

Karna Vishwas on Working for Google and His Plans Going Forward



MEMP Alumnus

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By Harsh Ambekar



Karna Vishwas, a graduate of the Duke's MEMP in 2009, currently works as a manager of media and technology solutions at Google. A Mechanical Engineering undergrad from Osmania University in Pakistan, he worked as a Quality Assurance Lead and then as a Program Planning and Control Analyst. After having worked for Honeywell for almost three years, he wanted to attain a blend of technical, business and managerial expertise.

"Hi, Karna. Can you give us a run through of your position at Google?" said Harsh.

"Sure. I work in the Services Division and have around fifteen members in my team who are located at various offices of the Asia-Pacific and Latin America regions. My team is responsible for handling emerging technologies (new products) with respect to display advertising and market release. The team works with the Technical Team and Front Sales. We come up with different ways of customizing advertisements based on the demographics they will be targeting. We run market analysis for new products developed by the technical team and see if it's viable to release. When we actually release the advertisement and the product we capture customer reaction and let the technical team know how the product is being perceived in the market. As needed, necessary changes are made to the product."

"I see. So what is your work routine like?"

"Usually my week starts with coming up with goals and strategies for the week and coaching the team via one-on-one meetings. As the week progresses, I need to monitor how the projects are being carried out by my team while my team helps Front Sales and the Technical Team release the new product. In addition, I make myself aware of the industry trends and competition in the market, which I guess takes up around 20% of my time."

"In terms of managing a team scattered across the globe, what skills are required for this job?"

"First of all, I need to have data-driven decision making skills. You are required to employ a structured way to solve problems. I guess my engineering background helped me with analytical skills and common sense. Next come influence and negotiation skills. I often negotiate with the sales team on various projects which is very essential. It is also important to have a strong personality and make sure you are firm with respect to your recommendations."

"Got it. And how did MEMP help you develop these skills?"

"For me, it was the cultural mix rather than the coursework that helped me gain the required skills in MEMP. As you are aware, MEMP has a huge cultural mix. You work with people from different background and cultures. It teaches you to be

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sensitive towards cultures and work efficiently with a diverse group of people. This has significantly helped me in my current role. I learned team management skills during the program. And before I forget, networking and negotiation skills that I learned helped me a lot. I have changed my position, based on my interests, three times in Google, and networking was the key. In terms of coursework, subjects like marketing and management helped me a lot. In my opinion, case studies are very beneficial.”

“Perfect. What are your suggestions for a prospective student in search of a job at Google?”

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“Focus on your strengths. Articulate them effectively in your 30-second elevator pitch. Employers usually look for strong decision making skills and good interpersonal skills. Network! Use LinkedIn or other means to connect to alumni. Make sure you do a thorough background check and are prepared before your scheduled informational interview. It really disappoints me when a student is not well prepared. You miss a wonderful opportunity, apart from wasting both the parties’ time. Having said that, I would like to say that more MEMers are needed in Google. I see a lot of potential in MEMP students and employers like Google are looking for them. I have worked with many MBA grads who generally aren’t always able to dive deep into technical problems in a hands-on way. I believe MEMP students can definitely be a better fit.”

“Thank you, Karna. This will help MEMers significantly. Coming to Google, how do you like working there so far?”

“As you may have heard, Google is a great place to work. Teams are very important in any company. I get to work with some of the smartest people here. This kind of population may form 20 to 30% in some companies, but it’s around 80% here at Google. The caliber of people in general is high here. I guess quality is very important for me and I find it here.”

“Based on your experience and the professional journey you have travelled through, what are your future goals?”

“I came from a startup. I intend to go back to startups. My professional career is 7 years long, with around 4.5 years in Google. Every year has been different. I have worked in an individual role for 2 years and a managerial role for 2 years. When I look ahead, say in 4 to 5 years, I see myself in a leadership position at a startup.”

“Thank you so much for your time. It has been a pleasure talking to you.”

“You’re welcome, Harsh. I highly encourage MEMers to look for opportunities at Google and reach out to me if needed. I would be very happy to help.” ■
