

I Walked Into a Room of 2,000 Builders — I Walked Out Different

I didn't go in as a founder.

I didn't even go in with a startup.

I went in curious.

And somewhere between 2:30 PM and 9 PM—surrounded by 2,000 builders—something shifted.

On April 18th, 2026, I attended something I'll probably remember for a long time—**Y Combinator India's first Startup School event** in Electronic City, Bangalore.

This wasn't just another tech event.

Out of all, only **2,000 builders, founders, and investors** were selected. And somehow, I was one of them.

Walking Into the Room

I reached around 12:15 PM, got my QR scanned, picked up my band, and stuck a name tag on my shirt—something simple, but important.

Because here, people actually look at it and talk to you.

We were sent straight to lunch. At first, I thought the space might not be enough—but by the end of the day, I realized they had managed it really well.

By 2:25 PM, the YC welcome started.

And from there—it was just **back-to-back firepower**.

What the Day Looked Like

The event was structured as a series of fireside chats with some of India's top YC-backed founders:

- Aditya Palicha (Zepto)
- Harshil Mathur (Razorpay)
- Varun Vummadi (Giga)
- Vidit Aatrey (Meesho)
- Lalit Keshre (Groww)

- Mukund Jha (Emergent / ex-Dunzo)

Along with YC partners like **Jared Friedman, Ankit Gupta, Jon Xu, Puneet Kumar, and Arnav.**

Each session was ~30 minutes, but packed with insights that didn't feel theoretical—they felt earned.

Things That Hit Me Hard

A few moments stood out immediately:

- Zepto started with **WhatsApp groups and a home-based dark store**
- Razorpay didn't blindly burn money—they even parked funds in FDs (and yes, investors didn't like it 😞)
- Giga's early validation came when **one big company trusted them—and then everyone followed**
- Meesho showed how even massive numbers are still **tiny compared to the total market**
- There is no difference in building for India and the entire globe, so **build for the world**

But beyond stories, there were patterns.

The Patterns Were Loud and Clear

Across all talks, a few themes kept repeating:

1. Use AI. Relentlessly.

If you're not leveraging AI tools (like cloud coding, etc.), you're leaving speed and opportunity on the table.

2. Start small. Know your users.

Not big ideas—real problems.

3. Don't overthink. Just build.

Ship → feedback → fix → repeat.

4. Hustle is non-negotiable

Every founder there had failed multiple times before succeeding.

“Entrepreneurs never fail.”

The Most Unexpected Advice

One founder said something that genuinely hit (*It was Lalit 🙏*):

“Stop listening to us old people blindly. Our experiences are from our time. Yours is different.”

That was powerful.

Take insights—but don't copy paths.

Networking: The Real Game

If the talks were 50%, networking was the other 50%.

And honestly—it was hard.

People made eye contact... and walked away.

So I had to push myself to start conversations.

And once I did—it changed everything.

And yeah—there was this one moment.

I got to talk to **Ankit Gupta**.

It was not more than 5 seconds maybe, but it felt great and promising.

I told him I'm a pre-final year student and that I'll show up at YC someday.

He was like, yeah, come on, hop on when you can.

And the way I saw it—

the horse is already there. YC is the horse.

I just have to get on.

People I Met (And What I Learned)

- A founder running a **50-person company** hiring at the event
- A fintech expert from Hong Kong (**Ankit Suri**, u you will one of the first persons i would contact) who simplified everything in seconds:

“Don't aim for a company. Just keep solving problems. Eventually you will figure it”

- A startup working on **AI-based land document analysis with government data**

- My senior Krishna Dvaipayana, who said what not to do and to do to be an entrepreneur (*you will make it to school*)
- A founder from **Netts Mobility** who I walked around with and hey thanks for the tips.
- **Nidhi Kulkarni**, who was in similar shoes as mine in networking, but we enjoyed at the end.
- People from Texas Instruments, VIT, startups in Indiranagar, Delhi projects, and more

And even:

- A **14-year-old building a startup**
- A **13-year-old working on e-commerce**

That was humbling.

The Spectrum of People & Domains

One thing that really stood out was the **range of people and domains** in that room.

It wasn't just "tech people."

It was everything:

- AI, software, and pure tech
- Hardware, sensors, and defense
- Real estate and construction
- Medicine and healthcare
- Law and policy
- Finance and fintech
- Architecture, CAD, and design

And then there were people combining both ends—hardware + AI, deep tech + real-world systems.

The spectrum had no end.

I also spoke about some of my previous projects to people who could relate—and those conversations felt real.

Not everyone gets what you're building, but when someone does, it clicks instantly.

And one more thing—I told quite a few people:

▮ If you need an engineer, reach out to me.

So yeah, if you're reading this and building something—you can reach out to me too.

What Networking Actually Felt Like

At first—awkward.

Then—addictive.

Because you realize:

Everyone there is just like you.

Trying to talk. Trying to build. Trying to figure things out.

My Biggest Internal Shift

Before the event, I was nervous.

After the event, something changed.

- You don't need to be “unique”—you need to **execute better**
- You don't need perfect timing—you need to **start**
- You don't need to do it alone—but if you choose a co-founder, choose someone you **enjoy suffering with**

And the biggest one:

There is no perfect moment. You create it.

Was It Worth It?

Honestly?

It felt like a **million-dollar experience**.

Who Should Attend Something Like This?

- People who actually want to build
- People willing to talk, learn, and get uncomfortable

Who shouldn't?

You already know.

What's Next for Me

No more overthinking.

Just starting.

Using the **\$25,000 YC credits**, building something, shipping it, and seeing where it goes.

And someday—

I'll be back.

Not as an attendee. *(hey Ankit, i told you i will)*