

Culture at StarApps Studio



Welcome to a Journey Through StarApps Studio's Culture!

At StarApps Studio, we firmly believe in the power of strong company culture to drive success. Recently, we had the pleasure of sharing our office stories with Harsh Pamnani, an accomplished business storyteller known for his work with publications like CNBC and Forbes. Impressed by what he heard, Harsh suggested creating a culture book to document our values and principles. And so, we asked him to write this book, based on inputs from us and our team.

This book is crafted with three important groups in mind:

Firstly, those who have been part of our journey and want to continue to contribute to our growth and success.

Secondly, our new hires who are eager to learn and grow with us.

Thirdly, potential candidates who are considering joining our team and want to get an inside look at our values and practices.

Moreover, we warmly welcome our clients - Shopify merchants interested in learning more about our organization and anyone eager to delve deeper into our culture.

This book is not just a collection of words on paper but a living representation of our purpose, vision, and mission. It reflects the values we hold dear and the aspirations we strive to achieve daily.

As you explore these pages, we hope you'll be inspired by the stories and experiences of our team members, who have played a crucial part in shaping our culture and journey.

Sincerely, Shashank and Santosh Co-founders, StarApps Studio



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From Dream to Reality: The Journey of StarApps Studio

Shashank has always been interested in business. After graduating from the prestigious Delhi College of Engineering, he explored various business concepts before co-founding FreshMonk in 2013, an online platform focused on selling customized apparel. FreshMonk received funding from investors in Singapore, the UK, and India, ultimately resulting in a successful exit in mid-2016.

After leaving FreshMonk, Shashank began searching for new opportunities and decided to create an ecommerce store on Shopify. However, he quickly became dissatisfied with the limited capabilities of Shopify's variant system. Although he found an app that could address some of the gaps, it was far from perfect, lacking popularity and not providing an optimal user experience.

Leveraging his prior experience in e-commerce and recognizing the potential for recurring revenue in a SaaS business, Shashank set out to create a variant image management app for Shopify stores that would surpass existing options by automating manual processes and solving problems at a deeper level. This led to the establishment of StarApps Studio in December 2016.

From the beginning, Santosh, a former team member at FreshMonk, proved to be an invaluable supporter of Shashank. Despite being occupied with another job, Santosh willingly made himself available for late-night phone conversations that revolved around technical matters.

On July 28, 2017, StarApps Studio achieved a significant milestone as its inaugural app was published on Shopify. Shortly after, on October 6, 2017, the company received its first modest payment of \$87.85. This day is celebrated as the **founding day** at StarApps Studio as it symbolizes the importance of the initial earnings derived from the customers' trust.

Meanwhile, recognizing the criticality of technical expertise in propelling StarApps Studio towards greater success, Shashank set out to find a co-founder who shared his passion and vision. Despite recently becoming a father and being well-settled in Delhi, Santosh firmly believed in Shashank's vision and decided to relocate to Pune and join as a co-founder.

Together, the duo poured countless hours into refining their first app. Their efforts were met with an overwhelming response from the market. On June 8, 2018, the app reached a remarkable milestone of 1,000 installs, all achieved through organic growth without any significant marketing push.

Shashank and Santosh began to interact with hundreds of Shopify merchants to discover other unsolved problems related to variants in the e-commerce industry. This led them to explore new solutions and further enhance their product offerings.

After achieving product-market fit and generating healthy revenue, the company set out to expand its team. In March 2019, Zoeb and Shubham became the first two hires to join the company. By that time, the company's total revenue had reached \$50K, with Annual Recurring Revenue (ARR) exceeding \$100K in the same month.

Zoeb's expertise proved instrumental in developing and launching a beta version of a variant discovery tool, "Swatch King," within an impressive three-month timeframe. This premium offering received an enthusiastic response from customers, contributing \$1 million in revenue within two years of its launch and becoming a significant revenue driver for the company.

Meanwhile, Shubham assumed a crucial role in delivering exceptional customer service, leveraging his innate understanding of customers to establish strong personal relationships with early adopters. This allowed the founders to focus on product planning and development for new initiatives, knowing that customer support was in capable hands.

StarApps Studio's journey towards becoming a top player in the Shopify variants space is a testament to the unwavering dedication and hard work of its talented team. Their relentless effort, product-driven mindset, quest for perfection, and never-settle attitude have resulted in the development of five successful apps that have helped over 20,000 businesses globally. Thanks to these apps, the shopping experience of over 50 million shoppers is significantly enhanced every day.

Since the very beginning, Shashank and Santosh have dedicated themselves to building a profitable bootstrapped business that places a strong emphasis on cultivating a supportive work environment for their team members. Their unwavering commitment has paid off, as StarApps Studio is now a prosperous business where team members eagerly look forward to coming to work.



Purpose, Vision and Mission

Let's look at the world from the perspective of an online shopper, Jane, a working mother of a young baby with many responsibilities at home and at the office. Recently, Jane has been scrolling through an online store to find the perfect pair of shoes for her. She has spent hours searching, but the vast number of options has left her confused about what to buy.

Overwhelmed and exhausted, Jane is just one of the millions of customers searching for products in countless e-commerce stores, wasting precious hours of their lives.

Our **Purpose** is to make decision-making easier for ecommerce customers in a world of endless choices. By simplifying the decision-making process, we aim to save customers time and energy while helping them get the products they need.

Shopify is a globally renowned e-commerce platform that empowers businesses to sell online. Our **Vision** is to develop a top-notch variant management system for e-commerce, enabling businesses of all sizes to serve their customers better. We're committed to aligning our vision with our purpose as we grow.

Our **Mission** is to focus on the needs of e-commerce customers, stay ahead of market trends, and continuously innovate to help grow the businesses of e-commerce merchants.



CARE

The Heart and Soul of StarApps Studio

At StarApps Studio, we are dedicated to fostering a work environment where everyone feels valued, respected, and inspired. To achieve this aspiration, we have established a set of four core values that we hold ourselves accountable to. We have encapsulated these values in the acronym CARE, which stands for Collaboration, Accountability, Respect, and Entrepreneurship. These values are the foundation of our culture, guiding our every action and decision as we work to make a difference in the lives of each other, our clients, and our community.

We understand that we may not always meet these values perfectly, but we are committed to making progress every day and continually improving ourselves both as individuals and as an organization. By upholding these values, we believe that we can continue to positively impact the world around us.

Let's take a closer look at each of these values and how they help us create a culture of excellence.



We understand that success requires a collective effort. That's why we prioritize both individual excellence and strong team dynamics. Our team members are not only top performers in their roles but also committed to supporting each other and working towards our shared goals. We don't believe in blaming individuals for mistakes. Instead, we work together to identify the root cause of any issues and take proactive steps to prevent them from happening again.



We're committed to delivering excellence in everything we do because we believe our merchants deserve the best. We understand the 'WHY' behind every merchant inquiry and product development decision and take personal accountability to make our merchants happy and satisfied. To make informed decisions and provide thoughtful guidance, we rely on data rather than personal opinions.



We believe that entrepreneurship is more than just starting a business; it's a mindset that enables us to identify opportunities where others see challenges. We approach every aspect of our business from the first principle and find opportunities to do something better. We don't rest on our laurels or take anything for granted, and we are committed to creating something truly exceptional that positively impacts our customers and the world around us.



We believe in treating others with the utmost care and consideration, as we would expect for ourselves. We actively encourage open communication, welcome questions and feedback from everyone, and celebrate the distinctiveness of every team member. We respect our merchants' time and priorities. We put effort into addressing their concerns while being respectful of their time. We also respect our environment and make every effort to contribute to its protection.

Our Focus on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

We hold tremendous pride in our exceptional team, consisting of individuals with diverse backgrounds, varying levels of expertise and experience, and a wide range of skills.

Our unwavering commitment lies in cultivating an inclusive and respectful workplace where every team member feels valued, respected, and supported, regardless of race, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, or background.

We firmly believe that embracing and celebrating our differences not only enriches our work environment but also fuels our creativity, innovation, and overall performance. Together, we create a collaborative and harmonious space that nurtures the growth and success of each individual within our team.

We recognize that achieving diversity, equity, and inclusion is a journey, and we are dedicated to continuously improving and holding ourselves accountable to these principles.



Creating a Happy and Appreciative Workplace

At StarApps Studio, we are driven by a passion for fostering a work environment where productivity and happiness complement each other. We firmly believe that individuals tend to be more engaged, creative, and productive when they experience contentment and happiness.

Our focus on joy and fulfillment is woven into every aspect of our culture. We encourage our team members to pursue their passions and develop their skills through a range of personal and professional development opportunities. From attending workshops and international conferences to offering mentorship, we strive to help our team members reach their full potential.



We take immense pride in recognizing every team member's accomplishments. To ensure that our team members feel appreciated and acknowledged for their valuable contributions, we have implemented a peer-to-peer Star Rewards Program.

The primary objective of this program is to foster a culture of appreciation among team members by encouraging them to acknowledge each other's impactful actions. Whenever a team member assists you in accomplishing something significant, share the impact story with the team, and the company will gift them an Amazon voucher to appreciate their valuable contribution.



At StarApps Studio, we also understand the importance of taking breaks and recharging our batteries. That's why we organize or participate in trips, workation, concerts, and live shows. These activities not only help us bond as a team but also give us an opportunity to step away from work and enjoy some downtime.

In all that we do, we are committed to fostering an environment of happiness, fulfillment, and positivity. We believe that when our team members are happy and fulfilled, they bring their best selves to work and create amazing things.



Our Commitment to Sustainability and Social Responsibility

At StarApps Studio, our commitment to environmental sustainability is as important as our commitment to our clients and employees.

As our way of saying "thank you" to our clients and demonstrating our commitment to the planet, we planted 1,000 trees when we achieved 1,000 merchant reviews on one of our products. We will take care of these trees for at least four years until the jungle becomes self-sustainable. We have also committed to growing this jungle by adding 100 trees every time we hit the next 100 review milestone.



We recognize the power of individual actions to create a positive change in the world. To reduce paper and plastic waste and combat air pollution, we encourage our employees to bring lunch from home instead of using food delivery services. We also incentivize ecofriendly modes of transportation, such as paying for any expenses related to charging employees' electric vehicles.

We support our employees in contributing to the community through various initiatives:

Through our "Impacting Together" program, we match the charitable contributions of our employees to registered non-profit organizations, thereby effectively doubling the impact of their giving.

We also provide every employee with a fully paid day off to engage in volunteer work for a cause of their choice through our "Your Day for Community" program.

We believe that giving back to the community is an essential part of creating positive change, and we are proud to support our employees in their efforts to make a difference.

Voices from Within: Our Team Members' Stories



Zoeb Chhatriwala

Tenure: 7th March, 2019 to 24th June, 2022

He left StarApps Studio to start his own software company. We are proud of his achievements and wish him the best of luck in his new venture.

"Shashank provided me with immense opportunities to expand my skills. One of the most significant advantages of working at StarApps Studio was having complete control over the project's development roadmap. This gave us the freedom to launch our flagship product in less than three months, which was a remarkable achievement that we are all proud of.

What impressed me the most about working with Shashank and Santosh Ji was their collaborative leadership style. They treated us as equals and discussed problems openly, rather than asserting their authority. This approach created a positive work environment, and I hope the company continues to maintain it.

The memories of my time at StarApps Studio will remain with me forever, and I will always be grateful for the laughs we shared along the way."





"Earning a computer science degree from Manipal University, I began at Barclays. However, craving new challenges, I cofounded a content marketing agency with a friend. Operational struggles led to its closure, but the experience was invaluable.

Drawn to e-commerce, I found StarApps Studio. Applying for a software developer role, I shared my journey with Shashank. He recognized my technical skills and potential and offered a unique role beyond coding, with a competitive salary and dedicated mentorship.

My responsibilities started with support and marketing, but I employed my technical expertise to refine our apps, streamline processes, and boost product quality. Representing StarApps at global forums, I forged key partnerships. This dedication led to my promotion to Chief Growth Officer.

My trajectory at StarApps is a testament to the extraordinary growth opportunities available here, especially for those who marry technical expertise with business acumen."

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Utpal Sharma

"I always wanted to work on Shopify and in a small team. So, I went through several interviews to find the right fit for me. That's when I came across StarApps Studio and was immediately drawn to its culture. The people here are so friendly, and the work environment is very welcoming.

Shashank genuinely cares about the professional growth of each employee and understands that individual success ultimately leads to the company's success. I was given the opportunity to attend Shopify's international conference, which was a fantastic learning experience that I'm truly grateful for.

What sets StarApps Studio apart is the open communication that is encouraged among team members. We are encouraged to freely give feedback, and when we do, it is valued and appreciated.

StarApps Studio is a great place to work, and I feel lucky to be a part of it!"



Shreya Pillai

"I"I've been working at StarApps for over three years, and having previously worked at several startups, I can confidently say this is the best place to work.

As a woman from a non-tech background, I was initially hesitant to voice my ideas, but the leadership here has consistently encouraged and supported me, ensuring my voice is heard.

Working here has profoundly shaped my character and personality. The core values of honesty towards our customers, owning up to our mistakes, and choosing to do the right thing even when it's difficult—these principles will stay with me forever and guide my actions.

I am genuinely grateful to be part of a team where empathy and growth coexist, and one is never sacrificed for the other."

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Yadnesh Sumbre

"Before landing at StarApps Studio, I had the opportunity to work with Amazon and EXL. There, I felt restricted in terms of learning and growth opportunities.

Thankfully, one of my managers suggested that I apply for startup jobs, and that's how I discovered StarApps Studio.

The moment I walked in the door, I knew I had made the right decision. The atmosphere was warm and welcoming, and my colleagues ensured I felt comfortable and supported from day one.

Under the expert guidance of my mentors, Shashank and Santosh, I quickly learned how to experiment with different approaches to problem-solving. They were always patient and transparent with me and took the time to teach me new things and help me grow.

I am thankful for the fantastic team that I work with and the support they have given me."



Riyona Mukherjee

"At StarApps Studio, I am fortunate to work alongside an exceptional team of supportive and encouraging individuals. Initially, I found it challenging to convey my ideas effectively, but with the patience and guidance of my colleague, Lakshmikant, I gained a better understanding of our products and tasks from the ground up.

One of the standout aspects of this organization is the inclusive culture nurtured by Shashank. He has created a safe and welcoming work environment where we feel comfortable asking questions and seeking clarification until we are satisfied.

Moreover, StarApps Studio is dedicated to the growth and development of its employees, which is evident through its various initiatives. For instance, the company reimburses employees for their gym and health expenses and sponsors professional training and certifications. When I expressed my aspirations for higher education, Shashank was appreciative of my focus and provided guidance to help me achieve my goals.

I am proud to be associated with StarApps Studio!"



Laxmikant Makone

"Since joining StarApps Studio, I have experienced remarkable personal and professional growth. My colleagues' unwavering support and encouragement have helped me realize my potential and improve my self-confidence.

I come from a humble background. This company gave me the first opportunity to travel by airplane. It was a life-changing experience that I will always cherish.

Moreover, the company's compassion and generosity during my personal emergency were truly exceptional. When I needed financial assistance to cover my father's heart treatment, the company offered me an interest free loan without hesitation. Their act of empathy and support is something that I will always be grateful for.

I feel incredibly fortunate to be a part of such a caring company!"

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Nikita Agarwal

"Before starting my MBA program, I secured an internship at StarApps Studio.

I was thrilled to have the opportunity to gain some valuable experience, but I wasn't entirely sure what my role would entail. However, with the guidance and support of Shashank, Santosh, Shreya, Laxmikant, and Shubham, to name a few, I quickly found my footing and began making valuable contributions to the team.

Although I did not have a technical background, I took on technical tasks and worked to improve the usability of one of the apps, resulting in a 10% improvement.

As part of my responsibilities, I designed tasks to evaluate interview candidates and assess their skills. I am proud to say that I helped the company hire many key resources.

I am grateful for the experiences I have gained at StarApps Studio, and will always cherish my time here."





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Tanuj Kumar

"I love working here, and one of the reasons is the clarity that comes with well-defined tasks. I always know what is expected of me, which helps me contribute to the team's success. When I joined, I was unfamiliar with the applications, but the founders took the time to ensure that I understood them inside out, which allowed me to hit the ground running.

The supportive and collaborative work environment allows me to develop new skills and take on new challenges without fear of failure. You can grow here as long as you are honest about your work and don't repeat mistakes.

Also, the sense of community here is fantastic. When I purchased my car, everyone joined me to pick it up from the showroom, and we celebrated the moment together. The little things like this make working here feel like being part of a family.

I highly recommend StarApps Studio to anyone looking for a positive and fulfilling work environment!"

Be a Part of Something Great

Our market is vast, and our vision is ambitious. We are committed to building a legacy that will have a lasting impact. To achieve this, we strive for excellence in every aspect of our business.

However, we acknowledge that we cannot achieve this on our own. We need a team that shares our passion, drive, and dedication to excellence. That's why we search for outstanding individuals who embody the qualities we admire and value.





FAQs

We understand that talented individuals have many questions about an organization and their potential for growth in it. We have compiled some frequently asked questions (FAQs) to provide information that may be helpful. We welcome any additional inquiries and will update the FAQ section accordingly.

What qualities do you look for in potential team members?

We are in search of individuals with strong analytical abilities, a mindset geared towards product excellence, a genuine thirst for knowledge and curiosity, an entrepreneurial spirit, a willingness to acknowledge and learn from mistakes, and exceptional active listening skills.

What is the definition of a top performer at StarApps Studio?

In your journey with us, remember that being a "Star" is not just about individual achievements. It's also about being a team player and working together to achieve something greater than any one of us could achieve alone.

I am new and don't know many things. Will people judge me if I ask silly questions?

You're new and don't know everything, and that's perfectly fine with us. We want to encourage you to ask questions without the fear of getting judged. Before you start any work, you should ask yourself and others why this work needs to be done. By doing this, you'll gain a better understanding of the task and be able to approach it with greater confidence and clarity. So don't be afraid to ask questions and seek knowledge – it's one of the best ways to learn and grow at StarApps Studio.

How can I become a valuable asset to the company?

If you want to be a valuable asset to the company, the first step is to add value to yourself. That means taking the time to learn about your domain, our business, mastering our products, and upgrading your own skills. To support your professional development, we offer financial backing for useful training and certification programs.

How can I be known as an expert in something?

If you want to become an expert in a certain area, it's important to behave like one. This means taking your work seriously and striving to improve your skills and knowledge every day. At the same time, we recognize that everyone has their own unique talents and expertise. That's why we want you to continuously share your knowledge and guide others in your area of specialization.

What is expected of me if my team or peers are unable to resolve a problem?

This is an opportunity to develop your leadership skills and demonstrate your commitment to the team. If you have the solution, take the lead and share your idea with the team. If you do not have an answer, actively listen to your team's concerns, acknowledge their efforts, and provide support and guidance where possible.

What steps can I take to ensure my work meets high standards and doesn't negatively impact the customer experience?

If you want to ensure that your work meets high standards and doesn't negatively impact the customer experience, it's important to take full ownership of your tasks and actively seek feedback from more experienced team members. You should strive to be proactive and seek out guidance and advice whenever necessary. By doing this, you'll be able to improve your skills and ensure that your deliverables are of the highest quality.

What is the main responsibility of a merchant success team member, and why is it important to prioritize the needs of merchants in this role?

As a member of the merchant success team, your main responsibility is to be a merchant advocate at all times. This involves understanding the "why" behind the needs and interests of merchants and taking a stand for them, when necessary, even if it means pushing back against the development team or other parts of the organization.

By prioritizing the merchants' experience and ensuring that their needs are met, you play a vital role in maintaining our reputation and building strong, long-term relationships with our merchants. Before accepting any solution from the development team, make sure that their understanding of the merchants' needs and concerns aligns with your understanding of the "why." This ensures that our solutions are effective and meet the expectations of the merchants.

Why is it crucial for a product development team member to prioritize the merchants' needs, and what is their main responsibility in achieving this?

Your primary responsibility as a member of the product development team is to address the needs and concerns of our merchants by creating and improving products that solve real problems for them. It is essential to understand why a merchant has a particular pain point and why it wasn't addressed in previous product iterations.

If you come across a merchant request that you feel is not genuine or doesn't align with our product vision, it's essential to communicate your perspective to the merchant support team and push back. By doing so, you can ensure that our product development efforts remain aligned with our business goals, which in turn helps to create a loyal customer base and attract new customers through product excellence.

What should I strictly avoid doing here?

- You must avoid negative talk or gossip about others when they are not present
- Never engage in any form of bullying, disrespectful behaviour, harassment, or discrimination
- · Never rest on your laurels or take anything for granted

What should I definitely do here?

If you notice that someone is headed in the wrong direction or taking a misstep, we encourage you to speak up and share your concerns with them directly and politely.

How can I build a strong bond with my colleagues?

We believe in getting to know each other on a personal level, including understanding each other's hobbies and interests and showing respect for each other's backgrounds. Additionally, if you notice that someone seems stressed or overwhelmed, we encourage you to check in with them and offer your support. Asking if they're okay and if there's anything you can do to help can go a long way towards demonstrating that we care about each other's wellbeing and that we're all in this together.

What should I do when people challenge my ideas?

When your ideas or plans are challenged, don't get defensive or dismissive. Instead, take the opportunity to listen to the feedback and consider it carefully, asking questions and seeking to understand different perspectives.

How should I respond when a new or less experienced colleague offers an unconventional idea?

If one of your newer colleagues, who has only been with the team for a few months, offers a suggestion that seems at first glance to be unconventional and perhaps even a little risky, instead of dismissing their idea or ignoring it, listen carefully, ask probing questions and explore the potential benefits and drawbacks of the suggestion. Sometimes a new person can see things from a fresh perspective, and we encourage them to share their view. This brings new opportunities to audit existing processes and improve them.

What if I fail while trying something new?

Rather than wasting time and energy worrying about the potential for failure, you can direct your efforts toward planning properly, discussing with experienced team members and trying new things.

If you do experience failure, don't worry - we all are there to support you. What's important is that you use that experience as an opportunity to learn and grow. Also, ensure that anyone else doesn't make the same mistakes or go through similar failures. Your experience should help others.

How well will you compensate me?

We are committed to being fair and competitive when it comes to your compensation. That's why we regularly review and adjust salaries according to both your performance and market standards. However, we encourage you to look at the bigger picture, including the

benefits of working with us, the strength of the team, the opportunities for personal development, the recognition you receive, and your overall well being.

What criteria are used to promote someone at StarApps Studio?

At StarApps Studio, promotion is not based on a set timeline but rather on exceeding expectations in your current role while embodying our CARE values. To be considered for a promotion, you should have demonstrated the ability to take on larger and broader responsibilities. Additionally, there must be a business need that justifies creating a new role for you.

How many leaves can I take?

We trust that our team mates are committed to their tasks and responsibilities, and we give them the flexibility they need to manage their work-life balance. That's why we offer an unlimited leave policy, so our team members can take time off when needed without worrying about using up their vacation days.

We also give our team members the option to work from home, so they can create their own ideal work environment.

How will you help me to settle down at StarApps Studio?

We understand that starting a new job can be overwhelm-

ing. To ensure that you have a comfortable and stress-free settling-in period, we'll guide you in finding suitable accommodation near our office.

Additionally, we'll reimburse any expenses related to your move, including one-way flight tickets if you're not in Pune already, hotel accommodation for a week when you land in the city, broker bills for finding a house, and setting up your home office. We will also provide you with a detailed orientation on our product and connect you with people across the organization to help you get up to speed quickly. Additionally, we will give you a MacBook and assist you with installing any software or tools you need for your work.

We believe that building strong connections with your colleagues is an important aspect of creating a positive work environment. To help facilitate this, we recommend that new team members sit with a different colleague each day during their first few weeks at the company. This will give you the opportunity to get to know your colleagues better, learn about their roles and responsibilities, and develop a sense of comfort with everyone. Once you've had the chance to sit with everyone, you're free to choose a workspace.

Our commitment to helping you settle in doesn't stop at the office. We organize outside parties and events to help you get to know your colleagues and make new friends.



StarApps Studio

