

Bootcamp

Self-published cohort course on something the founder can teach. Two cohorts per year of 60 working engineers at \$399/seat = ■40 lakh year-one revenue. Cash-positive on launch day, high margin, no subscription churn.

Category	Set 4 · 12-mo Cash
Customer	Working professionals seeking structured cohort-based learning in a high-value technical or professional topic (recommended topic depends on founder expertise)
Monetisation	\$399 per seat per cohort (60 seats × 2 cohorts/year baseline) · \$799 'plus' tier with 1:1 coaching · evergreen self-paced version at \$199
Build effort	Med
Plan version	v1.0 — 2026-05

Executive Summary

Bootcamp is the model of self-publishing a cohort-based course twice a year on a topic the founder can teach at depth. The cohort-based course (CBC) format emerged through Maven, Reforge, and a cottage industry of indie creators between 2020-2025; it works because it combines structured curriculum + live cohort dynamics + accountability + community network. For the founder, it is the highest-margin product available at this size — cash-positive on launch day, no subscription mechanics, no ongoing technical maintenance, repeatable twice yearly.

Pricing: \$399 per seat baseline, \$799 'Plus' tier including 1:1 coaching, \$199 evergreen self-paced version (sold continuously between cohorts). Target: 60 seats per cohort × 2 cohorts per year = 120 seats × \$399 = \$48k base revenue, plus ~25 Plus-tier seats at \$799 = \$20k upsell, plus ~120 evergreen self-paced at \$199 = \$24k = \$92k total annual revenue (~■76 lakh). Adjusted for Indian-founder economics, target is ~■40-50 lakh annual revenue in year 1.

The recommended topic depends entirely on what the founder can teach with credible depth (not what's trending). Strong choices given common founder backgrounds: 'Production AI Agents in 6 Weeks' (for engineers shipping AI products), 'India SaaS Founding from First Principles' (for technical founders launching B2B SaaS in India), 'Bootstrapped Startup Operations: Year One' (for solo founders trying to ship without VC), 'Practical Machine Learning Engineering' (for working engineers transitioning into ML roles). The course is the founder's existing knowledge productised.

The Problem

Working engineers + technical professionals + ambitious early-career people face a recurring learning problem. Books are too slow. YouTube is too fragmented. Self-paced courses (Udemy, Pluralsight, Coursera) have low completion rates (~6-10%) because nothing forces accountability. Senior mentors are inaccessible. Bootcamps in the traditional sense (8-16 week career-change programs at \$8k-20k) are over-priced and over-committed for the working professional who wants structured upskilling in a specific topic.

The cohort-based course (CBC) format addresses this. 4-8 weeks long, live sessions weekly with cohort participation, structured curriculum, peer accountability, instructor access, completion certificates. Pricing \$200-2,000 per seat depending on topic positioning. Maven scaled this format through 2020-2024; Reforge productised it for senior product roles; a cottage industry of indie creators has emerged.

Demand exists but supply is uneven. Most cohort courses are either too generic (Udemy-adjacent content with cohort wrapper) or too senior-specialist-oriented (Reforge, Maven for \$1.5k-3k). The middle market — well-structured, focused content from a credible practitioner at \$399-799 price point — has consistent demand.

The Solution

Bootcamp is a self-published cohort course produced and run by the founder. The format: 6-week cohort, 60 seats per cohort, \$399 baseline + \$799 Plus tier including 4 1:1 coaching calls. Weekly cadence: pre-recorded foundational content (released Monday), live cohort session (Thursday 90 minutes), peer-discussion + assignment due (Sunday). Cohort uses Discord or Slack for ongoing community + asynchronous discussion. Completion certificate at end.

Per-cohort production. Pre-course (8 weeks): finalise curriculum + record video content + build assignment frameworks + set up community + market the cohort. During course (6 weeks): run live sessions + participate in community + grade assignments + run Plus-tier 1:1 coaching. Post-course (2 weeks): final-project showcase + alumni-community handoff + collect testimonials + refine for next cohort.

Founder workload: ~200 hours per cohort cycle (16-week production cycle for 6-week delivery; one cohort every 24 weeks = 2/year). Roughly 12 hours/week average across the year. Founder-shippable; no team needed in year 1.

Evergreen self-paced version (\$199): recorded version of cohort content + asynchronous-only community access. Sold continuously between cohorts. Lower completion rate but adds passive revenue stream.

Three structural differences from comparable cohort courses define the wedge. First, founder-credibility positioning (course is 'taught by [founder name] who built [specific credible thing]' — not a generic platform's hired instructor). Second, focused topic (mile-deep on one topic vs. broad coverage). Third, accessible price point (\$399 baseline vs. \$1,500-3,000 Reforge / Maven typical).

Market Opportunity

Cohort-based course market globally: approximately \$400-700M annual revenue across all topics and platforms in 2026, growing at ~25% per year. Working-professional learning segment specifically: \$180-300M, growing similarly.

Per-topic market sizing varies enormously. 'Production AI Agents' topic: estimated 50,000-100,000 working engineers actively seeking structured learning on this exact topic in 2026. At 0.2% capture per year = 100-200 seats/year per cohort run = plausible. 'India SaaS Founding' topic: smaller market (~15,000 potential learners) but higher conversion (~1% capture realistic).

Comparison to other Set-4 plans: Bootcamp has the lowest ceiling (limited by cohort size + frequency) but the highest immediate cash and the lowest operational complexity. Two cohorts per year is sustainable for a single founder. Scaling beyond requires adding co-instructors or expanding to multiple topics (each topic = its own cohort series).

Adjacent expansion. Year 2: add second course on adjacent topic (run by founder or by a vetted co-instructor on revenue-share). Cohort-graduate annual subscription (\$99/year for continued community + monthly office-hours + alumni-exclusive content). Corporate training engagements (sell the cohort format to specific companies for their team — \$30k-100k per engagement).

Target Customer

Primary persona: a 33-year-old working software engineer at a mid-size SaaS company wanting structured learning in a high-value topic (e.g., 'how to build production AI agents'). Has tried unstructured YouTube and Udemy; abandoned both. Will pay \$399 for a focused 6-week cohort that gets them productively shipping in the topic by end. Reads cohort marketing on Twitter / IndieHackers; converts on credibility of instructor.

Secondary persona: a 38-year-old senior engineer at a Series B company who is moving into a tech-lead role and wants peer-network + structured upskilling. Will pay \$799 Plus tier for the 1:1 coaching component, which addresses career-progression questions specific to her situation.

Tertiary persona: a 28-year-old early-career engineer who cannot attend the live cohort schedule due to work commitments. Will buy \$199 evergreen self-paced version, accepting lower completion rate trade-off for time flexibility.

Product

Curriculum: 6-module structure, one module per week. Each module: 60-90 minutes of pre-recorded foundational content (released Monday), live 90-minute interactive session (Thursday), structured assignment due Sunday with peer feedback.

Pre-recorded content: produced quarterly with refresh cadence (year-1 cohorts use refined content from each prior cohort). Production quality: professional but not over-produced (clear audio, readable slides, founder camera-on for credibility).

Live sessions: 90 minutes, founder-led, structured around walkthroughs + peer Q&A.; Recordings made available to cohort and to evergreen-version buyers.

Assignments: structured weekly assignments that require applying the week's content. Cohort members peer-review each other's submissions (with founder/TA oversight). Builds practical skill + community connection.

Community: Discord or Slack workspace for the cohort, with structured channels per week and ongoing async discussion. Founder participates regularly. After cohort completes, members transition to evergreen alumni community.

Plus-tier 1:1 coaching (Plus seats only): 4 x 45-minute coaching calls with founder over the 6-week cohort, addressing each Plus-tier student's specific career or project context.

Completion certificate: founder-signed certificate issued to cohort members who complete all assignments. Modest credibility marker but valued by participants.

Evergreen self-paced version: same pre-recorded content + assignment framework + alumni-community access (no live sessions, no live grading, lower price).

Technical Architecture

Course platform: Maven (the obvious choice; handles cohort logistics, payments, attendance, community at ~10% take rate) or self-hosted (Circle.so for community + Stripe for payments + Loom for video + Discord for synchronous = saves the Maven take rate but adds operational complexity).

Video production: founder records on Riverside.fm or similar for high-quality multi-track, edits on DaVinci Resolve or similar. Production setup: decent microphone (Shure SM7B or similar) + good lighting (Aputure 60d or similar) + clean background. Initial setup investment ~₹1.5 lakh; reusable across all future cohort content.

Live sessions: Zoom Webinar or Riverside Live; recording for cohort access + evergreen content.

Community: Discord (free, developer-friendly) or Slack (free tier for first cohorts; paid as scaled). Both have known pros/cons.

Marketing site: simple Next.js + Tailwind site with cohort dates, curriculum overview, instructor credentials, testimonials, Stripe Checkout.

Email marketing: ConvertKit or Beehiiv for cohort announcements, waitlist nurture, alumni communications.

Business Model & Unit Economics

Cohort tier pricing. Standard (\$399): full cohort access including all sessions, assignments, community. Plus (\$799): everything in Standard + 4 1:1 coaching calls. Evergreen self-paced (\$199): recorded content + assignment framework + asynchronous-only community access.

Cohort cadence: 2 cohorts per year (spring + fall typically). Per cohort target: 60 Standard seats + 15 Plus seats = 75 seats at average \$480 = \$36,000 per cohort. Plus 60 evergreen self-paced sales per cohort cycle at \$199 = \$12,000. Per-cohort revenue: ~\$48,000.

Annual revenue: 2 cohorts x \$48,000 = \$96,000 base (~₹80 lakh). Adjusted for Indian-founder economics and conservative estimates: ₹40-55 lakh year-1 target.

Costs per cohort: video production (mostly amortised after first cohort, ~\$500/cohort marginal), Maven take rate or self-hosted infrastructure (~\$3,000-5,000/cohort), marketing (~\$3,000-8,000/cohort for paid promotion), payment processing (~\$1,500/cohort). Marginal cost per cohort: ~\$8,000-15,000. Gross margin per cohort: ~75%.

Unit Economics (Year-1 base case)

Year-1 cohorts run	2
Year-1 cohort seats (Standard + Plus)	150
Year-1 evergreen self-paced sales	120
Year-1 revenue	~₹40-55 lakh
Gross margin	75%
Customer acquisition cost (CAC)	~\$120 per seat
Payback period	Single transaction
Year-1 founder time	~600 hours total across both cohorts + production
Year-1 all-in costs	~₹12-18 lakh (production + marketing + tools)

Go-to-Market

Channel 1 — Founder's existing audience + Twitter (40%): founder must already have, or rapidly build, a meaningful Twitter / LinkedIn / GitHub / blog audience in the target topic. The course launch flows from the existing audience.

Channel 2 — Content + thought leadership (30%): publish substantive content on the course topic (blog posts, conference talks, podcasts) leading up to each cohort launch. Builds topical authority + waitlist.

Channel 3 — Partnerships with adjacent creators (15%): co-launch with related creators (cross-promotion to their audiences), guest podcast appearances on shows the target audience listens to.

Channel 4 — Targeted paid promotion (15%): Twitter/X Ads + LinkedIn promotion to lookalike audiences in the 4 weeks before each cohort launch.

Roadmap (first 12 months)

- Month 1-2: Curriculum design, recording of first cohort's pre-recorded content, marketing site + Stripe + Maven setup, founder's audience building.
- Month 3: First cohort marketing campaign (4 weeks pre-launch).

- Month 4-5: First cohort runs (6 weeks). 60 Standard + 15 Plus seats = ~\$36k. Collect testimonials + post-cohort feedback.
- Month 6-7: Refinement of curriculum based on cohort 1 learnings, evergreen self-paced version published, second cohort marketing campaign.
- Month 8-9: Second cohort runs. ~\$40-55 lakh year-1 revenue cumulative.
- Month 10-12: Alumni community management, evergreen sales, planning for year-2 expansion (second course topic or co-instructor model).

Key Risks

- Founder-credibility dependency: the course works because the founder is credible on the topic. If founder is not yet credible in their target topic, building credibility itself becomes a 12-18 month prerequisite — mitigated by choosing a topic where the founder already has demonstrable expertise.
- Cohort-launch marketing concentration: revenue concentrates around two 4-week marketing windows per year; underperformance in one cohort directly halves annual revenue — mitigated by waitlist building between cohorts, by evergreen self-paced revenue smoothing, by paid-promotion budget reserved for cohorts hitting capacity friction.
- Maven take rate (~10%) vs. self-hosted complexity trade-off: Maven is the easiest operational path but takes a meaningful share of revenue; self-hosted preserves margin but adds 30-50 hours of operational setup work. Mitigated by starting on Maven for first 2-3 cohorts (validate the model) then migrating self-hosted once volume justifies.
- Burnout risk: running cohorts is high-touch work; the founder is the bottleneck. Two cohorts per year is sustainable; three is not without help — mitigated by accepting two-per-year cadence as the steady state in year 1 (resist temptation to scale faster).
- Topic-relevance shift: a topic that sells well in 2026 may not sell well in 2028 (especially in fast-moving fields like AI). Mitigated by topic-refresh cadence and by founder's commitment to ongoing depth in the topic regardless of course economics.