly behind my aspirations. When I chose to pursue engineering, and later research and an international master's, their support never wavered. I may have been the one writing the scholarship essays and cracking interviews, but it was their sacrifices that laid the groundwork.

Anchored in love and tradition!!

Instead, he empowered me, celebrated my small wins, understood my frustrations during setbacks, and reminded me of my worth when I doubted it.

My 3-year-old princess, Sehar is my little powerhouse of joy and inspiration. She gives meaning to my hustle and makes sure even my most tiring day ends with giggles and cuddles.

I believe values like perseverance and a hunger for learning are the true differentiators in a career, more than any technical skill. And these were seeded early in me, thanks to my father. I often say that while I may have walked the path, my parents lit the way.

Three generations trying hard to keep up with AI: Dad shared this Ghibli portrait

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ForceNetPreneur

Very few veterans take up entrepreneurship in their post military careers. We at the Forces Network wish to change that by showcasing veteran entrepreneurs who have gone to achieve success in their ventures. The aim of this series in not just to celebrate our successes from the veteran community, which unfortunately we do not do enough, but also to inspire others. The ultimate goal is to set up a virtuous self-sustaining cycle of inspiration leading to more veterans taking up entrepreneurship and become job givers rather than job seekers.dy text

Col Amit Batra is an ex-NDA officer. He was commissioned in June 1992 into the Corps of EME.
He took premature retirement in 2018 to start AB Kids to become the life coach for Kids. Amit has an uncanny ability to connect with children, he has been able to transform the lives of several children thigh AB Kids.

Q. Please tell us something about your background prior to joining the Army. I believe you had some challenges in your childhood. Would like to hear more about them.

"Well, growing up, like many kids, I had my share of challenges. I experienced periods of low self-esteem and struggled with certain insecurities. However, those experiences, in hindsight, really shaped my drive to help others build their own confidence. It's funny how those early struggles can become the foundation for your later purpose."

A brotherhood forged in whites, frozen in time — where every laugh echoes the glory of the game. 🏏✨

Q How was your army career? Take us through some of your tenures, the highs and the lows. What is it that you learnt from the Army that helped you in your civilian career?

"My army life was filled with challenges—but not the kind people usually associate with a uniform. While I served with honesty and loyalty, I struggled deeply with self-esteem. I often focused on what was missing, rather than counting my blessings. I could argue with anyone, find fault easily, and somewhere, I became a recluse—lost in my own world. I was mocked, misunderstood, and honestly, I was a trauma to myself. What I didn't realize back then was that I wasn't alone. Many others go through similar emotional turmoil, but hardly anyone admits it.

Things changed in 1998. I visualized myself sitting in a dingy, dark hall—suffocating. I knew I had to escape. There were many tempting doors around me: pretending, faking it, flattering seniors to move ahead. But I knew those doors weren't aligned with my soul. So I shut them all… and threw away the keys. I chose just one path—self-realization and self-empowerment. That decision changed everything.

A proud beginning to a lifetime of honour—stepping into service for the nation. 🇮🇳💂✨

I then spent the next 17 years of my life going deep—finding answers, healing the wounds of my childhood, and rebuilding my foundation from scratch. That painful yet transformational journey is what shaped the coach I am today. I now help others find what I found… but in a fraction of the time."

Q Your decision to leave the army despite being a regular officer.

"Leaving the Army wasn't an easy decision. I was a regular officer with a stable career, but deep inside, I felt a strong calling—a voice telling me that I was meant to make a different kind of impact. Over the years, I had done deep work on myself, healing from a difficult childhood and overcoming long-standing emotional wounds. Through that journey, I had discovered powerful insights—and I realized I wasn't alone.

I began to see the same kind of silent suffering in young kids—trauma, low self-esteem, emotional confusion—through no fault of their own. What hurt even more was that despite their best intentions, parents and society often failed to truly understand these children. I knew I had many answers—because I had lived that life and emerged stronger. I couldn't ignore that anymore.

It wasn't about dissatisfaction with the Army—it was about alignment. I wanted to serve, but in a way that healed lives at the core. Coaching kids and parents became my mission—a way to turn my own pain into purpose."

Q Your motivations for choosing kids coaching as a post-military career path, which is considered unconventional.

"To many, it may seem like an unconventional path—but for me, it felt like the most natural one. Having spent years working on my own inner wounds, especially those rooted in childhood, I realized how much of who we become is shaped during those early years.

parents, lost and frustrated, despite doing their best. That's when I knew—if I could help even a few families understand each other better, if I could save a child from growing up with the same pain I once carried, my work would be worth it.

So, I combined everything I learned from my military discipline…

A room full of curious minds, inspired parents, and powerful conversations — because true transformation begins when families learn and grow together. 💡👨‍👩‍👧

Q Detailed information about AB Kids Life Coach, its programs, and services.

"AB Kids Life Coach is a mission-driven coaching platform focused on transforming families—by empowering parents to raise confident, emotionally strong, and self-reliant children. We specialize in simple, practical systems that deliver fast and lasting results—even in the most complex parenting challenges.

Our programs go beyond just discipline and routine—we help parents build emotional connection, set up powerful yet flexible systems at home, and become true influencers in their child's life. And the results speak for themselves.

We've helped:
– A boy with ADHD who couldn't sit for more than 5 minutes or complete basic schoolwork—today he's focused, calm, and thriving academically, without any medication.
– A child with dyslexia who was failing in every subject—now reading, writing, and participating actively in school, after simple parenting and learning systems were implemented at home.
– A teen who had completely withdrawn into depression and gaming—transformed into a confident speaker who now mentors other kids, all because his parents learned how to connect with him the right way.
– Families that were full of daily shouting, fights, and frustration—now peaceful, cooperative, and full of love.

We've even had parents share how lifelong issues were resolved—like a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law who hadn't spoken properly in 15 years, finally bonding like mother and daughter.

Whether it's screen addiction, stubbornness, low motivation, poor academic performance, or deeper emotional struggles like anxiety, dyslexia, or trauma—we have helped parents overcome it all, often in just a few weeks, without therapy, medication, or exhausting effort.

Our offerings include:
– Core programs like Positive Parenting Basic & Advanced
– High-impact programs such as:

- The Energy Bridge
- Empowered Tech Smart Kids
- Future Millionaires
- HomeMastery Challenge
- Nurturing Genius

At AB Kids Life Coach, we don't just coach parents, teachers, and kids—we change lives. We help families heal, grow, and thrive—together."

These are not just simple programs. This is family transformation—backed by results, driven by heart, and designed for real life.

Here's a cleaned, structured, and professionally rewritten version of your content — optimized for clarity, emotional impact, and inspiration. It's perfect for personal branding, interviews, media features, or business storytelling.

Q What is the intended impact of AB Kids Life Coaching, and how is it being achieved

At AB Kids Life Coaching, our mission is both simple and powerful: to create 1 million happy families.

Families where children are confident, self-driven, emotionally strong—and parents feel proud, peaceful, and deeply connected. We don't just fix surface-level behavioral issues. We work at the root, transforming the very culture and energy of the home.

We achieve this through structured, result-oriented parenting programs that are practical, easy to implement, and effective across a wide spectrum of challenges—tantrums, laziness, screen addiction, poor academics, ADHD, learning disabilities, or emotional trauma.

What makes our approach different?

- No long hours with kids.
- No complex techniques.
- Just small, powerful shifts that lead to big transformations—often in a matter of weeks.

Thousands of parents have already witnessed incredible changes in their children's behavior, confidence, and overall performance, simply by following our system consistently.

The outcomes speak for themselves:

- Kids becoming calm, responsible, and self-motivated—with essential life skills for the 21st century.
- Parents guiding without shouting or nagging.
- Homes filled with peace, joy, and connection.

And the ripple effect is real—one transformed family becomes a lighthouse for others. That's how we're creating a movement—one empowered family at a time.

Q What is parent coaching, and how does it help families?

Parent coaching is one of the most underrated yet life-changing tools in today's world.

It's not therapy. It's not counseling. It's not about fixing something broken. It's about unlocking the strength, wisdom, and emotional clarity already present within parents.

At AB Kids Life Coaching, we help parents:

- Develop the right mindset,
- Build effective systems,
- And adopt conscious strategies to raise happy, disciplined, emotionally strong children—without stress, shouting, or self-doubt.

Parent coaching isn't about advice or judgment. It's about hand-holding, guiding parents to realize how their own tone, energy, and habits influence their child's future.

The truth is—most children are not problematic. They're simply misunderstood. And most parents aren't doing it wrong—they've just never been shown a better way.

We coach parents to become influencers in their child's life, not managers.
And the results?

- Stronger communication
- Higher academic focus
- Fewer emotional outbursts
- Deeper bonds at home

Because here's the truth:
Parents are like the Wi-Fi of the house.
If the signal is strong—calm, clear, and consistent—children thrive.

An inspiring gathering of 750 parents at Infantry School, Mhow, united for an impactful session on '3 Secrets to Your Child's Success.

Q Is parenting harder today? How can modern parents cope?

Absolutely—parenting today is more challenging than ever before.

But it's not because parents have changed. It's because the world around us has.

Kids are growing up in a fast-paced, distracted, hyper-connected environment.

Social media, academic pressure, and FOMO are shaping their thoughts and behaviors.

At the same time, parents are juggling demanding careers, lack of time, and sky-high expectations. Even with the best intentions, many feel lost, guilty, or unsure.

That's why parenting today requires more than love —it requires:

- Awareness
- Skills
- Emotional regulation

But here's the good news:
You don't have to be perfect. You just have to be present and willing to learn.

The moment parents focus on:
Building emotional connection
Setting healthy systems at home
Managing their own energy
…the transformation begins.

Children don't need perfection—they need presence, clarity, and compassion.
That's what we help parents achieve at AB Kids Life Coaching—so they're not just surviving parenting, but thriving in it.

Q What mindset shift is needed to move from employee to entrepreneur?

It's a massive shift—and it's not for the faint-hearted.

Becoming a business owner is like walking a razor's edge.
You will bleed. You will fall. The question is—will you get back up?

In my case, the first four years were brutal—minimal income, zero external validation, and draining my savings. I often questioned whether I should quit.

But one belief kept me going:
This is what I was born to do. There was no Plan B.

I had to learn it all—team building, systems, marketing, tech.
There's no escape route in entrepreneurship. You can't cherry-pick what you like.
If something needs to be done—you do it.

If you're afraid of failure or discomfort, this isn't your path.
But if you're excited by growth, grit, and meaningful impact—this journey will change your life.

Your pain becomes your power. Your perseverance becomes your edge.

Q. How important is it to align passion and profession?

It's not just important—it's everything.

Passion is your fuel when logic fails.

But passion alone isn't enough.
It must be backed by purpose and sharpened into skill.

That's how impact is made. That's how empires are built.

If you're unsure about your passion, don't look outside—look within.

Ask yourself:

- What energizes me effortlessly?
- What do I keep thinking about even when no one's watching?
- What conversations light me up?

Passion often hides in your wounds, your patterns, or your quiet obsessions.
Once you find it—nurture it. Build around it.
That's where true success and soul-level satisfaction begins.

Success

Q What advice would you give to transitioning military officers who want to enter coaching/self-help?

To my fellow officers—know this: this is a different battlefield.

Yes, the Army was tough. But this?
This demands a different kind of courage.

It's not about command—it's about connection.

It's not about strategy—it's about story, vulnerability, and empathy.

You will have to:

- Rebuild your identity
- Learn completely new skills
- Face rejection, uncertainty, and doubt

But here's the edge you already have:
Grit. Discipline. Resilience. Mission-first mindset.

If this space calls to you—go all in.
Because here, you don't lead with a title.
You lead with your heart, your transformation, and your ability to truly listen.

You've served the nation with honor. Now serve humanity—with heart.

Q What role did your family play in your value system and transformation journey?

My parents laid the foundation.
They didn't preach values—they lived them.
From them, I learned honesty, integrity, and an unshakeable sense of responsibility.

As for my personal transformation, I owe a lot to my former spouse.
Her presence was a mirror—reflecting parts of me I hadn't yet faced.
Her expectations, her strength, and even our emotional distance pushed me inward, onto a journey of deep self-healing.

While that chapter didn't end how I had once imagined, it served a purpose I'll always be grateful for.

That awakening now fuels my mission—to help families pause, reflect, and grow before it's too late.

My story is not about failure.
It's about awakening.
And helping others find theirs—before silence becomes separation.

Q What's next for AB Kids Life Coaching?

AB Kids Life Coaching isn't just a brand—it's a movement.
Born from a personal mission, it's now evolving into a complete ecosystem for family transformation.

Our vision is bold but clear: Reach 1 million families.

Make parenting:

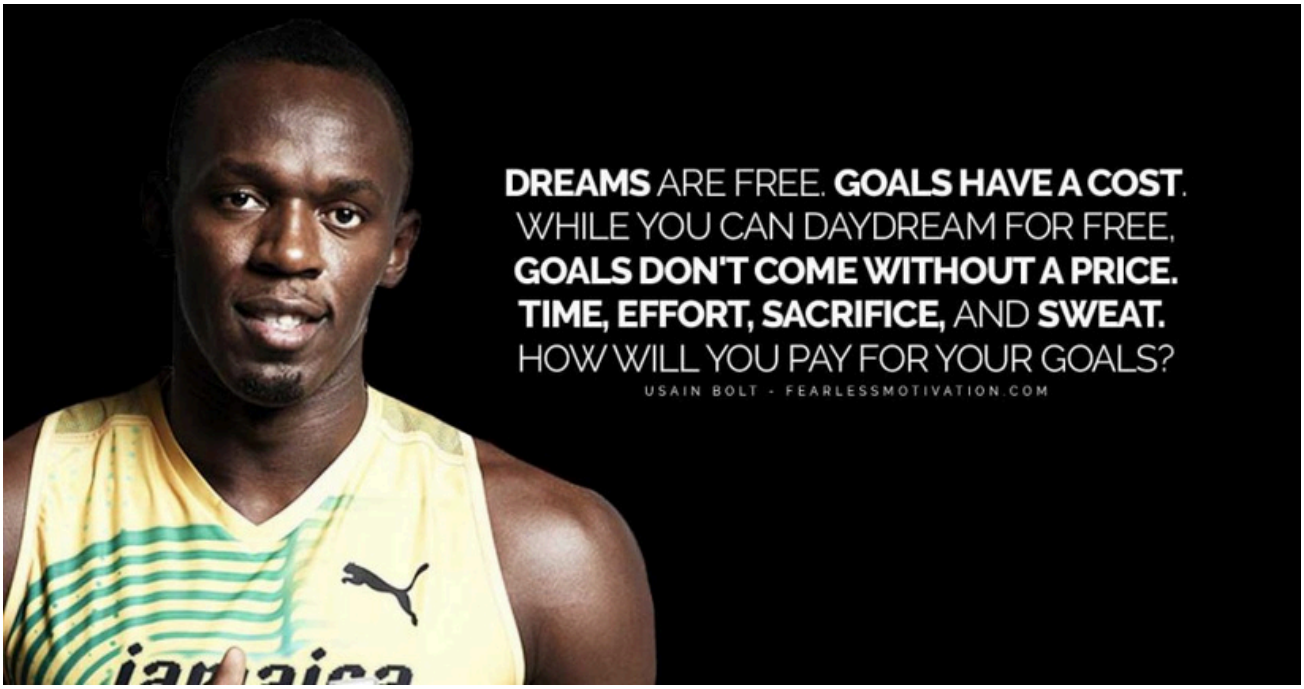
- Simpler
- More joyful
- Emotionally empowering

What's coming:

- Advanced programs for deeper challenges—ADHD, anxiety, screen addiction
- Life skills & leadership curriculum for kids to thrive in the 2035 world
- Parent communities for shared growth and support
- Collaborations with schools to integrate emotional intelligence, resilience, and real-life readiness into education.

We're not just transforming kids.
We're building happy, high-performing families who become changemakers in their communities.

Because when one family transforms—a ripple of change begins.
And that's how we create a better world—one home at a time.



AB KIDS LIFE COACH
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Parenting Woes

OUR UPCOMING WEBINAR

3 SECRETS to Your Child's Success

Key Takeaways:

- Biggest Mistake Most Parents Make
- Formula for Parenting for success
- The magical Secret to get quick and amazing result

Lalit Panwar ▸ Amit Batra
1 hr

Hi Everyone.... attended the Amit Batra's webinar on Kids Coaching today and found it extremely useful and powerful session. Shall recommend parents of all kids from 1 yr to 18 yrs to attend and gain the useful insights right from foundation to communication. Great Job Amit....carry on the good work.

Rajiv Ghosh ▸ Amit Batra
1 hr

Attended a session on parenting by AB, it was quite insightful. Concepts like mentoring your child, setting rules, delegating responsibilities, respecting your child's opinion did invoke my interest and we will definitely implement the same in my daughter's upbringing. Loved the way he explained how right parenting creates an environment which will help the child grow in a positive direction. I highly recommend all parents to attend his webinar.

If you are facing any of the issues with your child SCAN THE CODE BELOW

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Moment In Time

We have started with a Photography section **" Moment in Time"** to provide an outlet for creative side of our esteemed members. The rules for submission are as under:-

1. Forces Network members, spouses and their wards can submit images for publication.
2. No Nudity or Porn.
3. No mention of Mil establishments or unit identity or tac numbers or tail numbers.
4. It's a photography section so no images of various get togethers and social functions will be published.
5. The longer side of image should be 2048 pixels.
6. Maximum 5 images will be published every month. The images must be submitted by 20th of every month.
7. Mention your Instagram ID.
8. **While submitting the following details be submitted along with the suitable Title:-**

a. Aperture
b. Shutter speed
c. ISO
d. Camera used
e. Lens
f. Focal length.
g. In case of a mobile click, the same may please be mentioned.

All Photos may please be sent to forcesnetworkz@gmail.com by 20th of every month.

MOON ON RAM NAVMI- By Col Noel Ellis

Yellow-footed Green Pigeon - By Col Noel Ellis

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Author of the Month

This dedicated feature will shine a spotlight on veterans and individuals connected to the military community who have ventured into the world of publishing. Through insightful interviews, we aim to delve into the authors' literary works, exploring the themes, narratives, and inspirations behind their books. Furthermore, we will uncover their unique writing styles and gain an understanding of their mission and motivations as authors, providing our readership with a deeper appreciation for the diverse talents and experiences within the Forces Network extended community.

Navinder Narang

I am not your typical author. With 21 years of service in the Indian Army and about 15 years of leadership in the corporate world, I have always believed that growth isn't something you wait for; it's something you chase.

While my military roots gave me the discipline, resilience, and clarity, the corporate exposure taught me how to identify complexities in absence of perfect conditions.

A strategist and systems thinker, I have led transformative initiatives across sectors, building scalable models and steering projects through complexity with sharp insight and practical execution.

When I am not writing or reimagining how the world works, I generally dream up the next big idea in Sustainability that can be executed through Digital Transformation to bridge purpose with performance.

Q Please tell us a little introduction about yourself. Your early childhood, schooling and subsequent army career. Also why did you decide to explore the corporate world?

Born in Karnal, Haryana, I was fortunate to get a good schooling in a reputed Convent School, which laid a solid foundation of my written and spoken English. Being youngest of five siblings, I had the benefit of observing their struggles since our family was going through financial crisis. Maybe, on hindsight, the step I took to join NDA was also because I saw Army as a great opportunity to create a value for myself without being financially dependent on my parents or elder siblings.

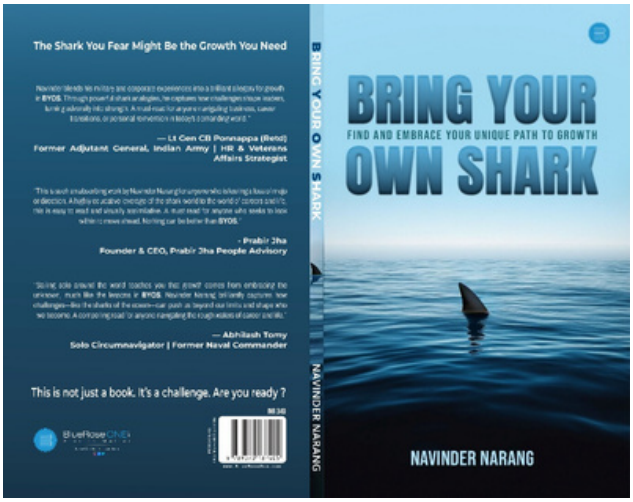
My military career was chequered with great swings on either side. On the positive side, I did extremely well in courses including clearing the Staff College entrance, led well during combat, with expertise in counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency roles. On the downside, I was very aggressive and headstrong, due to which perhaps I created a particular perception of myself, which affected some critical patches in my career.

Realising the need for course correction and knowing that I had the potential to prove myself, I decided to take a plunge into the other side after completing 21 years.

As I stated briefly earlier, my writing skills were honed right at the school level, and I kept that interest alive. The Army tenure perfected my skills further and I used to be the preferred choice among officers to write the SOPs, papers and prepare presentations.

Writing was a passion in the beginning, but as I went on, it slowly started adding purpose to it. I started writing blog posts on leadership and joined LinkedIn in 2010, soon after leaving the Army. The turning point came a few years ago when I developed a deeper interest in topics related to sustainability, and many of my posts and articles were well received. With my first book coming out now, I intend to convert this passion into a purposeful journey, maybe not exactly a mission.

Q Many congratulations on the publishing of your first book " Bring Your Own Shark – Find and Embrace Your Unique Path to Growth" It is indeed a rare subject to write upon. How did you decide to write this book and is there a backstory to this? If so please share.



My first interaction with sharks in 1993 was not with the whole shark, but with basket loads of their fins, freshly cut off their bodies by a fisherman in the high seas in the Nicobar Island. This grisly image stayed with me in the background of my memory. A few years ago, I read the popular Japanese tale about the fishermen adding a small shark in the tank to make the fishes agile and active, responding to the external fear. I could relate this immediately to the external pressures that keep all professionals on their toes, however this pressure was only effective till the time the fear remained. What I felt was needed was to welcome the challenges suited to your growth at that particular phase so that the fearful experience turned into a willing journey to bring true growth onto you. Thus started my journey to seek answers which resulted into a research around sharks and their behaviours.

Q What is the essential message of your latest book? Also, why do you think you felt impelled on writing upon such a topic on which there are already a multitude of books?

At its core, Bring Your Own Shark is about taking personal responsibility for growth. It encourages professionals, especially those in mid-career or transition, to stop waiting for external pressure, deadlines, or leadership to push them forward. Instead, it invites them to bring their own challenge, or "shark," into their environment. The message is simple but powerful: Don't wait for growth. Bring it.

As for why I wrote it—yes, there are many books on personal development and leadership. But most are linear, prescriptive, or one-size-fits-all. I wanted to create something metaphorical, visual, and deeply personal. Something that didn't just tell people what to do, but helped them feel and choose the kind of growth they need.

The idea came from observing talented professionals who were drifting due to lack of the right kind of nudge. As someone who's transitioned from the military to corporate life, I've experienced the power of structure, and the void that follows when it's gone. That gap became the creative trigger.

The shark metaphor gave me a fresh way to bring it all together in a memorable, universal, and surprisingly human way.

Q You have used an allegorical storytelling style in the book. Any reasons for using it?

Absolutely, it was done very intentionally. I chose allegory because it allows people to see themselves without feeling judged. When you describe growth through the lens of sharks, each representing a mindset or challenge, you shift the reader's experience from "I should do this" to "Which shark do I need right now?" It makes the learning feel personal, but safe. It invites introspection, not instruction.

Q How did you conduct your research on this book? What were the major insights you learnt from your research? Anything that deeply impacted you?

I learnt a bits and pieces from various sources, be they be from Richard Attenborough's 'The Planet" series, YouTube Videos, or the famous book "Understanding Sharks" by Erich Ritter, which I specially ordered from a US based publisher as it was not available online.

Q What is your writing style or the creative process ? Do you make a list of points then create a draft and then refine it or do you have long sittings to pen the book? Is there a specific routine you follow while writing a book?

Frankly, since this was my first book, I took initial guidance from my friend and course mate Deepam Chatterjee, who had left the Army as a Captain and is an established writer. Once I learnt the ropes, I started adding thoughts as they occurred always keeping a writing pad or a mobile based recording handy to record those thoughts. The gaps in writing were probed further through other reference material. The main work was to correctly identify the various sharks out of the 500 plus species that would matter in the book, and ensure that their traits and behaviours are as truthfully captured as possible.

Since I was also into a corporate job, I found the most suitable time only at night. Over the last two years, I would not have slept more than 5 to 6 hours every day, barring holidays and vacations.

Q Tell us about your family. How do they take it when you are busy writing , reading and researching your books?

With Family

I must say that without the support and motivation from my wife and daughter, this book might not have happened. In a healthy relationship, either partner must understand the space needed by the other to grow themselves in their chosen fields, and I was particularly blessed

in this aspect. My daughter did the proof-reading of the book and, I must say, when I thought that I had finished doing everything, she showed me that I needed to do a little bit more.

Q What are your future plans regarding writing?

I have a couple of books on my mind, and if all goes well, I should be getting on the job soon enough. However, I see a scope in getting the message from this book across audiences in a manner that would be more long-lasting and effective. It all depends on how widely the book gets accepted.

Q How can our readers keen to pick up a copy of your book do so ?

The book is available on Amazon and also on the publisher's website. I would request all to buy from the publisher for the simple reason of growing a home brand. Both links are below:

https://www.amazon.in/dp/9370187405

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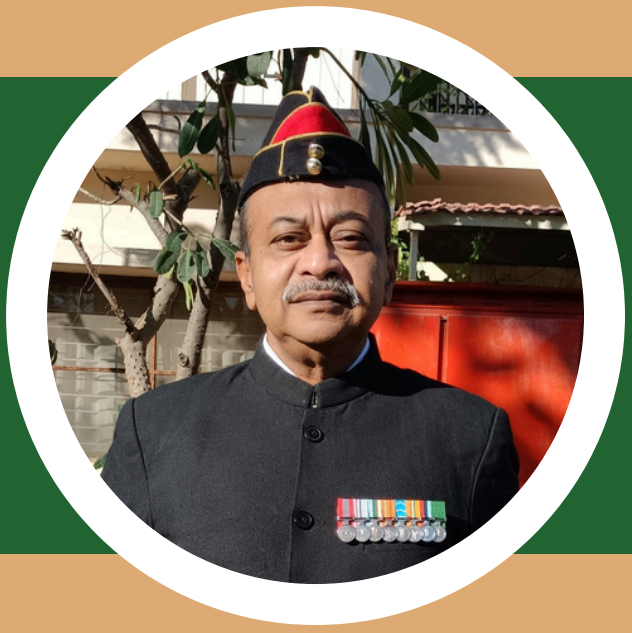
Dedicated Section for the Star Author of Forces Network

LT COL NOEL ELLIS



We welcome Col Noel to the folds of the Forces Network .
We have decided to devote a Section to his writing every month in the ForceNet E-Zine .

Katran
कतरन

By Lt Col Noel Ellis

What comes to your mind if I say 'कतरन' (Cutrun)? Most of us won't know what it means. Probably, people belonging to UP/MP might relate to it. It was a very commonly used term in the days of yore.

'Katran' means cutting, piece or shred. It is what is leftover, unwanted and unused. Mostly, in relation to cloth or paper.

In layman's terms कतरन were rags, waste cloth, especially leftovers with tailors, who after cutting the cloth to the measurements had shreds and fragments that were thrown away. Those cuttings were in a haphazard pattern but were bits of extra/wasted cloth during the garment stitching process.

There is another word called 'Cut Piece'. That I shall discuss sometime else. Suffice to say, one can call it a sort of कतरन and it used to be a pre-measured cloth from which you could make a garment like a shirt or a pair of pants. Generally, the tailor would tell you that pants for a normal person could be made in 'ek-bees'. All those who used the services of a tailor to get pants stitched would know.

One of my Mausi was an expert in utilising Katran. I remember her making a whole cover of a quilt out of it. Painstakingly stitching pieces of cloth one by one into a spread of more than a bedsheet size.Thereafter, joining them into the shape of a cover of that quilt. This kept the quilt safe from dust plus added another layer of cloth to trap the warmth inside.

It looked like today's 'designer wear' and increased the life of the quilt at throw away prices.

Aunty would take us all to a कतरन market in Kanpur close to 'Elgin Mills'. Cloth merchants were famous for keeping the last bits of their 'Thaan' (complete roll of cloth). Leftover pieces were sold dirt cheap and poor people or 'shaukeen' people like my aunt were their customers. Bargain was still done to further reduce prices as these remnants would go unsold and the cloth merchant would love to extract the last penny out of every centimetre of cloth.

Again, people might not remember a word called 'Paiband' पैबंद, which means a patch or piece of material to cover a hole or mend a tear. In the good old days, one used to see beggars with patches of different coloured cloth pieces stitched on their garments. Katran was also used for covering sheared and torn garments.

There used to be a very qualified person who could do 'Rafoo' रफ़ू, which means darning or mending. 'Khota' not the Punjabi word for a donkey, but 'khota lag jana', again this phrase I heard in UP and more so from my mom who used to get damn annoyed when we would nick our pants or shirts when it got stuck in a nail and a small tear could be seen. I wish I could send all people wearing torn clothes today to a darner. I just can't stand people wearing shredded jeans.

Services of a 'rafoogar' were commonly used who would blend it with such expertise that to

THE KATRAN HIBISCUS FLOWER

locate that shear needed a keen eye. Such people now are almost extinct. Ours would probably be the last generation to have utilised their facilities.

Why the idea of this article came to my mind was we have nicknamed one of our Hibiscus flowers as 'Katran'.

It is a red coloured hibiscus flower. Why we love it is because the edges of the flower seem to have been trimmed by a pair of scissors in a zig-zag pattern resembling Katran. Like we used to cut sides of paper in our craft class. It is flowering now. The plant appears to have so many Katran stuck on its green foliage.

My mom, being from UP used these words often. Today, through this flower, I remembered her and her sis so fondly. God bless their souls.

These days people are recycling leftover pieces of cloth and converting them into items of daily use. It is good to see things being recycled and reused. In the good old days, clothes were never thrown away. They were handed over from generation to generation. In case, due to a mishap, the garment took a shear, it was repaired and reused till sold to a person who would exchange clothing items with utensils.

Katran is doing well in our garden. Thanks to it, I was reminded of so many words which made me drift into nostalgia. I remember vividly, when we would get a small patch of leather stitched to the sides of our OP/PT shoes from a cobbler due to overuse of shoes when the sides got perforated. We had only one pair those days.

Would that piece also qualify as Katran? I wonder!!!!!!!

JAI HIND
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About the Author

Lt Col Noel Ellis (retd) is an ex-NDA officer from 66th NDA course. He was commissioned in June 1985 into the Mechanised Infantry. Col Noel is a very vibrant writer. His articles relate to his deep experiences which he had as an Army officer. During his service he has interacted with numerous types of people, be it his colleagues, his seniors or his subordinates and each of his articles portrays that how vivid human nature is and how different their reactions to situations are. He is heavily into reading and leaves no opportunities to pen down his opinion about what is going on in the country.

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Tech Corner

CYBATHLON – A Tech Challenge with a Noble Purpose

By Iqbal Singh

Pushing the limits of Mobility

Image: ETH Zurich, CYBATHLON

What is CYBATHLON?

CYBATHLON was a groundbreaking initiative started by Professor Robert Riener at ETH Zürich.

Its purpose was to create a platform where teams from across the globe could compete by developing **assistive technologies suitable for everyday use by people with disabilities.** The overarching vision of CYBATHLON was to drive **innovation in assistive technologies and promote greater inclusion** for people with disabilities.

Over more than a decade, CYBATHLON transformed the landscape of assistive technology and inclusion. It served as a global platform for innovation and inclusion. The CYBATHLON events involved competitions across different disciplines, showcasing **state-of-the-art assistive technologies designed to help individuals complete everyday tasks.**

The first CYBATHLON event took place in 2016 at the SWISS Arena in Kloten, Switzerland, featuring 66 teams competing in six disciplines. In 2020, it adapted to a virtual format due to the global pandemic, with 51 teams from 20 countries participating remotely in six disciplines. The third and largest edition, CYBATHLON 2024, saw 67 teams from 24 nations competing in eight disciplines across the SWISS Arena and seven connected hubs worldwide.

Purpose Behind CYBATHLON

With the aim of driving forward the development of assistive technologies for people with disabilities, CYBATHLON continues to challenge the teams of developers and end-users with adapted and new CYBATHLON disciplines.

In CYBATHLON competitions, teams from all over the world compete with and against each other in different disciplines. Teams consist of a

technology developer and a participant with a disability, referred to as a pilot. The tasks in the respective disciplines represent everyday activities.

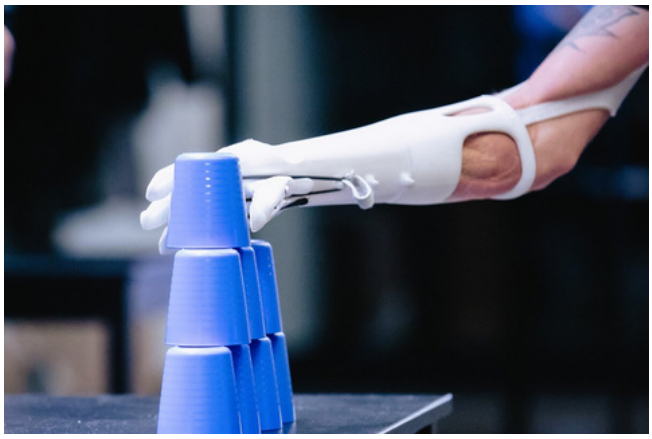
While the competition tasks for CYBATHLON 2016 and 2020 were specified to a very high degree, tasks for CYBATHLON 2024 included more uncertainty and variability in most disciplines. This required improved dynamic control, increased functional flexibility of the devices and more ad-hoc selection of the problem-solving strategy by the pilots. The aim of adding variability to the competition tasks wass to better account for everyday situations where the exact circumstances of a given task are not always known and/or constant over time and across different locations.

Highlights of CYBATHLON 2024: Witness Excellence

The third edition of CYBATHLON is now part of history. It was held from 25–27 October 2024, at the SWISS Arena in Zürich. To get a brief snapshot of the event watch this short video.

Events at CYBATHLON 2024: There were 8 different events held – details can be seen as under:

- **VIS- Vision Assistance Race:** People with severe visual impairment or complete loss of vision lack the most basic information about their environment, which limits their autonomy in completing many activities of daily living. Simple situations such as selecting colour-matching clothes or identifying a desired product in the supermarket can become a challenge. Unexpected road work on the daily commute can lead to hazardous situations. New technologies such as intelligent white cane help to provide information about the environment that is otherwise accessed through vision by rendering the information to the available senses, such as touch or hearing. Smart vision assistive technology has the promising potential to improve the quality of life and autonomy of people with severe visual impairment or complete loss of vision. The competition tasks included elements of spatial orientation and personal mobility, such as boarding and leaving a public bus, which needed to be tackled under a time constraint. Pilots had to be able to recognise the context of a task and avoid obstacles. Some of the competition tasks contained dynamic elements to which the pilots have to react.



The Arm Prosthesis Race

Image: ETH Zurich, CYBATHLON

- **ARM- Arm Prosthesis Race:** This event involved Grabbing, moving and feeling with a prosthetic hand. An amputation above the hand or a congenital malformation may lead to significant challenges in everyday life. While many of the latest arm prostheses provide a wide variety of grip patterns, their use and range of functions are often not completely satisfactory for their users. The devices often still lack some of the fundamental functionalities of a human hand, such as wrist flexion and extension or the control of individual fingers. Missing degrees of freedom often result in non-physiological, compensatory movements. Most devices also do not provide depth perception or haptic sensory information, which can lead to a lack of acceptance of the prosthesis. The competition tasks tested various abilities, such as sensory feedback from the hand, the ability to rotate the palm upwards and downwards, or the ability to cope with objects of different sizes, shapes, and weights, as well as coordination of both hands.

ROB- Assistance Robot Race: This event was about managing daily life autonomously with an assistance robot. People with severe motor impairments or missing limbs, both upper and lower limbs, have limited autonomy when interacting with their physical environment. Tasks such as shopping for groceries independently, personal hygiene or clearing out the dishwasher are just a few examples of where these people might depend on a care person. Assistance robots are a relatively new category of assistive devices which can support a person with limited motor control in daily life. as manipulating delicate objects skilfully or avoiding obstacles autonomously. In the contest both pilots and robots had to recognise and manipulate various objects and avoid obstacles on the track. Tackling tasks under a time constraint was also included.

- **BCI- Brain Computer Interface:** Brain-computer interfaces (BCI) are a technology that enables direct communication between the human brain and a computer. BCI detect specific activation patterns in the brain and translates them into control signals suitable for interacting with computer-based processes. A person with tetraplegia or locked-in syndrome lives with paralysis of numerous muscles of the body. This means that they are not able to carry out many activities of daily living autonomously and are therefore highly dependent on the assistance of other people. The competition tasks required the ability to independently generate and control multiple discrete and also continuous control commands for a computer-based process, and thus drive a vehicle in an animated scenario.

- **Exo Exoskeleton Race:** This event was about standing upright and walking with paraplegia. Robotic exoskeletons are devices that enable people with paraplegia to stand upright, walk, or go up and down stairs. The user-friendliness of current exoskeletons is limited by shortcomings such as a limited ability to adapt their movement patterns to situations, and time-consuming procedures for fitting them to the person and taking them off. Robotic exoskeletons enabling an upright posture and gait for paraplegic users have the promising potential to alleviate many of the shortcomings associated with prolonged wheelchair use mentioned above. Being able to communicate with peers at eye level while standing is a frequently mentioned additional feature of exoskeleton use. The competition tasks included greater variability and uncertainty about the exact structure or exact arrangement of the various objects. Amongst the things that were tested were the overall body balance, such as walking with the exoskeleton without crutches.

FES- Functional Electrical Stimulation Bike Race: The theme of this event was moving paralysed muscles with electrical stimuli. Functional electrical stimulation (FES) is a technology that uses electrical pulses to excite muscles that are paralysed due to a central nervous system injury. Thus, a person whose nerves from the brain to the leg muscles are disconnected due to a spinal cord injury (SCI) can use an intelligent control device to initiate a movement, e.g., a pedalling movement on a bike. Regular FES cycling exercise after spinal cord injuries (SCI) has been proven to lead to positive physiological improvement, such as improvements in bone density, increase in muscle mass, as well as improved cardiovascular and respiratory fitness. FES can also be applied in combination with other assistive technologies such as robotic exoskeletons. This allows the movement control advantages of a robotic device to be combined with the physiological benefits conferred by FES.

- **LEG- Leg Prosthesis Race:** This event involved climbing stairs and overcoming rough terrain with a leg prosthesis. An amputation above the knee or a congenital disorder may lead to significant challenges in mobility in everyday life. The functionality of current assistive devices does not always optimally support their users. Many prostheses do not have a motor as part of the knee joint. As a result, such prostheses cannot actively support their user when getting up from a chair or when climbing stairs. Current devices lack the ability to provide proprioception and haptic sensory feedback from the joints or the sole of the user's foot. Leg prostheses which mimic and enable the natural function of human legs have the promising potential to optimally support their users. Leg prostheses that can be controlled intuitively and allow for symmetric gait lead to better device acceptance and better health of the users.

The Leg Prosthesis Race
Image: ETH Zurich, CYBATHLON

- **WHL- Wheelchair Race:** This event involved overcoming uneven terrain and stairs with a wheelchair. People who use a powered wheelchair for personal mobility are often confronted with challenges in their daily lives. Individual steps, flights of stairs, or uneven terrain can pose big obstacles.

Users must often rely on help from a third party to overcome such situations. Recently, technologies such as stair-climbing mechanisms have been developed to provide support in some of the situations mentioned above. However, these technologies are often developed for specific tasks only and their function cannot be applied to other situations. The addition of technologies such as stair-climbing mechanisms to powered wheelchairs has the promising potential to improve the personal mobility of people with a severe walking disability in daily life. The competition tasks included a greater level of uncertainty about the exact structure or exact arrangement of the various objects, e.g., variable patterns of stones and unevenness inrough terrain, or stairs of varying step height and/or angles. Manipulating objects that are related to personal mobility, such as opening and closing a door, were likewise included in the wheelchair race.

The Future of CYBATHLON

While the CYBATHLON project has concluded at ETH Zürich, its legacy is set to continue . ETH Zürich is currently in discussions with potential organisations to take over the leadership of this project. The next edition of CYBATHLON is tentatively planned to take place in Asia in 2028. CYBATHLON brought together not just teams and their technologies but also pilots (people with disabilities), researchers, supporters, volunteers, and a global audience. The emphasis was not only on technological breakthroughs but also on fostering social inclusion and empowering people with disabilities.

CYBATHLON's impact is further demonstrated by the ongoing research and publications in the field of assistive technologies that were showcased in previous editions . The event has created a movement aimed at inspiring future generations.

Conclusion

The mission of CYBATHLON, initiated by Professor Robert Riener at ETH Zürich, is undeniably noble, aiming to develop assistive technologies suitable for everyday use and promote greater inclusion for people with disabilities. This ambitious goal inherently pushes technology to its boundaries, as evidenced by the state-of-the-art assistive technologies showcased across its various editions, culminating in eight disciplines at CYBATHLON 2024. The very act of creating these groundbreaking solutions for complex real-world tasks challenges human innovation, demanding creativity, teamwork, and resilience from the participating teams. CYBATHLON serves not only as a competition but as a catalyst for progress in assistive technology and a testament to human ingenuity.

About the Author

Iqbal Singh is a tech enthusiast with a passion for sharing his knowledge with others. He has the ability to explain complexity with simplicity. He uses this skill to demystify complex technological subjects in order to make them more popular and accessible. Iqbal is a former army officer who switched to the corporate world n 2008. He is currently working with Google.

Poetry

दो दुनिया एक दिल

BY LT CDR VARUN KUMAR DHAND

आर जवान बॉर्डर पर लड़ने की तयारी तूने अच्छे से की है!
क्या तुझे पता है! एक सैलाब, एक तूफ़ान, एक सुनामी तेरे घर में उभर रही है।
क्या तू इसके लिये तैयार है?
तूने अपने अस्त्र शाश्त्र की धार तेज की, अपने प्रशिक्षण की गहरही को नापा।
परंतु क्या , तू व्यंगों के बाण की वर्षा के लिए तैयार है?

मैं बात कर रहा हूँ एक युवक की जो बड़े अरमानों से अपनी अर्धांगनी के साथ सात फेरे लेकर आया है।
एक दुसरे के साथ जीने मरने की कसमे खायी है।
क्या तू जीवन में नई भूमिका, अभिनय के लिए तैयार है?

पहले अपनी मां/आयी से संतान था, बहू बेटी के समान होती है।
पर जब सचाई से परिचय हुआ तो पता चला, बहू बेटी कभी बन नहीं सकती।
मैं इस सचाई को मनाने के लिए तैयार न था

फिर थोड़ी आदत सी होने लगी, पर में नफरत के इस दलदल में डूबता जर रहा था।
मैने अपने आप से पूछा, मैं ही क्या, तो मुझे जवाब मिला।
तेरे अपनो को तुज से बहुत अपेक्षा है, मां को बेटे से, पत्नी को पति से।
पर क्या मैं इन अपेक्षयों का भोज शाहने के लिए तैयार था?

मैं अभिमन्यु की तरह इस चक्रव्यूह को तोड़ना चाहता था।
तभी इस मुसीबत की घड़ी में मेरे दोस्त काम आये।
जो निस्वर्थ भाव से, बिना किसी अपेक्षा से मुझे राह दिखलाई।
तुम नारद मुन्नी (नारायण नारायण) का अभिनय करना छोड़ दो। तुम्हारी समस्या का खुद ब खुद समाधान हो जाएगा।
मेने सोचा में कितना ही मुर्ख था जो के एक सरल बात को समज न पाया?
अभी में बोल सकता हूँ के में मैदान-ए-जंग और रिश्तों की जटिलता को समजने और सामना करने के लिए तैयार हूं।

नमस्कार
लेफ्टिनेंट कमांडर वरूण कुमार ढंड (रिटायर्ड)

About the Author
Lt Cdr Varun Kumar Dhand **retd from Indian Navy with 11 years of service in Executive cadre. He had left Indian Navy in 2018. Presently, he is working as Deputy Manager (Security) in State Bank of India, Mumbai. He is passionate of reading books, running marathons, writing book reviews, write and debate on different topics of national importance. Readers can share their feedback of book review at dhand1984@gmail.com**

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The Undertaking will be under: a. "I certify that the Article titled 'दो दुनिया एक दिल' has been written by me and is original in content. It has not been published in any print or electronic medium earlier. Also, relevant references and bibliography has been given, where essential. I will also take the onus in case of any contest by any person."

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Lt Cdr Varun Kumar Dhand (Retd)

Poetry

The Digital Frontier Beckons the Soldier

By Lt Col Iqbal Singh

The screen's bright world, a new and vast terrain,
Invites your skills, though fields may seem so far.
Your inner strength, a wealth you still retain.

No trenches here, but code's intricate chain,
New languages where bright ideas are.
The screen's bright world, a new and vast terrain.

Though battle plans and algorithms may feign
To be unlike, your discipline's bright star
Your inner strength, a wealth you still retain.

The digital frontier, where fortunes gain,
Demands sharp minds, no matter where you are.
The screen's bright world, a new and vast terrain.

Embrace the change, let knowledge ease the strain,
For learning's power breaks down every bar.
Your inner strength, a wealth you still retain.

This modern age, a chance to rise again,
A rewarding path, however near or far.
The screen's bright world, a new and vast terrain,
Your inner strength, a wealth you still retain.

Note: This poem has been written in the form of a Vilanelle. It is a French verse form of 19 lines consisting of five three-line stanzas and a final quatrain.

Go Beyond the Dreams !

By Commander V Srivatsan

They told me to dream big -
so, I did!
A bungalow on Mars, a yacht on the moon,
and a bank account that laughs in binary.
But dreams, it turns out,
are notoriously bad Project Managers.

They never mention the paperwork,
the sleepless nights,
or the awkward small talk with
reality at networking events.

I chased success like a
'kaapi-nated' Lab,

"Did you really think running faster
would help?"

So, I stopped!

Not to quit - don't be ridiculous -
but to recalibrate the GPS.
(Reality forgot to update the maps, as usual)

Turns out, the point was never the bungalow,
the yacht, or the binary crorepati club!
It was the detours.
The wrong turns.
The embarrassing pit stops at 'Self-Doubt Café'

Dreams are overrated anyway

where the service is slow, but the lessons are unforgettable.

Ambitions with glitter on top.

Go beyond them!

Beyond the scripted monologues of success,
beyond the Instagram quotes &
LinkedIn wisdom.
Get your hands dirty in the trenches of
'What If?'
and build something absurdly,
gloriously, entirely yours.

Be the punchline to life's joke -
the one that makes the universe snort into
its kaapi

And when you get there –
wherever there ends up being -
don't bother setting-up a throne.
Someone else's dream will
bulldoze it soon enough.

Just smile, wave,
and start planning the next impossible thing.

Because beyond the dreams?
That's where the fun really starts!!!

~ Commander V Srivatsan
cdr.srivatsan@gmail.com

Keh De.....

By Capt Uday K Shriwas

Keh De.....

Woh Jo dabi SI
Sun le koi bin kuch kahe

Jo maang lu to khatam
Bin maange mile
To ho khatam

Jo tufan andar
Kuch shabd jo kahne se
Shayad mil jaata sabar

Kya kaha jo
Chup hua ek rishta
Jo na kahaa hota
To shayad Bolta

Jo samz jaate
To sulaz jaate
Na Jo samaze
Aur ulaze

Kaha tak jaati
Hai ek aah
Suno kabhi

Kuchh kehe bina
Sab keh de
Aankho me dekh lo

Kyun shabdo ki
Hai talash
Ek masoom hansi
Kaffi hai

Annkho se jhalak jaate
Wo jo hai
halka kar jaate hai

Dhadkan jo sambhal jaye
Aise kuch isharo ki
Saugat aa jaaye

Subah ke ujale ki
Badi chahat hai
Sust ek angdayi ki

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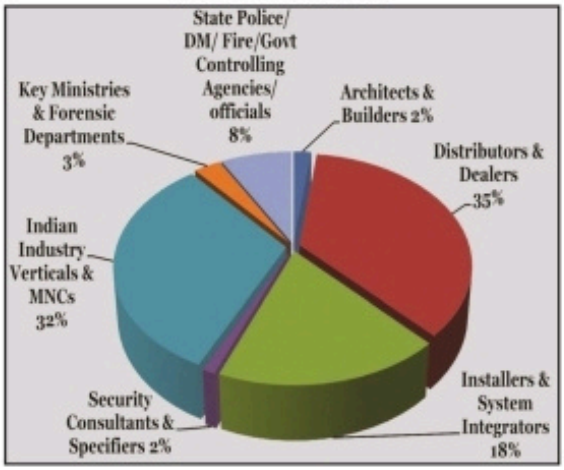

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