Should you be an engineering manager?

Vincent Chu @ Later.com

Who am I?

- https://www.linkedin.com/in/vincentchu/
- VP of Engineering (VPE) at Later.com
- Later founded as the first-to-market Instagram scheduler in 2014
  - Formerly Latergramme, we have grown beyond a simple Instagram tool
  - Allows social media scheduling and planning across all major platforms
  - Linkin.bio is a mini website built into your Instagram profile
- Together with 50+ engineers, we look after
  - New product development
  - Product features
  - Infrastructure

My Journey to VPE

Simon Fraser University	Electronic Arts	Apple	Visier	Later.com

- Computing Science
- Bioinformatics
- Governor General Silver Medal

- "Mobile" games (not phones!)
- Animation engineer
- Animation tools
- FIFA

- Productivity suite
- Tools and adhoc infra
- icloud.com

- Analytic platform
- HR domain
- Management career progression
- My journey from a team lead to VPE happened here

- Started Nov 2021
- Took over 50+ engineers from CTO
- Scale the team to next level!

Being an "Individual contributor"

- I started writing code when I was 6 years old .. GWBasic!
- Writing code is a lot of fun for me, and it still is..

What is great about being an IC?

- Flexibility - not tied down with meetings. Work anywhere you want!
- Being able to go into "the zone"!
- Being able to keep up with the latest technology!
- No need to deal with politics, bureaucracy, or people….

What is great about being an IC?

- Getting paid $$$$$
  - Recruiters knocking multiple times a day. Good to feel wanted!
- Companies value software developers
  - As of 2022, it's a "Developers market".... You can basically name your price if you're great.

Why then become a manager?

- Or for that matter, why become a VPE

- Before we get there, let's talk about what being a manager is **not** about…

Myth #1: You get lots of $$$$$

- Certainly not…..

- Often you get sr. developers who report to you and get paid more than you
- You can probably get paid more at top companies

Myth #2: You have a lot of power

- Certainly not…..

- The more senior you get, the less power you have (!)
  - The further you're away from your team, the more difficult it is to build the trust necessary
- Developers are intelligent workers. You can't "tell" them what to do.

Myth #3: You control your calendar

- Just going for a walk during the day could be challenging
  - Calendar invites…. they just pop up any time!

Myth #4: You get automatic respect

- Certainly not…..

- People will challenge your decisions (as they should).
- They will constantly evaluate your technical prowess

Why then become a manager?

#1 Reason:

IMPACT

Impact

- Even if you're a so-called "10x developers"...
  - You can impact the product more if you have a team of 10…
- Building something from scratch is very satisfying!
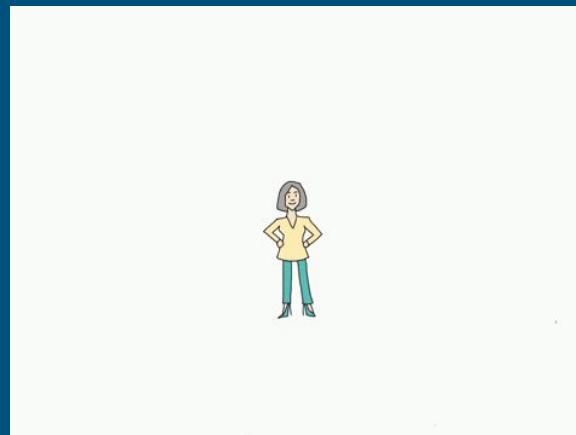 - Most engineers enjoy building stuff!
  - How about building teams instead?

Why then become a manager?

#2 Reason:

BUILD NETWORK

Build Network

- Hard to meet new people especially when everyone works remote
- Main part of the role is recruiting… sort of forced into it…
- Gain new perspective of the world

Why then become a manager?

#3 Reason:

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Sense of Accomplishments

- Built more than just code… but new products, and even new businesses
- Working with a great team (that you built) to deliver something great
- More than specific features you worked on as an IC…

It is extremely hard… but also rewarding

Why then become a manager?

#4 Reason:

EXPLORE

Explore new technology, new ways…

- As part of the role, you have to constantly think outside the current framework, technology, or way of organizing
- You have constantly keep yourself up-to-date

It is extremely hard… but also rewarding

Should you be an engineering manager?

Should you be an engineering manager?

Q&A
https://ca.linkedin.com/in/vincentchu