



My Entrepreneurial Journey

Melea McRae

Following the crowd
down conventional
paths and maintaining
the status quo

ROUTES TO ACHIEVEMENT

Conformity

Originality

Taking the road less traveled,
championing a set of novel
ideas that go against the grain.



Originals are nonconformists, people who not only have new ideas but take action to champion them.

They are people who stand out and speak up.

Originals drive creativity and change in the world. They're the people you want to bet on.

They are independent thinkers: curious, non-conforming, and rebellious. They practice brutal, nonhierarchical honesty. And they act in the face of risk, because *their fear of not succeeding exceeds their fear of failing.*

ADAM
GRANT



“Originality.



itself starts with creativity.
Generating a concept that is
both novel and useful.

But...it doesn't stop there.
Originals are people who
take the initiative to make
their visions a reality.

ADAM
GRANT



What is an Entrepreneur?

- A visionary – *thinking differently*
- A risk taker/ fearless *which doesn't mean reckless*
- A job creator
- A wealth generator
- An opportunity inventor
- *A problem solver*

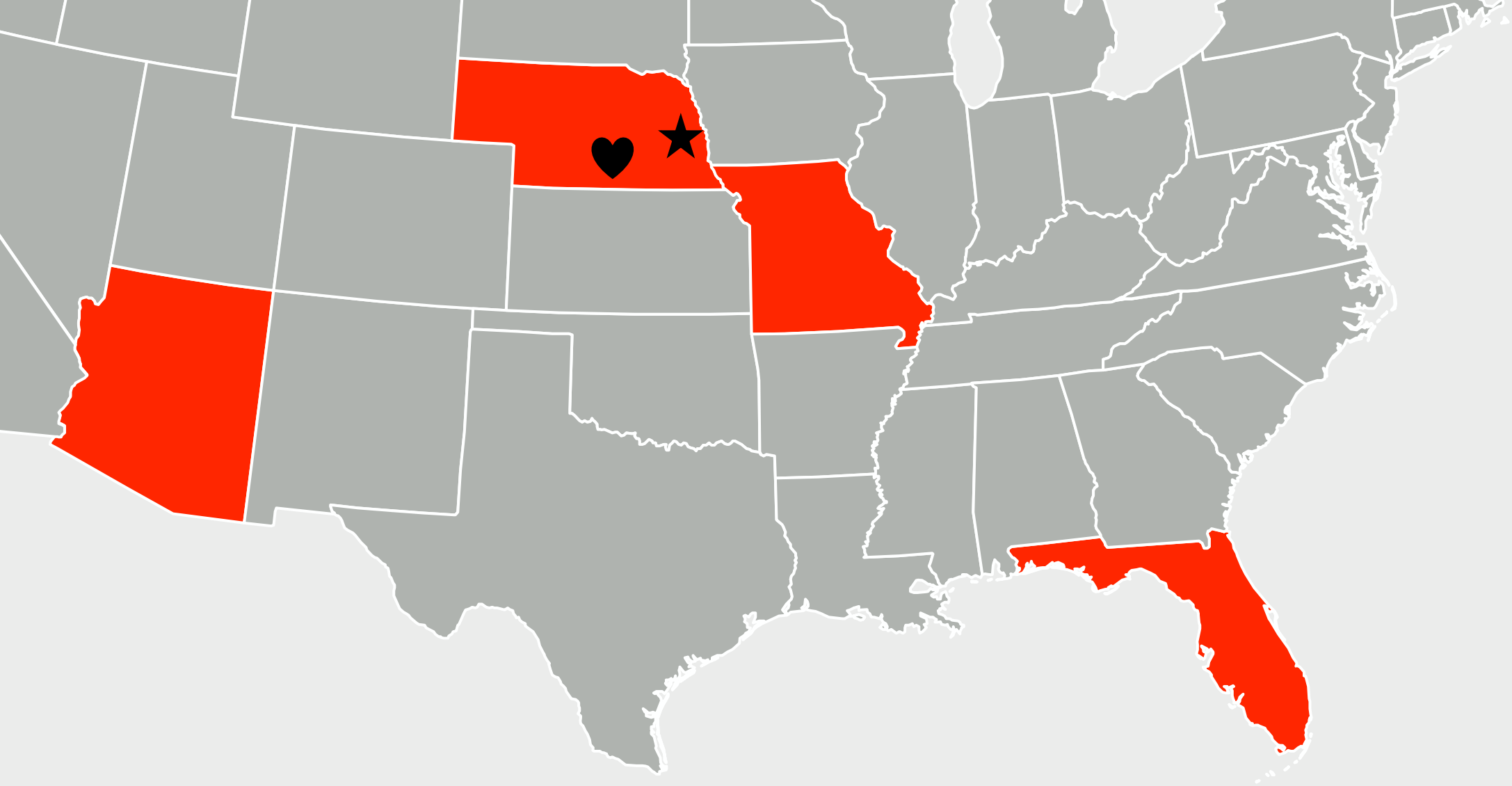
Originality leads to
Entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurship isn't for everyone.

"We do this NOT because it is easy, but because we THOUGHT it would be easy."

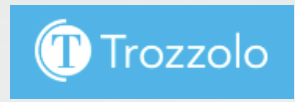


My Entrepreneurial Journey



My Career Path.

~~crux~~celerate



My Career Path.



Successful marketer, could have followed the status quo, but I chose the road less traveled

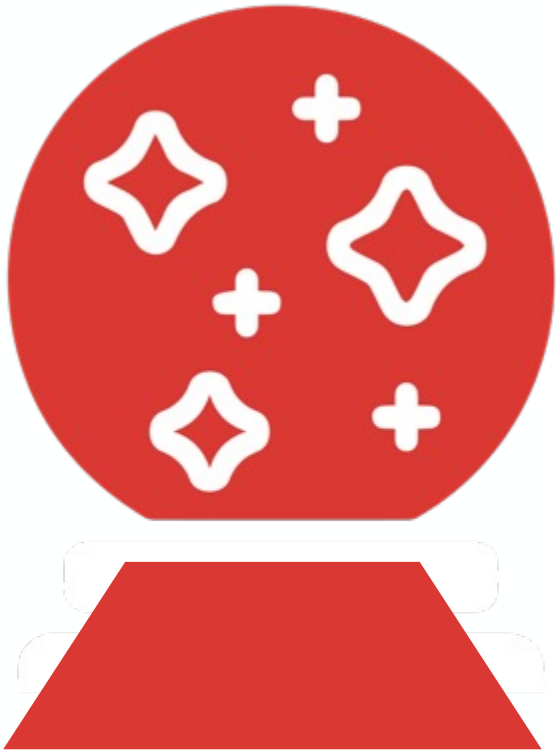
Why?

- Saw a need for a third marketing option that I believed was better for SMBs
- Wishing to be a role model for my daughter

What led me to launch my own business?



Crystal Ball Conversation.



- Always worked for large companies
- Always saw a different path to complete something
- Always diverted from the status quo and forged my own path
- Always tried to make a difference and try something new
- Loved to share new ideas
- Was an entrepreneur before I realized I was an entrepreneur

What gave me confidence?

- My network, relationships in the business community
- Business acumen
- Natural business developer/connector
 - Art of Networking class
- Mentors
- Board of Advisors



The Crux Story



crux n. /kruhks/

The most important point. We believe in simplicity, the nitty gritty, the bottom line, getting to the point. No fluff. No BS. Period.

Tagline.

Everything you need, nothing you don't.

Mission.

Elevating brands, amplifying missions.

Vision.

Fueling business growth for our clients
and opportunities for our team.

Elevator Pitch.

Crux is the “un-agency,” combining business acumen with marketing strategy, opening the door to a simpler, affordable outsourced marketing solution for businesses of all sizes.

Door No. 3



For the longest time, businesses were forced to choose between a traditional ad agency or hiring an in-house employee. Each presents its own risk, including hefty price tags and limited skill sets.

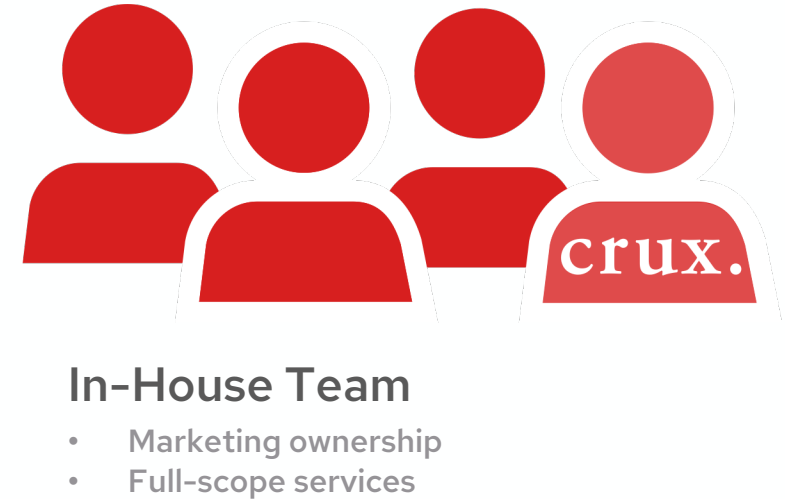
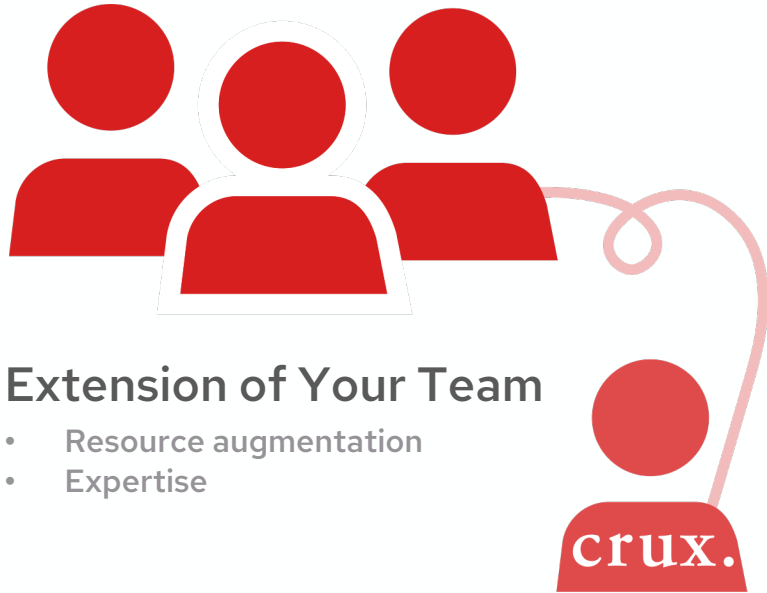
I knew there had to be a better way.



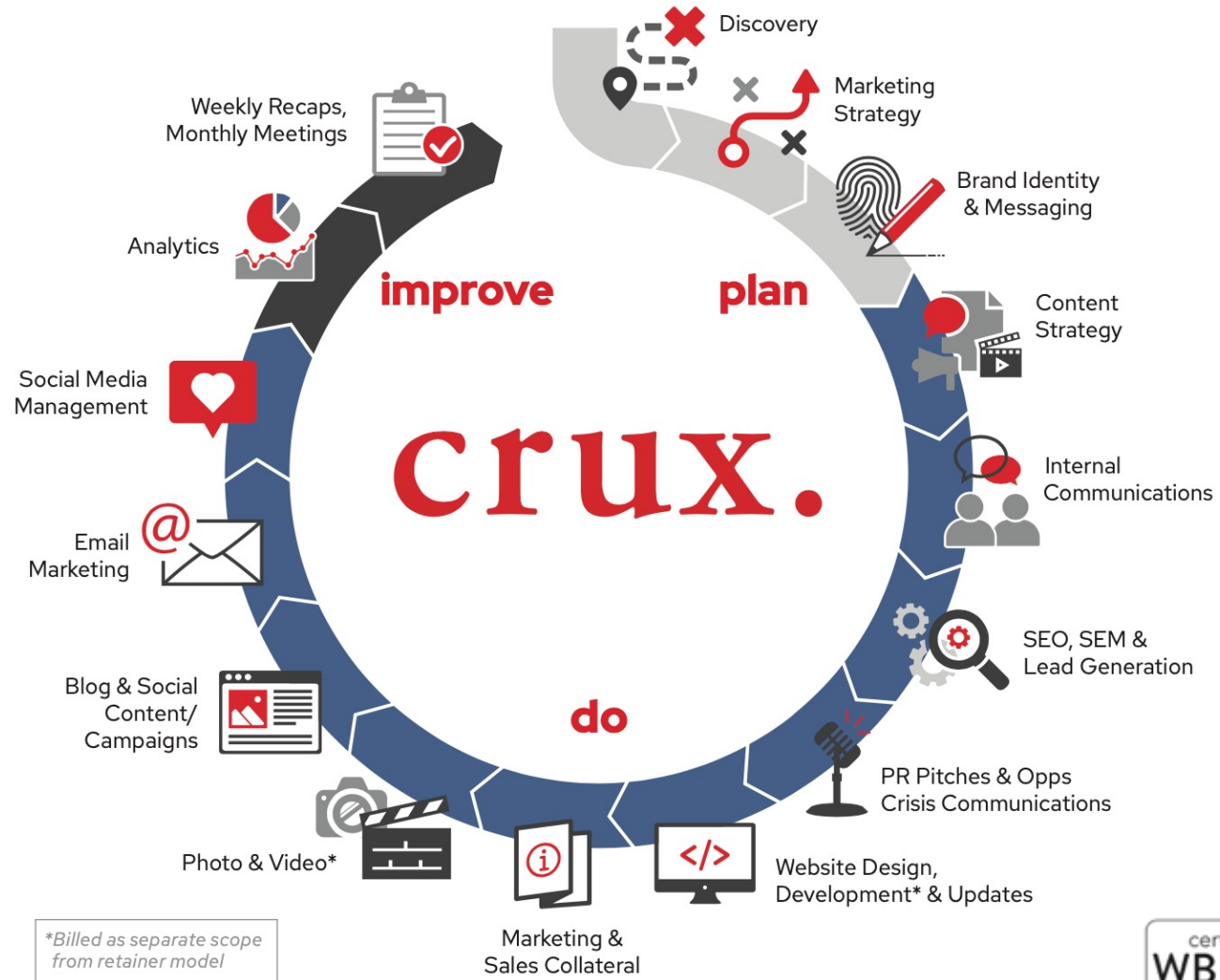
What's behind Door No. 3?

Engaging with Crux.

Crux can plug in as an extension of an existing team or serve as the in-house marketing team, outsourced, based on need, resourcing and business objectives.



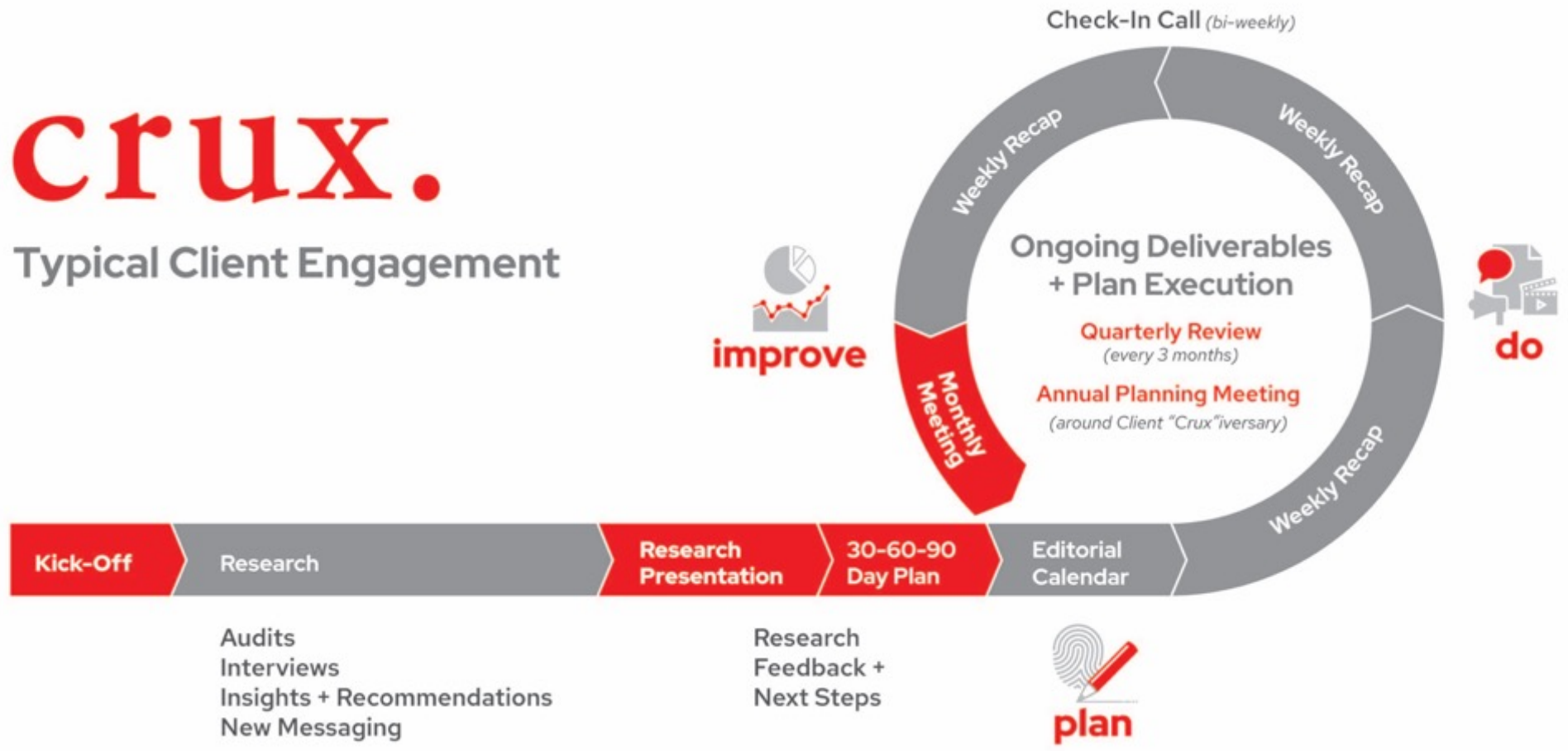
Crux Service Wheel.



The Crux Engagement.

crux.

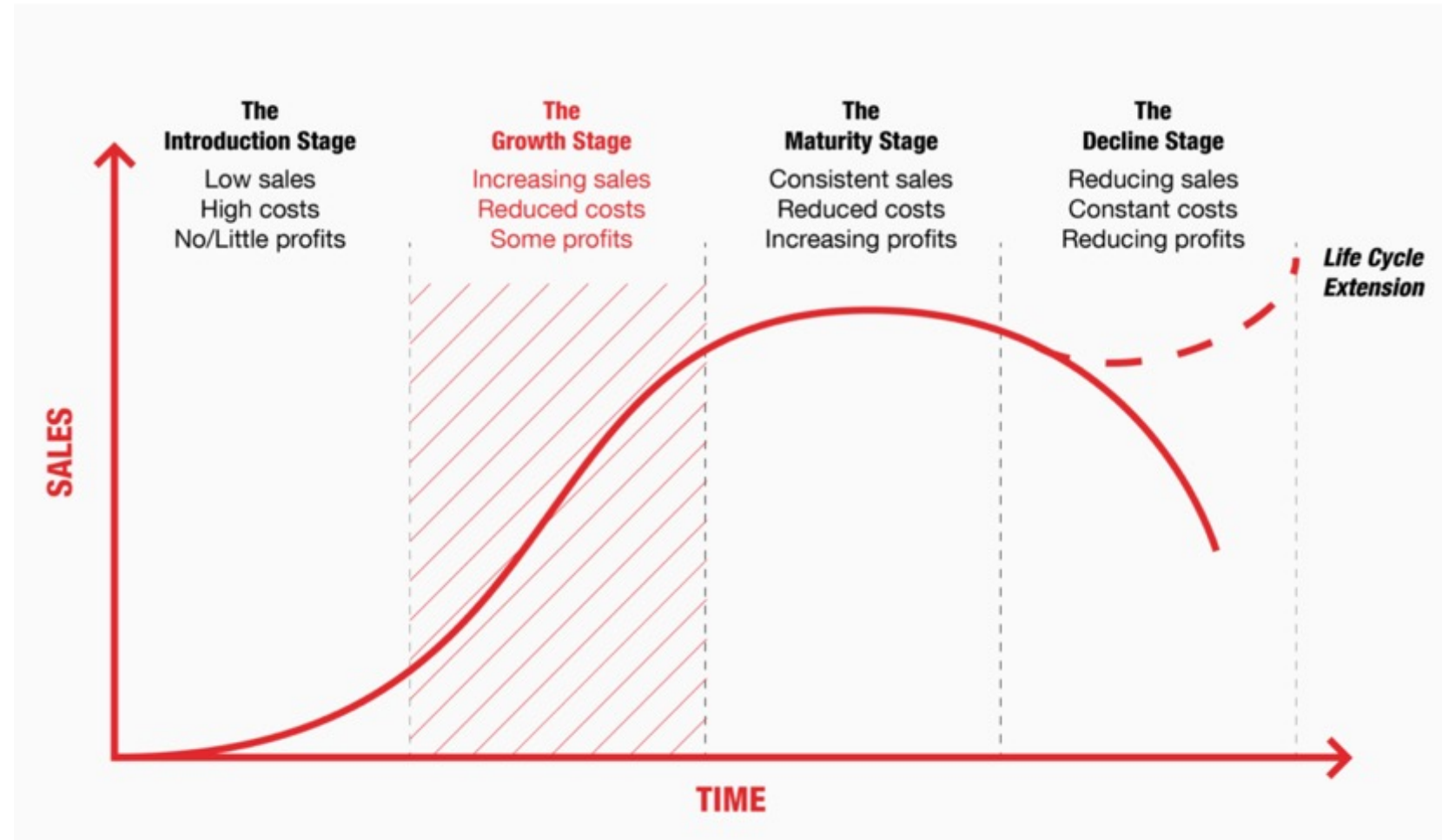
Typical Client Engagement



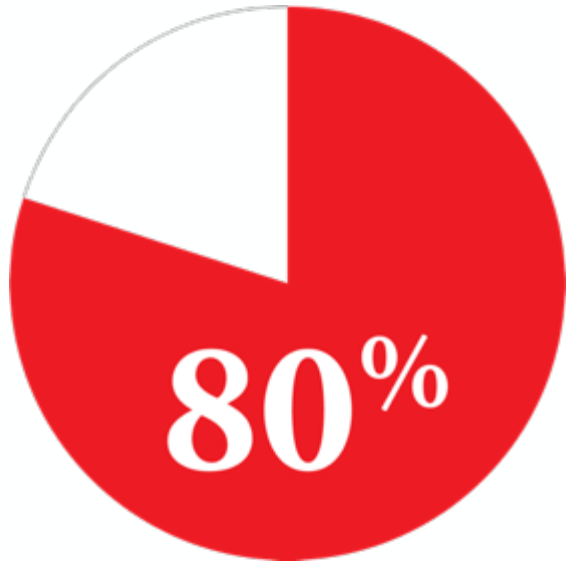
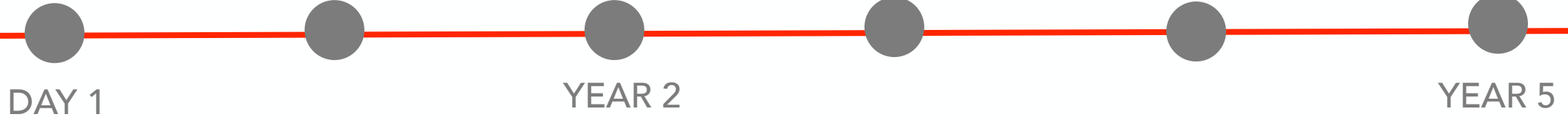


The Growth Trajectory

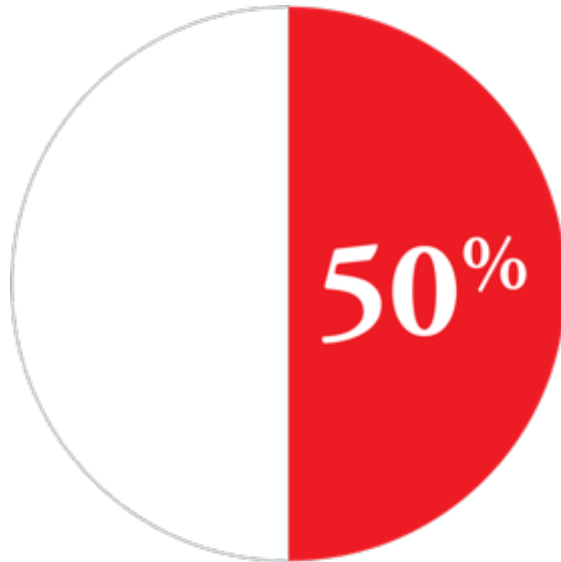
Business Life Cycle – Growth Stage.



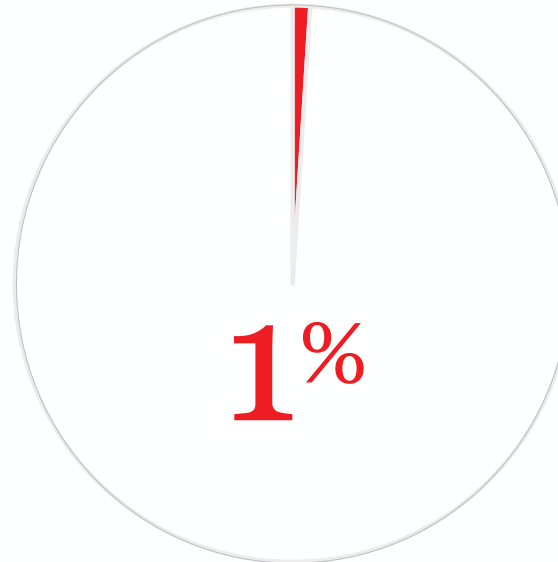
The Statistics Behind Startups.



of startups **fail** within
the first two years



of startups **fail** within
the first five years

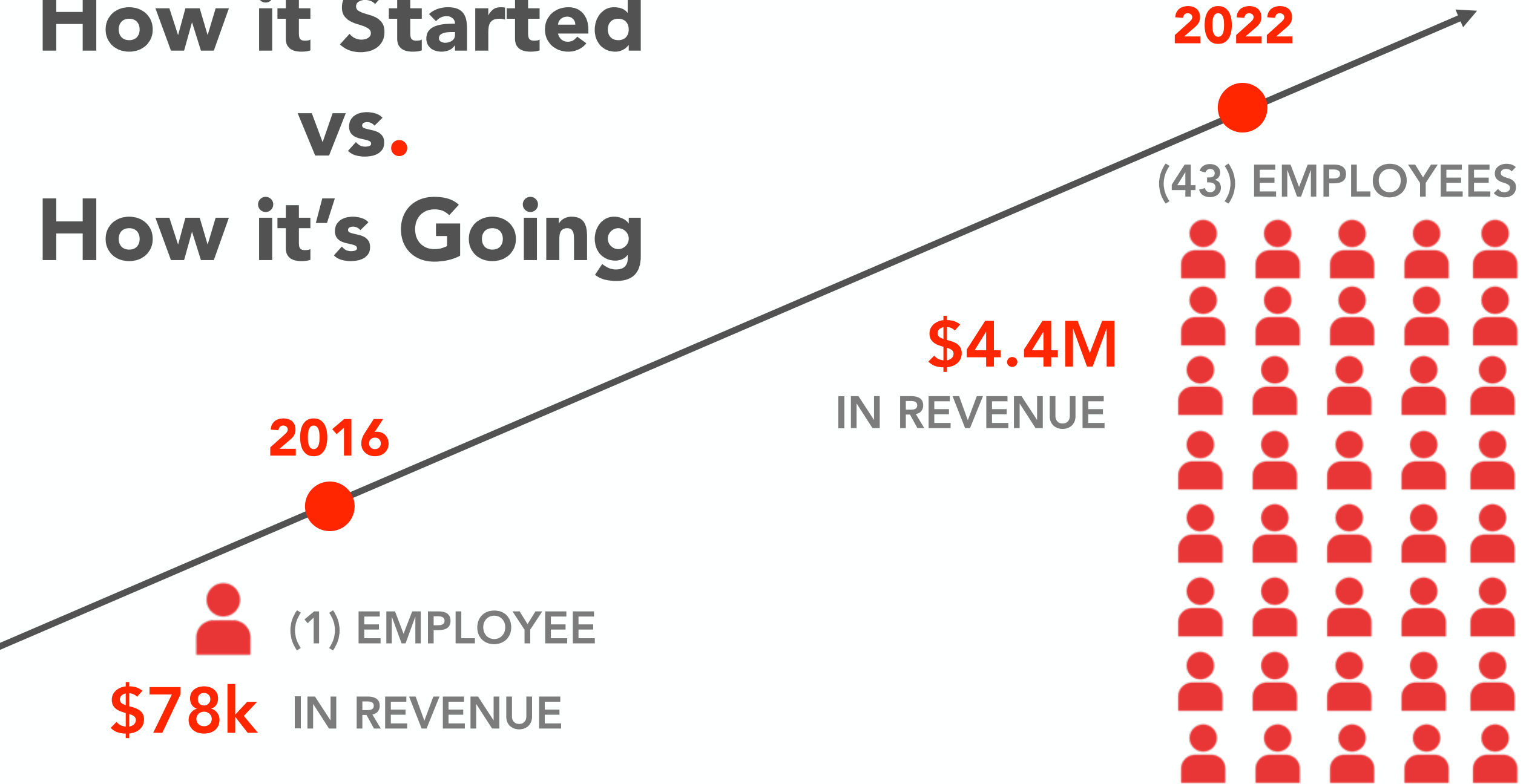


of startups make it to
the 5-year mark



of startups hit \$1M
ARR in < five years

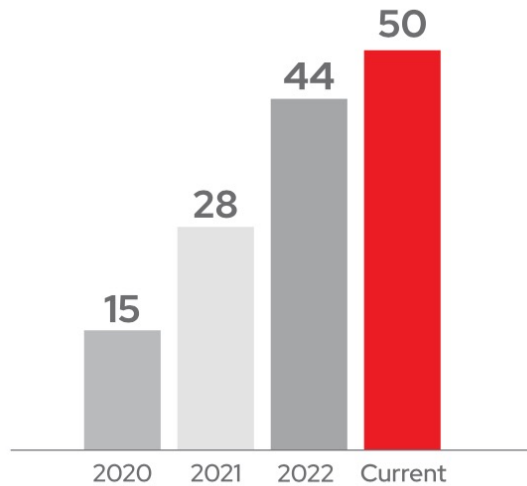
How it Started vs. How it's Going



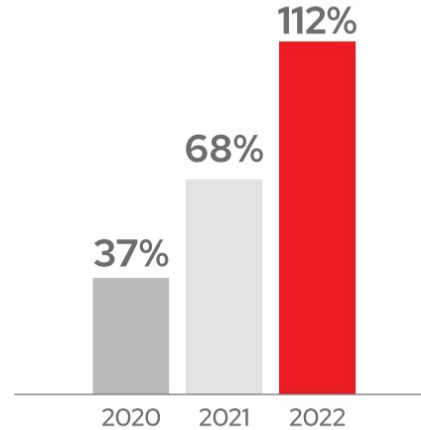
Three-Year Growth

Business Performance

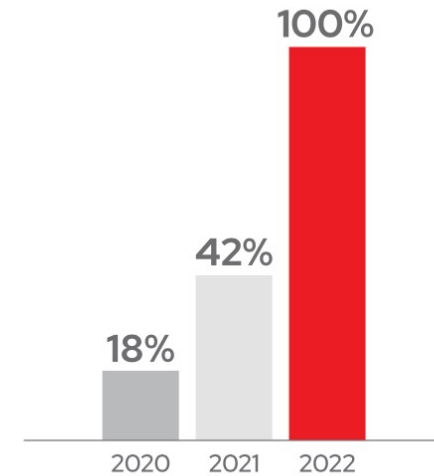
Company Employee Count



Revenue Growth Percentage



Profit Growth Percentage



Key Steps to Scaling a Business:

1. Have a clear purpose, vision and value prop that is unique and compelling
2. Have a deep understanding as to the exact problem your offering is attempting to solve
3. Possess an understanding of the marketplace along with competitor strengths and vulnerabilities
4. Have a founder who either possesses the skills to transition from an entrepreneur to a skilled business leader OR has the humility to know their weaknesses and fill those gaps
5. Sufficient capital and resources to fully build out the business
6. Willingness to change course as necessary when the facts require it



Lessons Learned

Top 10 Lessons Learned:

1. Being a leader is hard (the difference between leading and managing)
2. Lean into my strengths, hire my weaknesses
3. People are the most important, most challenging, and most rewarding
4. Building trust is a daily endeavor – be vulnerable
5. Everything you say is being judged, the art of communication
6. Delegate and hold accountable
7. Companies that win in this decade will focus on well-being
8. Process is critical to all of the above
9. Values matter
10. Brand reputation is everything

The Quadrant Method.





People.

Our Values... & how we live them.

T Trusting

We trust our teammates, our marketing acumen and our processes to deliver exceptional value to our clients.

E Entrepreneurial

As a startup-turned-small-business, we're committed to maintaining our entrepreneurial mindset embodying the drive to challenge ourselves and accomplish our vision.

A Accountable

We're human, and we own our actions. We share in our successes and failures, seeing both as opportunities to learn.

M Motivated

Our strong desire to make an impact for our clients is what drives us, this is more than marketing, this is about the greater good of utilizing marketing to get results.

C Collaborative

Success isn't achieved alone, and we soar when we put our marketing minds together.

R Respectful

We value the unique perspectives, skills and quirks of every member of our team and our clients.

U Unrelenting

We have the strength, stamina and determination to GSD, and live by the practice of under-promising and over-delivering.

X X-ceptional

We're not your typical marketing agency. We have the heart as well as the chops to back it up, driven to exceed client expectations and prove that what's behind Door #3 is the best option.


Our Values...



Our Values... & how we live them.


crux.

TEAM CRUX is the marketing “un-agency” fueling business growth for clients and opportunity for employees. We’re storytellers and brand evangelists—guided by collaboration, curiosity and creativity to elevate brands and amplify missions.



Trusting
Pecan Caramel

We trust our teammates, marketing acumen and smooth processes to deliver exceptional value to clients.



Entrepreneurial
Passionfruit

We’re passionate and resilient, and we challenge assumptions by asking “What if?”



Accountable
Citrus Caramel




We have a zest for follow through. We hold ourselves to a higher standard and share in our successes and failures, seeing each as learning opportunities.



Motivated
Vietnamese Cinnamon

We’re driven by a desire to make a difference for our clients, bringing spice and positive attitude to work each day.

Share a pic online and tell us your favorite flavor!



Just search for Crux KC




Collaborative
Strawberry Balsamic

We put our marketing minds together to create the perfect combination and achieve exceptional results for clients.



Respectful
Raspberry

Unique perspectives are our jam. We value the skills and quirks of every member of our team and our clients.



Unrelenting
Aztec Spice


We have the fire and determination to never give up, living by the practice of always under-promising and over-delivering.





X-ceptional
Champagne

We’re not your typical marketing agency—we’re the “un-agency.” We go above and beyond to live our values and celebrate our team and our clients.

EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH



The Crux team has selected **Dan Rohr** for Employee of the Month for the month of **December 2020** due to exemplary contributions to client projects and living the Crux Values.



Melea McRae, CEO

Chief's Super Bowl Parade



Building the Network.

- Vice Chair of the Kansas City Repertory Theatre board of directors
- Circle of Red and co-chair of AHA's Go Red For Women event in 2023
- Children's Mercy Research Institute Advisory Council
- CEOs for Real World Learning
- Arvest Bank Board of Directors
- Enterprising Center of Johnson County (ECJC) Board of Directors
- HEMP Fellow
- Rockhurst University adjunct professor
- Women Who Mean Business



Forbes

Communications
Council

2022
OFFICIAL MEMBER

Secrets to our Success.

- Awards Season at Crux
- PR – built in marketing machine
- Chief Collector of Talent
- Industry-agnostic
- Strength of the network
- All of our “ambassadors”
- Super strong culture





Questions?

THANK YOU!