

Revolutionary EdTech Startup From MIT–Golden Bird

In today's growing world of computers, education technology, or ed-tech, becomes equally valuable and important at every step. EdTech is devoted to the development and application of software and hardware tools to promote education. The MIT Post had the opportunity to have a chat with Pushpendra Singh, a fourth-year student of MIT and budding entrepreneur responsible for creating the EdTech start-up, Golden Bird.

What was the inspiration behind starting this initiative?

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020, I realised that most students were not doing anything productive at home. Since my engineering life got affected, I wondered how affected the tier 3 colleges would be. In addition to then not being very good, the students' productivity was also halted. Secondly, the Tech companies back then were offering block coding on simulated softwares—something which could not be considered proper coding. So as a professional developer, it was my obligation to teach students what App Development, Web Development, and Tech education actually meant, at affordable rates. The name of our company *Golden Bird* is based on the name of India, once known as the Golden Bird.



Pushendra Singh, CEO, and Founder of Golden Bird Education

Tell us a bit about your journey.

I had come to MIT on a scholarship wherein I took up ECE, and I was doing coding parallelly. Then an incident occurred in the 4th semester that left me completely isolated from the others, and I felt like I had no friends and my life was going in a downward spiral. I told myself to just put aside the emotion and everything happening to me and focus on work instead. The MIT administration always stood by me and helped me in all possible ways. I knew that there was something great that I could achieve, and that was my motivation. Due to this, I had a lot of time which I productively applied to complete my iOS, Android, and Unity Development Certification. Since my childhood, I was certain that I was going to do something unconventional. In 2020, I started participating in multiple competitions across India and won two of them hosted by IIT Bombay. We even won Rs. 50,000 in that grant and met a lot of good mentors. I have met some of the best professionals in their departments across the world.

Shortly thereafter, I drafted my curriculum. Then in January 2021, I launched my company. I had launched two companies focusing respectively on health tech and ed-tech. I stuck with the latter and today we have more than 1,00,000 students in our panel. We have branded more than 75 schools such as Vibgyor High and parts of Delhi Public School. There are over 1,000 students who have completed the course, and this is how we are growing. According to this year's plan, we hope to add 20 more career courses to the panel.

What difficulties did you encounter when you first came up with the start-up?

There were a lot of difficulties, let me tell you straight. First of all, I'm only 22 and nobody wants to talk to a young entrepreneur when you want to partner with a college or school. In spite of being from a great university like MAHE, which has provided the kind of facilities and exposure that

very few institutions can provide in India, I have experienced that entrepreneurs from IITs and IIMs are preferred in the startup ecosystem. Thirdly, we were a very early-stage start-up and already many big ed-tech companies existed. The first question everybody used to ask me is, *“How are you any different from other ed-tech companies in the market?”*

In the first college I reached out to partner with to teach their students, I told the gentleman that I'm a research undergraduate and would like to get some guidance from senior professors. These were some of the tactics I had to use to get my foot through the door and get them to take us seriously. I pitched my idea to the professor about my startup in detail and he was very impressed. This is the story of how I got my first college on board. Our curriculum is one of the best in the country. With mouth-to-mouth publicity, we have secured all the colleges and schools on our panel so far. I have not spent a single penny in marketing.

What points do you cover while pitching to investors or colleges to convince them to partner with you?

All I need to crack a deal is a five-minute meeting. I call it 5 MM. I just need 5 minutes because I know that our EdTech is the best that is available in the Indian education system. Once I get that 5-minute meeting, we just expand on our enterprise. From just one college in less than six months, we now work with more than 75 schools and colleges and cater to more than 1,00,000 students.

The best part of our curriculum is that everybody becomes a registered developer. By the end of the session, everybody has their own app, game, or web development project they wish to work on. If a student is learning iOS app development, they will certainly have their own professional app running in the App Store. Secondly, the price plays a big role. My courses do not cost more than Rs. 8,000. The price varies according to the course but never touches double digits. For instance,

right now we are providing the course at only Rs. 5,000 or 5,500 because we are a B2B business. We cater to the entire college. So now if you compare it with other companies, some of them charge Rs 1,00,000 and we do the same thing at Rs. 8,000 or 8,500. Our course, with the same quality, is 12 times more cost-effective, which is what is the need of the hour for the country's students.

Moreover, we are the only EdTech company in India that teaches on official software. For android app development, we use Android Studio, for Unity development engine, Unity, and so on. Other companies usually have their own build-up website in which they teach block coding. We are the only company that teaches text coding instead. These are the points and USPs that make us completely different from other companies in the industry.

How did you manage to secure the necessary resources?

Before this, I had been doing freelancing work. I have worked as a freelancer in multiple sectors. I had my own print-on-demand website. I had also worked as a debugger in multiple big tech companies. So, post-2019, I was quite financially independent. I did not have to ask for a single penny from my family. From there I saved my own money and therefore had some capital in hand. I got new hardware like laptops and made my own classroom setup. Golden Bird has a completely live classroom setup.

In the daytime, from 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM, I took three classes, and in the second half of the day, I went and met the professors, scheduled meetings to partner with new schools and colleges. Simultaneously, I had to do my college work as I am still an eighth-semester student. I had to attend lectures and do assignments and activities. This is what my day used to look like and this is how I handled everything.

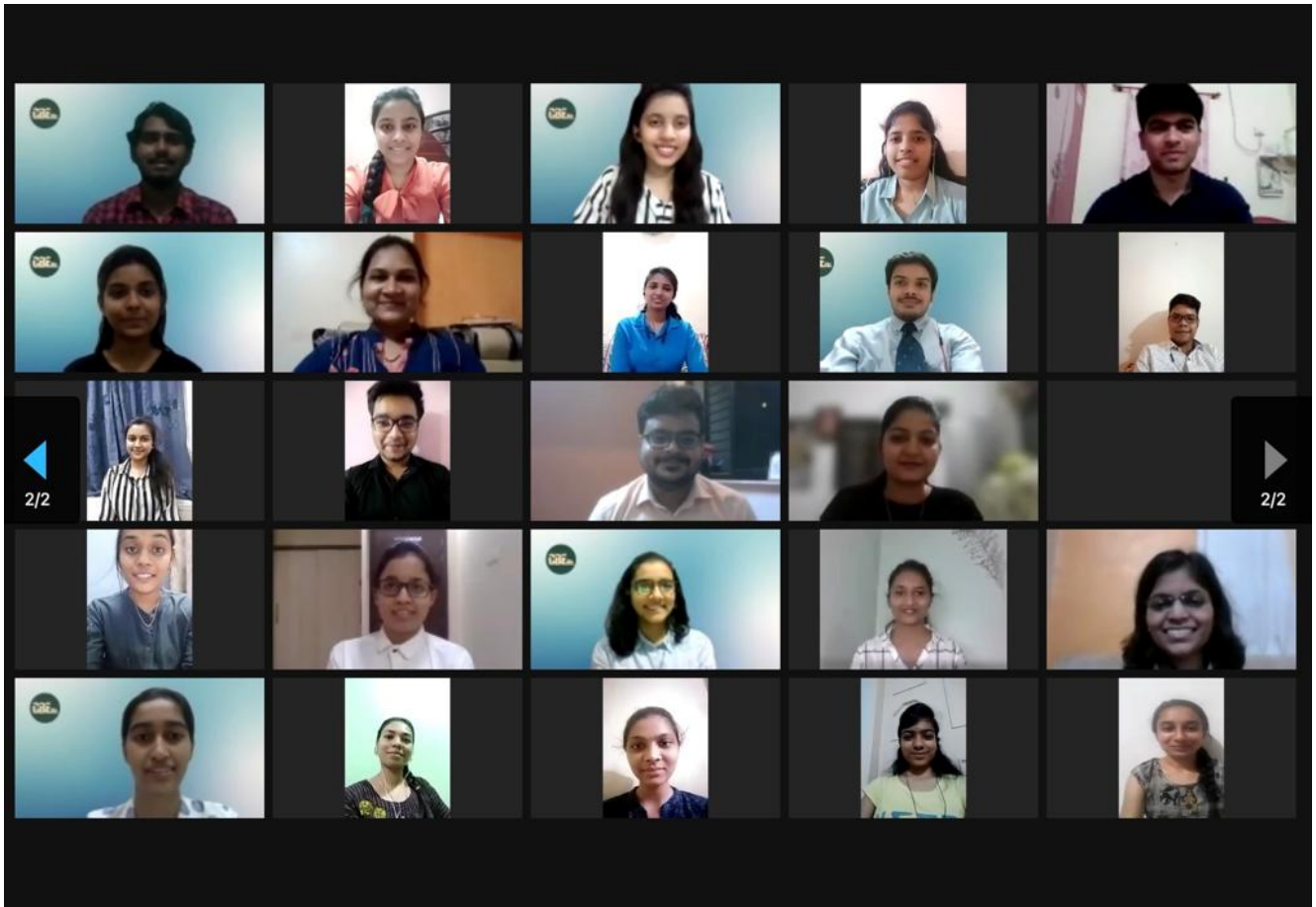
Are there any other people who played a major role in the

success of Golden Bird?

I had my best friend help me in the beginning for around two-and-a-half months. He is from IIT Bombay and he handled the process of creating the curriculum. He had prior experience working as a teaching assistant in his college which helped greatly. Other than that, everything has been done by me, including the marketing. I am currently handling more than fourteen departments in the company.

There are a few more people. I won't call it a successful start-up as of now as it's just been 6 months and this is a very short period of time to call a start-up successful. As of now, we are just at the beginning so I'll call it a growing start-up.

Rajdip, my CFO in the company, has provided some great inputs. I'm not a finance guy. Right now, I'm learning some MBA courses but I still don't know some financial terms. He has given us some financial planning on how to enter the market and some good business development procedures. Secondly, I'll mention Prashant Gupta who handles my investment firms. The third person would have to be Sameer Khan, my CA and mentor. Sameer Khan and Prashant Gupta are two of the best people that I have met in my life who have truly helped me think out of the box. I now know how investments work and all the ins and outs of start-ups. I'm learning every day and I am thankful to them for supporting my venture and having faith in me.



*An online class in the process of being taught on Golden Bird.
[Image Credits: Golden Bird Education]*

How does Golden Bird Education operate?

We're a B2B company. We partner with institutions and schools. We are like Udaan, which is similar to Flipkart or Amazon. It is basically an online selling platform for businesspeople. So if I own a shop I won't buy the product from Flipkart, I shall buy it from Udaan as I'll get it at wholesale. We only partner with schools and colleges. Then we hold an orientation programme, a live free webinar where we brief students about our training program, what we have to offer, what they will learn, and if they find it interesting, they join us. After this, we conduct live classes.

We approach the school or the college and give them a proper pitch regarding what we will be delivering, how much we will be charging, at what time we'll be doing it, what's best for the kids, and how it will benefit the kids and the school. Our

curriculum is designed for school children from grades 6 to 12, and STEM majors in college—students pursuing a degree in Polytechnic, B.Sc, M.Sc, Engineering. Then we hold the orientation programme. The interested students then pay the fee and join the session after which we start. We do not take more than 36 students in the classroom. In one classroom we have one main instructor for teaching and one teaching assistant who helps the students with doubts.

What do you envision for the future of the organisation?

My goal is to give Manipal University its first unicorn startup. In the next three to five years, Golden Bird will be the first unicorn from MIT and secondly, this company will set a benchmark regarding what education should be and the tech education students should be given. In the future what we see now as a conventional education system—the physical schools that we all go to—will not be so conventional anymore. A new form will emerge, which I would call *parallel e-schooling*, will become more conventional. Earlier, coaching classes were not conventional, but then it became such that every student now went to a coaching class in order to get good grades. In the coming decade, I am hopeful that we will be leading this new online education system.

What advice would you give to budding entrepreneurs?

The first piece of advice that I would like to give to everyone is that first prove yourself in the market. In the market, don't think that you're the smartest and that you would not have to prove yourself. This is again not applicable to every start-up, because there are some start-ups that are physical, based particularly on hardware, and take time to earn money. Try to prove yourself either in the tech department or in the market before approaching an investor. For every start-up, there could be a different milestone, so first prove yourself so that everybody respects you.

So first prove yourself and make note of your milestones. Note down the milestones you want to achieve, achieve those, and then try for marketing and investment. Always be open to learning. There is a saying in my hometown—“*On some days you are Sahab some days you are Salaam Sahab*”, which means that some days you need to bow down and, on some days, you have to keep your head up, depending on the situation. Initially, you will have to adjust and do whatever it takes for you to grow to a respectable position after which you can start saying no to something that you don't want to do. But that does not mean that you do something that is completely illegal or unethical. Do whatever is required and pour your heart and soul into it.

My inbox is filled with messages of gratitude from the students and their families. Always look at the greater good and do what is to be done in an ethical way. That's the bottom line.

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