

# prequate

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## **Progress Compass, Kaizen and Itadakimasu**

YIR 2021

We have, as a planet, gone through a very tough phase in 2021. No simulation would have told us how a 365-day period could have dealt so many blows (personal and work) and economic miracles in such quick succession (resurgence, IPOs, funding rounds, GNP).

But an even bigger rollercoaster year at Prequate.

At Prequate, 2021 was defined by two words – **Kaizen** (continuous improvement) & **Itadakimasu** (gratitude to the people & the process).

Across various channels, we have been in touch – I'll admit, not as active as some of the other years.

But what happened this year and the rest of this article may make you feel that this literature is a lot more personal to you.

This article is going to be a compass check (coined by Chase Jarvis in 'Creative Calling'), introspections and a proclamation.

But like every year, in true Prequate fashion, this email is slightly different from what came the year before.

My guarantee, like every year - your 10 minutes of reading this is going to be well worth your time if you enjoy leadership and business stories or just care about anyone in Prequate in general.

This is a nut graph of 2021.

Its our harbinger of what we see to happen because of deeper moments of introspection.

Also, a bare-all of sorts.

Let's dive head in.

The logo for Prequate, featuring the word "prequate" in a bold, orange, lowercase sans-serif font. A horizontal orange line extends from the end of the word to the right, and another horizontal orange line extends from the left towards the start of the word.

## **Progress Compass 2021**

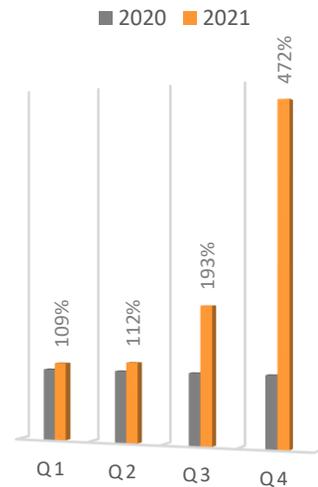
**How do we know if we are on the right track?**



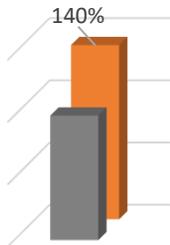
## Progress Compass 2021 Growth in relationships

### We did a lot more

2021 was a good year by any standards. What started as a lukewarm recovered had us reaching a new business peak as we ended the year with the most powerful Q4 in our decade plus history. We closed the year 190% as compared to 2020.



### for a lot more exceptional organizations



In 2021, we worked with 40% more clients in the year. Our clients included the portfolio of some of the best venture capitalists on the planet and the winners of some of the most coveted business awards in the world.



As an additional feather in our cap – in 2021 we also had one of the worlds best VCs become a client where our team would begin assisting them in their simulations and investing process.

### from across the globe.

This year we also added China, The Netherlands and Qatar to our client locations taking our total client operational (KDM) country tally to 26 over the last 10 years. Our relationships in 2021 came from organizations in China, India, Japan, Malaysia, The Netherlands, Singapore, UK, US & Qatar.

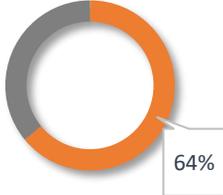
# Progress Compass 2021

## Growth in talent

### We were fortunate attracting talent

In 2021, we perfected our job descriptions to be match exactly the skills we wanted for the work we do at the firm. Our Engagement Associate hiring attracted 885 qualified applications from across the country.

*We have a whitepaper on our hiring process coming up later this year.*



■ MBA/ Professional  
■ Others

#### Avg. Work Experience

**5.6**

years

#### Masters/ Professionals

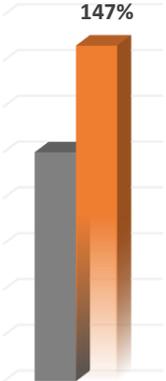
**68%**

of candidates

#### Advanced Finance Experience

**43%**

of candidates



### & being able to share the growth

In 2021, we revised fixed pay structures for all our team members to match our ethos that the firm's growth was OUR growth. This pay revision, lead to an increase, on average, by ~47% compared to pay in the previous year.

*For my colleagues reading this: Do you think we should revise our 2022 goals and make it a little more aggressive? ;)*

### with a stellar team.

Our thesis that diamond-shaped structures are the only way to build high impact + lean teams has become a closer reality. In 2021, the dynamics further sharpened our belief.

#### Masters/ Professional

**90%**

of team

#### Avg. Work Experience

**10**

years

#### Avg. Time at the Firm

**4.9**

years

#### Big4 backgrounds

**50%**

of team



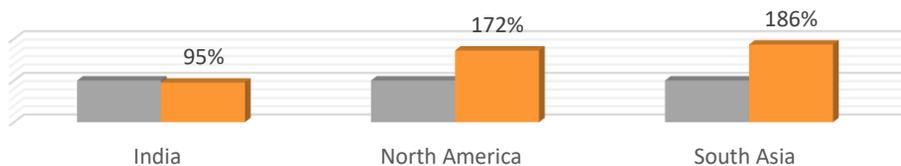


## Progress Compass 2021

### Growth in visibility

#### Our exposure outside India gained momentum

In 2021, our messaging changes and positioning had us appealing to an audience outside India where performance led finance is a more accepted and understood market.



#### with more focused quality on target buyers

Over the last quarter of 2021, data showed that the number of people looking for us on LinkedIn was moving significantly towards the KDMs of organizations or management levels.



~25% of the visibility came from Management/ KDM levels (Investors, founders, CxOs, Board Members, Senior Managers).

#### & significantly higher engagement with our thought leadership.

When studying our thought leadership, we noticed that we had significant improvements on 3 very crucial aspects which could be an indication of progress towards a visible expert:

**Interactivity**  
**+1.4x**  
improvement in our click-through

**Effectiveness**  
**+1.6x**  
improvement in our effectiveness

**Interest**  
**+12%**  
improvement in our content views

**Progress Compass 2021**  
**All the missed opportunities during the year**



## Progress Compass 2021

### The missed opportunities

#### **We barely scraped in more visibility.**

As compared with 2020, we managed to get **only 10% more** digital visibility to ourselves. In fact, India as a target market dropped by 5% in our total exposure though we added the most accounts in India. Worrying. Needs fixing.

**Indian Digital Presence**  
**-5%**  
drop in visibility in India

**Thought Leadership**  
**-33%**  
in content created in 2021

#### **We did much less to tell the world about us.**

In 2021, we published **33% less thought leadership** than 2020. We spent more time overall than the previous years but managed to put out a lot less content. This really matters for us as organization that is known for its presence.

#### **We were not as effective in communicating our value to prospective buyers.**

In 2021, our **win/loss ratio dropped by 9%** on prospective accounts compared with 2020. We closed approx. 72% of leads that came in during the year as compared with 78% during 2020. This meant that we were either not doing as good a job communicating or were not able to display our skill-sets in a manner that favoured their decision criteria.

**Client Conversion**  
**-9%**  
in our win-loss ratio

# Progress Compass 2021

## The missed opportunities

### We lost some patrons of our thought leadership.

Our reader list during 2021 were less excited to view or interact with our content than the previous year. This could be a signal that our content quality was affected or that the wrong type of regular content was published. Or maybe, fatigue.

Open  
rates  
**-13%**

in open rate  
across content

Offers  
accepted  
**2 in 3**

for applicants  
that qualified

### We did not make the cut always.

In 2021, only 2 out of 3 offers made were accepted and met the expectation of both us and a prospective hire. This could be a signal that we are doing a great job validating but erring somewhere else.

### We were still black-box as far as the internet goes.

A major portion of traffic for us was still heavily lead by someone who had heard about us and was looking us up. This means that we are still not leveraging the full potential of what we can do using the internet to interact with our target.

Organic  
search  
**37%**

of total users  
who visited us

Referrals as a  
source  
**75%**

of clients that we  
worked with

### We are still reliant on an unpredictable growth engine.

While this looks like a good problem, Referrals are the most unpredictable of all client acquisition channels. We cant build an organization built on an unpredictable channel.



# Progress Compass 2021

## The missed opportunities

### **We need to really work on our retention rates this year.**

Our list of repeat business accounts between the year was a little under 60% overall. After removing the list of relationships that are new, this number increased to only 73%. In the consulting domain, this is good but not great.

**Repeat business  
rate**

**73%**

of existing clients  
repeated

**Engagement  
drop-offs**

**2**

during the  
year after  
starting

### **We had 2 live engagement drop-offs before completion.**

We are very vary about engagement drop-offs (where signed off but not moving to sign-off due to various factors). It signals that we are not communicating right or setting the right tone with our clients. While the instances were rare and rather small compared to our overall number of engagements, they cannot be ignored. In 2021, in 2 instances (up from 1 in 2020), we had live engagements that dropped off. We have identified the cause but now need to work on fixing them in 2022.

**Success is no accident. It is hard work, perseverance, learning, studying, sacrifice and most of all, love of what you are doing or learning to do.**

**- Pele**

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## **Lesson #1**

**Breakdowns are a lot more controllable than lockdowns. Breakdowns also throw out leaders.**



## Lesson #1

# **Breakdowns are a lot more controllable than lockdowns. Breakdowns also throw out leaders.**

During the first lock-down, we were fortunate to not have too many engagements that were in the beginning stages of delivery. In 2021, this was not the case. When an unprecedented number of new relationships, all for fantastic founders, came together at the same time with the lockdown, we realised that the system was breaking.

Which is when we realised the value of the single most important resource in the organization.

The **'we'** thinking in Prequate.

Rockstars within the organization took it upon themselves to take charge of the situation – across every level in the organization.

They communicated the new expectations.

They planned delivery schedules out.

They coordinated on information.

They planned seamlessly.

All without needing to work tirelessly or stretch to extraordinary lengths – which is the cornerstone of a good organization in our opinion.

If you guys are reading this, you know who you are – *A hat tip!*

KAI      ZEN  
改      善  
CHANGE      GOOD

**Lesson #2**  
**The Kaizen ways of Prequate.**

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## Lesson #2

# The Kaizen ways of Prequate

In 2020, I wrote to you about Kintsukuroi (the art of golden repair) which signalled how we were mending the bits and pieces of excellence in the organization to become something more valuable together.

2021 was about Kaizen or the art of continuous improvement.



Every engagement was now with a new goal – which was a lot more than to please a client.

During the year, we learnt that the key was to constantly challenge and beat our own work from earlier – that's it. Just as simple as that.

Over the course of more than 200+ engagements at the firm in the last 4 years alone, there is a fair bit of work in almost every sector to set a precedent.

But the trick was to beat every precedent.

How do we know this worked?

More than 90% of the clients we worked with during the year appreciated our work and/ or the value we brought in during the engagement either directly to the team or the founders.

For an organization like ours, which works with some of the smartest minds in the world, this is no ordinary feat.



### **Lesson #3**

**Vanity metrics don't matter. Your true judge is who chooses to work with you.**

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## Lesson #3

# Vanity metrics don't matter. Your true judge is who chooses to work with you.

The real inherent value of what you do is best showcased by the organizations and founders that you work. Why?

### **1 Are you built for the best in the world?**

In 2021, we worked with Unicorns, 3 Forbes 30U30 winners, TechCrunch featured companies, TED speakers, Dell Social Innovation Award winners, Aegis Graham Bell Award winners among many others.

### **2 Are you built like/ better than the best in the world?**

When working with these entrepreneurs, they have already experienced the work in the best in the world. They can instantly know if you are a sub-standard provider and will immediately disengage.

### **3 You are challenged intellectually on Day 1**

Great founders are usually also great builders with a high aptitude. When working with them, you are constantly challenged, and you need to be able to deliver every time.

### **4 There is no patience for gradual trust-building**

The base bar at which you start at is often very high considering the talent that good founders have already worked with. If you don't match up, you won't last the month.

### **5 You are only as valuable as your experiences as a firm**

In consulting, we bring a funnel styled approach to every organization. The wider the spectrum/ range of engagements, the more useful your insights and findings are that you can bring to an organization.

## Lesson #4

**80/20 is essential thinking if you wish to remain sane in consulting.**

## Lesson #4

# 80/20 is essential thinking if you wish to remain sane in consulting.

In a consulting outfit, the world is very dynamic. The businesses we work with are unique. The founders are talented. The phase of the organization is constantly evolving.

But the nature of the beast is such that it is very easy to get excited or bogged down – sometimes both happen on the very same day. So how do you continue performing every day and every hour without the creativity-killer of stress?

80/20

### ***On engagement delivery:***

- Identify the 20% that drives 80% of client satisfaction as soon as possible
- Get the best effort done on the 20% that really matters in a way that nobody else can ever do
- Communicate with your founder why you think that this 20% is what matters for their organization

### ***On customer satisfaction:***

- Know that 20% of your clients are going to drive 80% of your growth
- Be focused on your CSATs on this 20% constantly because they drive growth
- Welcome critical feedback from the 20% who are not delighted by the work
- Implement that feedback across the organization constantly

## Lesson #4

# 80/20 is essential thinking if you wish to remain sane in consulting.

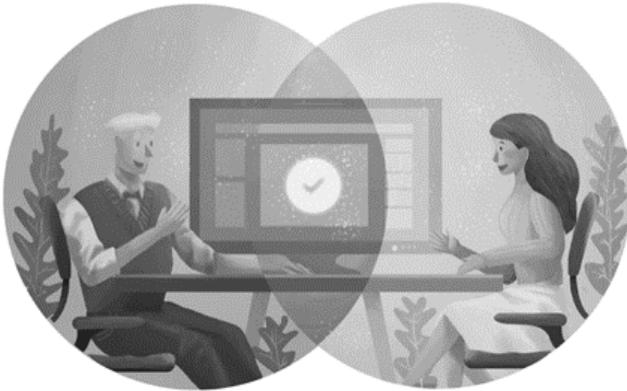
### ***On growth:***

- 20% of your accounts will make up 80% of revenue for the year and maybe for the next few years as well
- Critically evaluate the quality of this 20% by matching business vision and core ambitions
- If the organizations are a match on both their ambitions and style of working, they are likely of becoming longer relationships that last several years

### ***On talent:***

- 20% of the team is likely to not be at their peak performance at any point of time – either due to their personal journeys or their own aspirations
- Acknowledging this makes you appreciate that beyond everything, as long as there is an alignment, you can be accommodating and yet enjoy the best of your relationships

A graphic consisting of a dark grey square with the number '80' in white, and a smaller '20' in white positioned below the '0' of '80'. The square is tilted slightly to the right.



## **Lesson #5**

**Every no is a yes for the right things.**

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## Lesson #5

### **Every no is a yes for the right things.**

If there is one critical skill we learnt in 2020, it was to be more vocal about saying no to certain clients or to certain engagements.

Being able to say 'No' (especially when there are financial repercussions) is what real wisdom and maturity is.

We turned down a lot of collaboration opportunities.

We turned down quite a few enquiries this year.

We turned down several engagements too.

All because we did not feel that our value was placed in the right manner. Either as a team or as an organization, it was not placed in the right way.

But turning them down helped.

We looked far beyond ourselves as a business.

To what we were truly building.

An amazing organization like none that has ever existed.

And we asked ourselves – does this fit in our vision of how we see ourselves 3 years down the line?

No?

Say **No**.



**Lesson #6**  
**Your client's aspirations HAVE to also be**  
**your teams**

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## Lesson #6

# Your client's aspirations **HAVE** to also be your teams



One thing that we always stood for as an organization was how committed we were to the success of our clients.

This was palpable and pervasive in 2021.

We were excited when they got new management hires.

We prayed when our clients pitched to investors.

We celebrated when they closed a large deal.

We high-fived when they got term sheets.

We felt committed to their success throughout the year.

We did not feel we were just a part of an engagement.

We felt that we were a part of their organization.



## Lesson #7

### Process. Process. Process. Digital.



## Lesson #7

### **Process. Process. Process. Digital.**

One of our learnings of 2020, which we put into action in 2021, just made its value visible.

Most organizations talk about process. We had, honestly, mistaken the value of internal processes in our hurry to work with processes in our client organizations.

This year, we had a process for everything – baked in heavily with technology.

Collaboration runs on box.

Communication runs on slack.

Hiring runs on a series of chatbots.

Business runs on one of the best CRM platforms.

Thought leadership runs on an automation tool.

All of this may seem like overkill – even to some of our new joiners today it does.

But when growth spurts hit, we were geared.

We lost no time to be able to handle the surge and we could continue working the same way.

Because with systems we were built for scale. Irrespective of how rapidly it hit us.

**Lesson #8**

**Itadakimasu**

*(gratitude for the people & process)*

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## **Lesson #8**

### **Itadakimasu**

*(gratitude for the people & process)*

We have been very fortunate.

#### **For the clients that trust us**

We have had some great entrepreneurs who decided to work with us during the year.

They understood the values that we stood for.

They saw our potential in working with their legacies.

They let their guards down, bared their plans and built their businesses in full view of everything – good or bad.

**To them, we will be forever grateful.**

#### **For the people that make us**

We have had some great talented individuals who came into our organization over the years and called this their home.

They decided to build their careers with us.

Often in a space that was completely alien to them.

In an environment that requires you to be at 100% always.

You made a choice to build your careers with us.

**To them, we will always be grateful.**

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**Itadakimasu**

**For all those who are in Prequate today and  
those who made Prequate what it is today**

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## **For the supporters on the inside**

### **Why we will always love you**

Over the years, we have gotten an opportunity to work with some of the brightest minds.

They have joined us in our vision and taken it upon themselves to work towards a greater goal.

What is more valuable is that they put their trust in what we do – even when we were so ahead of the time on our approach or our thesis that it may have seemed incredulous.

Sometimes, when we ourselves doubted our ability to pull something off, they shared their alignment and had us stay course – sometimes pulling off the seemingly ‘impossible’.

Internally, it has always been more than just ‘resource’ thinking for us. They were friends, companions, partners-in-crime and sometimes our solace. We have learnt so much from them over the years.

## **A short letter to those who made us**

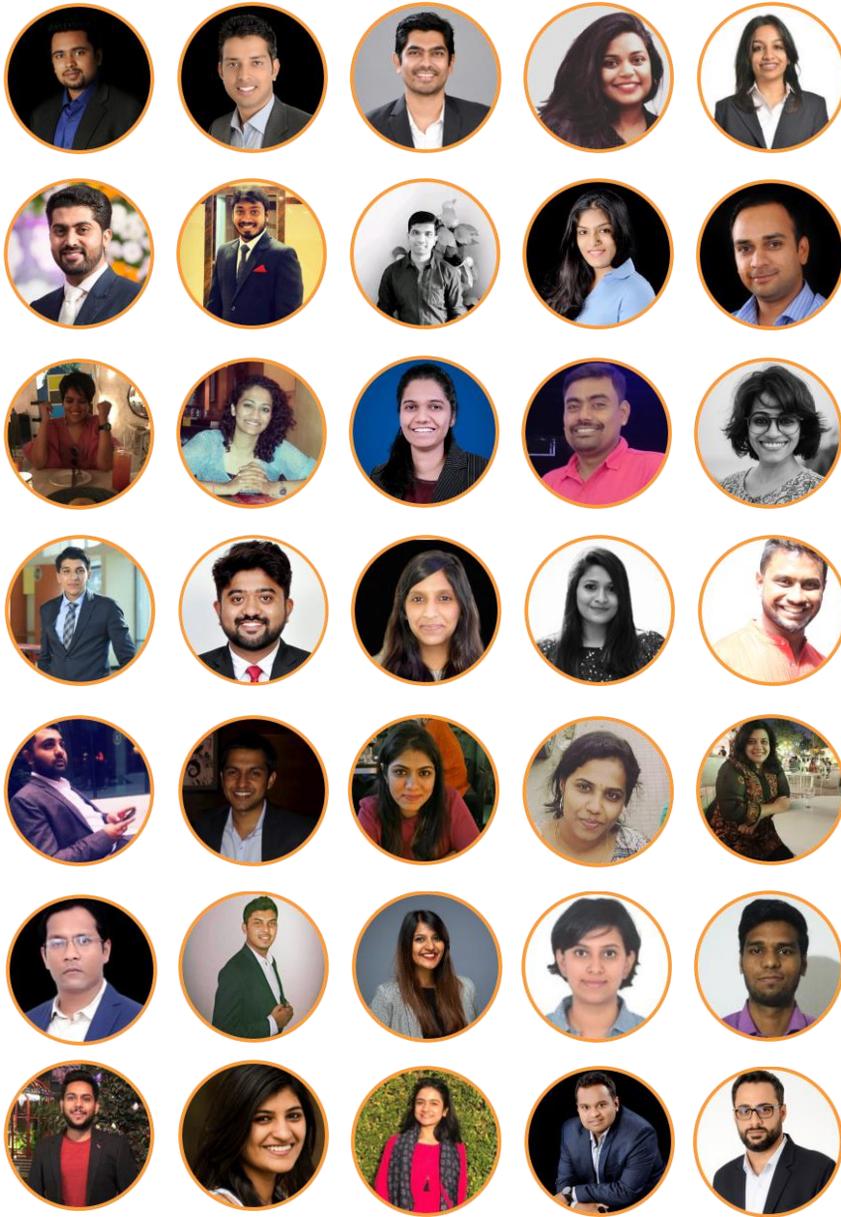
Guys, you know how much we love all of you. Many of you are still with us – one way or the other.

I just wanted to say,

A BIG THANK YOU.

You guys made us be better versions of ourselves, one way or another.

You know we are still just a call away.  
This is home.



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## **Itadakimasu**

**For all those who allowed us into their organizations and made us part of their journeys**

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## **For our supporters on the outside Inside fortresses of trust**

Over the years, we have thoroughly enjoyed one thing – The unrestricted access we had to the organizations and the opportunity to play a small role in your growth journeys.

This is not just words.

Unlike traditional professional services, what we do is VERY different.

Its highly forward looking and sometimes requires an organization to fundamentally question everything they thought about their business.

So for the most part, its like (organizational) clay  
|  
which we get to mould with analysis, introspection and simulation.

Founders/ Entrepreneurs and Senior leaders need to have a confidence to let someone into this space.

This is the fortune I was speaking about.

Our best work is when we get to be intrapreneurs for these amazing entrepreneurs.

And for this, we will be thankful to you.

You placed trust in us and allowed us into your businesses, shared your goals and aspirations and many a times were the first professional hire for your organization.

You have no idea what this means to us.



## of the best of the best.

Over the years, we got the opportunity to work on some absolutely astounding engagements.

We helped spinoff in a listed company.

We settled international cross-border equity disputes.

We valued one of the first fintech deals in the country.

We ran strategy office from India for a listed US company.

And better yet, who did we get to do it for?

A Unicorn.

Asoka Fellow.

An Ex-Apple CEO.

100+ Patent awardee.

An Academy Award Winner.

Multiple Forbes 30U30 Winners.

Red Dot Design winners, Cartier Women's Award Winners,

Entrepreneurs of the Year, CET Awardee, MIT IDEAS Award

Winners, Fast Company / Forbes / TechCrunch Featurees.....

While not one for vanity measures alone, our clients have raised over \$500M+ and 3 today are valued at over a \$100M.

But this is not the most important thing.

This is what is -

They are the organizations and founders that **chose to work with us**

- after having worked with the best in the world already
- being able to still afford the 'big'gest brands in the world
- understanding quickly where the delta lied
- considering us as high value partners
- hiring us for work that places us shoulder to shoulder

**That matters.**

 Schneider Electric Power Management	 Bloom Energy Power	 Kemwell BioPharma	 ABB Diversified	 Wendt Manufacturing	 Boku Mobile Payments	 MroTek EMS	 Essmart Logistics
 LendFoundry Fintech	 ACT Fibernet ISP	 KrypC Blockchain	 Creditex Fintech	 Vedantu B2C SaaS	 Sigma Technology	 Alicia Souza Design	 Ypayscash Mobile payments
 Pagariya Foods FMCG	 Interface AI	 Third Wave Coffee F&B	 Parentof AI	 IMMPL Wealth Management	 5BARz Telecom Infra	 Morphing Semiconductors	 PowerSquare Wireless Charging
 Trustwell Healthcare	 Basket Options Insurtech	 S4S Technologies FPO Platform	 75F Automation	 Benesse Edutech	 White Gold Gold Liquidation	 Sweet Chariot F&B	 Presto Technology
 Transpara Enterprise Tech	 Metal Street Maas	 OncoStem Diagnostics	 BugWorks Drug Research	 Giga Cars Auto Retail	 Omidyar Network Venture Capital	 inGO Electric EV	 Nando's F&B

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 Coconut EdTech	 Institute of Inspiring Innovation	 H	 KOGO	 Yellow checkmark	 Orange swirl	 Purple leaf	 Red flame
 User Facet Design	 ShipThis Enterprise SaaS	 TiaTech MedTech	 EOL Stock Liquidation	 Upswing LearnTech	 Bloom Value Enterprise AI	 TSI Power Power Management	 SmartStorey LogisticsTech
 Career Cafe Career Fairs	 PiSquare Analytics Products	 PetCart Pet Commerce	 Ethnus Skill advancement	 K2 Learning	 MintBook LearnTech	 Dyota Fintech	 BionicYantra MedTech
 HumbleBean Coffee	 Fidzeal Enterprise SaaS	 Hullikal EV	 Praxis Architecture	 Encee Aromatics	 Agile Labs Technology	 ChintaMoney FinTech	 iolite ERP
 MaxImpact Impact Network	 Great Innovus Technology	 LeagueX Fantasy Leagues	 FRUX Logistics	 Ipassio Skills Platform	 The College Ticketing	 AgileDC Technology	 AKR Express Logistics

## Summing it all up

This year was our best year yet.

It was a lot of work. For some very great people.

We started off to a tepid year where the world was in a state of flux.

But we ended up with a 4x leap over the previous year.

How?

We changed the paradigm - We made Prequate Advisory as a primary client as well.

But 2022 is the year we outdo *again*.

The year that -

We beat every precedent.

We surpass every milestone.

We surmount every boundary.

We achieve the greatness we are built for.

2022 is going to be a magical year.

*Until next year's YIR or our next cup of coffee,*



Pradyumna Nag  
That Guy @ Prequate

PS: We are 50%+ on our journey to work with 1,000+ businesses by FY 23-24.

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