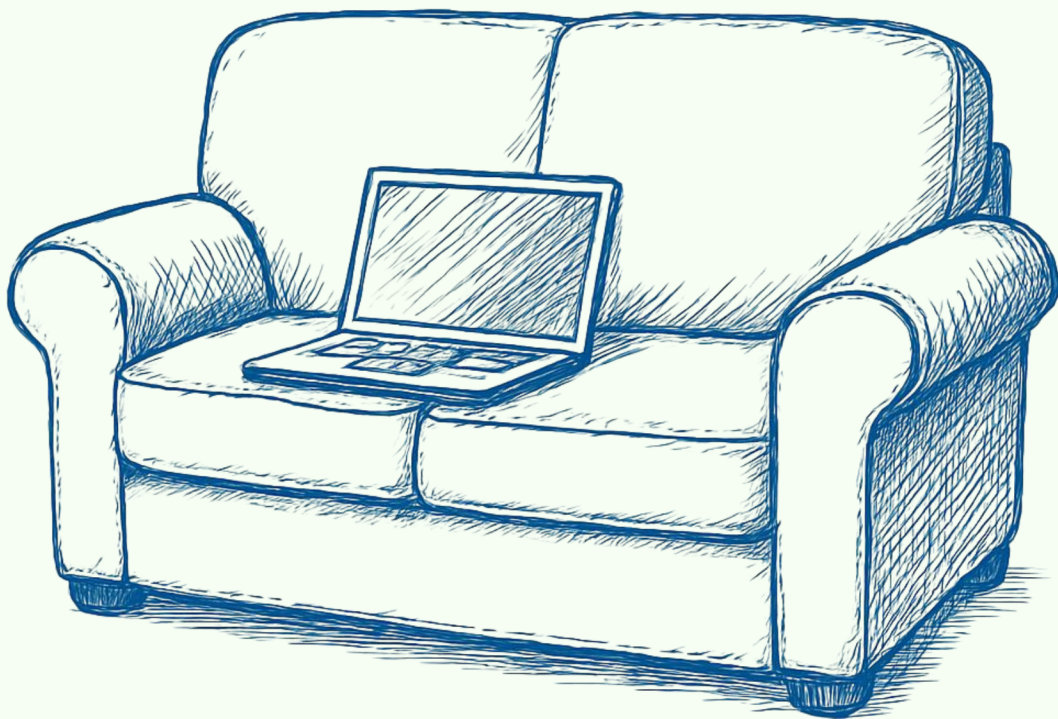


REMOTE KARO

*Land High-Paying Remote Jobs from
Countries Like Pakistan*



WAJAHAT KARIM

remotekaro.com

RemoteKaro

Wajahat Karim

This book is available at <https://leanpub.com/remotekaro>

This version was published on 2026-07-14



This is a [Leanpub](#) book. Leanpub empowers authors and publishers with the Lean Publishing process. [Lean Publishing](#) is the act of publishing an in-progress ebook using lightweight tools and many iterations to get reader feedback, pivot until you have the right book and build traction once you do.

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RemoteKaro

Land High-Paying Remote Jobs from Pakistan

Wajahat Karim

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First published 2026

Introduction

“Do you have any questions?”, that’s what CTO asked at an interview I was giving. It was a technical interview and was going for about 59 minutes exactly at this moment, when CTO decided to wind up the interview.

I answered with a lot of excitement and confidence I have been projecting for last hour, “I think I am fine but can you share when I would be hearing from you again for the next step?”. I didn’t know whether they had selected me for the next step, but I wanted them to know how confident I am.

It was Thursday, 4th November, 2021 at 12:00am in morning. I was hell tired due to spending full day at a job, then traffic, and then I had to appear for a technical interview at 12am. The time when I wanted to sleep and rest. But that’s how it is for software engineers like us living in Pakistan.

Before every interview for US-based companies of remote jobs, I used to put my head in sync under cold water to refresh my mind. This was the only thing which helped me with tiredness and regaining the confidence I needed for interviews.

The CTO asked about the recruiter I am in touch with. I shared the name and then he said “It’s Thursday today. So I guess you will get the feedback maybe tomorrow, but not entirely sure, so next week definitely.”

Here goes that word again. “The Feedback”. This comes back over and over again.

They don’t say you will get “rejection” next week.

They don’t say you got a job but we need a few days to finalize.

They don’t say you don’t live in US and we only offer jobs to US folks.

They don’t say you have to work a graveyard shift for us, which we don’t like.

They don’t say we don’t trust people from your country because of it’s bad reputation.

They don’t say we have thousands of other excuses to not hire you, even though you are a strong candidate for us.

But they always say “You will get the feedback”.

At this point in that interview, I had applied to over 1200 jobs, 1237 to be exact. I have appeared in approximately 300 interviews for few companies who were willing to hire from Pakistan. At least they thought they will hire from Pakistan.

I'd been giving interviews like this almost twice a week for last 17 months and then getting a classic rejection email, or you can say that “feedback” in the mornings when I woke up.

The emails would fancy on how tiring and hard it was for companies and recruiters to write such a hard email and always had this sentence somehow.

“We are moving forward with another candidate...”

I always wondered why so many companies have exact same sentence and similar rejection emails. I found the answer to be discussed later chapters in this book.

So, I happily (maybe not so happily) obliged and told them “I will be waiting for it”. And then conversation took an unexpected turn.

“Yeah yeah, and I will see you soon. Have a good night. Bye”. CTO dropped the zoom call for everyone, and I was staring into this Zoom dialog “The meeting has been ended by host”.

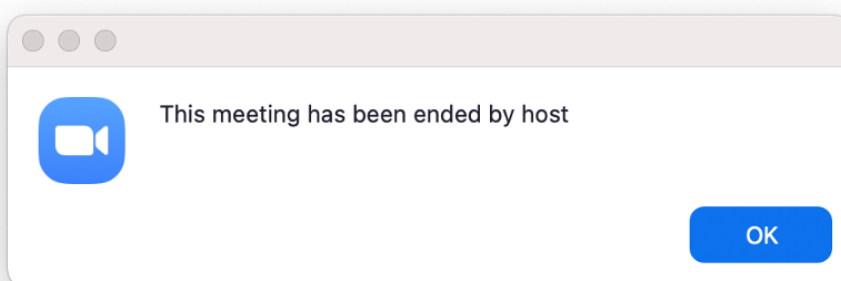


Figure 1. 00_00_meeting_ended_dialog.png

I was thinking about the last words CTO said. What he meant by “I will see you soon”.

Are they going to offer me a job?

Are they serious?

Is this where my job hunt will end after so many rejections?

But then I realized that it's been 1200+ so far. Landing remote job is tough as hell. It's one of the most competitive thing in the life of software engineers. Everyone wants a remote job.

People from Pakistan want a remote job so they can earn in dollars and spend in rupees.

People from Europe want a remote job so they can travel the world and be a digital nomad.

People from USA want a remote job so they can spend time with their families.

And on and on, it goes and everyone wants a **REMOTE JOB** for whatever reasons they believe in.

It's an aggressive competition of software engineers scattered around whole world and only ONE person is going to get the job. There's no 2nd, 3rd or top 5, top 10 leaderboards anywhere.

It's a simple "**Winner Takes All**" game. Either you are all in, or you are not. That's it.

So for me, the question was "I will see you soon". Is this my *Winner Takes All* or do I have to keep applying to crazy jobs and give these tiring interviews and pose a big smile like I am the happiest man alive on this earth.

Only time will tell. It was hard for me to be patient in that moment. Really really hard. But the good thing was that I didn't have to wait longer.

Next day around 8pm, I get this beautiful email I have waiting for. The email's subject was "Nebula Contract Agreement (Offer Letter)".

When I got this email buzz on my banged up Android phone, I was in shock. I showed it to my wife and she snatched the phone. She didn't even let me open the email and read it. And she started reading the email aloud herself.

"Hi Wajahat,

Thanks for taking the time this week to speak with our team. We are pleased to offer you the position of Senior Engineer, Android Team with a salary of _____ USD per year with a start date of December 16, 2021. Please take a look at the attached contract agreement for more details.

If you have any questions, I am happy to answer them! Otherwise, you may sign and return the contract agreement at your earliest convenience.“

When she reached to the salary part, she started calculating how much that would be in Pakistan Rupees. And then I snatched the phone back and saw the salary myself.

This was unbelievable for me. I was expecting around half or less than half of that salary and this was shocking to me. It was the best day of my life.

In that moment, I understood the meaning of “I will see you soon” said in the interview.

This was MY “winner takes all” moment. This is where I won the game, finally.

It's quite strange that when I put so much effort of spending years applying to jobs, giving interviews, coding tests, and making take-home assignments over and over again, it felt hard. Brutal. Aggressive. Depressing. Exhausting.

And fill in your choice of similar adjectives.

I started thinking about my life. I started underestimating myself. I started feeling like a fraud. I started doubting my skill-set.

I thought and even believed at one point that I have a self-imposter syndrome.

I don't know anything at all.

I don't deserve all of this. Any of this.

And then I get an email saying I got the offer I wanted for so long. And in that single moment, it becomes all WORTH it.

It feels...

...

...

Easy.

Yes, it feels *easy*.

In that moment of few minutes of smile, laughter and happiness, I realized that how easy it was.

But easy for whom? For the company who sent that email?

And then I looked back the whole journey and I felt nothing other than gratitude.

Thanks to Almighty for the blessings.

That moment made me feel that my hard work wasn't wasted. It bore fruit. I did it. I landed a job from US by living in Pakistan (again).

The next few years turned out to be life-changing for me and my family. It was officially the best job ever I did in my career with a loving respectful team, an amazing product, and a community of customers who loved it.

That experience changed everything for me. And it made me want to help others get there too.

I started doing one-on-one sessions with software developers who wanted remote jobs. I sat with each person, looked at their resume, fixed their LinkedIn, ran mock interviews, told them exactly what I did wrong so they wouldn't repeat my mistakes.

I did 118 of those sessions. These individual sessions were 3-5 hours each.

Then I organized group masterclasses. First group had 56 people, second 72, third 42, and fourth 54. This happened 2 months ago in November 2025 while writing this book. That's roughly 400 people I've walked through this process.



Figure 2. Landing Remote Jobs Masterclass

This book is everything I taught those 400+ people. Not theory. Not motivational fluff. The actual system I used and refined over 118 sessions of watching real developers struggle with real problems and then get real offers.

Every mistake I made in those 1,237 applications is in here. Every shortcut I discovered. Every trick that actually moved the needle. I wrote this book because I got tired of watching talented developers from Pakistan repeat the same mistakes I made. And because nobody else was writing this for us.

I won't over-sell this to you. My reality was getting rejected from 1,237 jobs before I got one offer. I won't tell you that you'll land a remote job in two months. It might not happen that fast. But I will tell you exactly what worked, what didn't, and what I wish someone had told me before I wasted months doing things the wrong way.

This book is for you if you're a software developer in Pakistan, India, Bangladesh or South Asia and you want a full-time remote job that pays in USD or EUR. If you're tired of applying to jobs and hearing nothing back. If you're competing against engineers at Facebook or Google and wondering how you're supposed to stand out from Lahore or Karachi or Delhi or Dhaka. If you've dealt with the payment system drama, the graveyard shift interviews, the *"we don't hire from your country"* rejections.

And you still haven't **given up**.

This book was written for *your* reality. Not some generic career advice from someone in San Francisco who has never had to explain to a bank why they're receiving dollars from abroad.

But let me be honest about who this book is NOT for. If you're looking for freelancing or gig work on Fiverr and Upwork, this isn't that. This is about full-time remote positions with companies.

If you're not a programmer or software engineer, most of what I teach may not be directly applicable to your field. But there are many areas like resume building, interviews etc, which you can learn from this book.

And if you expect that I have some magic wand and I'll say *"abracadabra"* and you'll get a remote job overnight, then I would say you can close this book right now.

Send me an email that you want a full refund and I will be happy to do so.

This takes work. Real work. Months of it. My goal is to show you exactly

what that work looks like and help you as much as I can. But nobody is going to do it for you.

It's your resume. It's you appearing in those interviews. It's you who will get the salary. Not me. Not anyone else.

If you're still reading, good. That tells me something about you already.

So let's get started.

My prayer for you is simple. I want you to have your own moment. The moment where your phone buzzes with an email you've been waiting for. Where you read the salary and can't believe it. Where you look at your family and feel like all of it was worth it. That moment is real. I've lived it. And I've watched dozens of my students live it too. And I am full confident that your turn is coming.

Thank you.

Best wishes from Wajahat Karim.

Who should read this book

If you are a Pakistani or South Asian software developer, designer, product, project, or any kind of online working person, and you want a full-time remote job that actually pays in USD - this book is for you.

If you have been sending applications into the void and hearing nothing back, or making it to interviews and still getting rejected - keep reading.

If you are tired of generic career advice from people who have never had to explain to a bank why they are receiving dollars from abroad, or dealt with a graveyard shift interview at midnight - this book understands your reality.

If you have watched your peers land remote jobs and you are wondering what they did differently - this book some interesting strategies and tricks in it.

If you are willing to put in the work. Real, consistent, sometimes frustrating work and you are not looking for a shortcut - then we are going to get along just fine.

Who shouldn't read this book

If you are looking for freelancing or gig work ~~ Fiverr, Upwork, project-to-project contracts ~~ this book is not for you. I am talking about full-time remote employment only.

If you are not a software developer or engineer, some of what I cover here will not directly apply to your field. The strategies, the interview prep, the portfolio tactics - they are biased to software engineering but can be transferred to other domains.

If you are expecting a magic formula, let me save you some time. I went through 1,237 applications before I got one offer. This is not a shortcut. This is a system built from that pain.

If you are based outside Pakistan or South Asia, some of the advice will still be useful, but the context like the payment struggles, the timezone battles, the visa-less reality, is written for our region specifically.

Chapter 1 – The Remote Work Reality

I was in a meeting. A real one. Screen shared, code review open, my colleague walking me through a production bug that needed a fix before the US team woke up.

And then the doorbell rang.

I ignored it. My wife got the door. Two minutes later, she knocked on my room door and whispered, “Your aunt is here.” Not just any aunt. The *dangerous* aunt. The kind who shows up unannounced, expects chai within four minutes, and if you don’t come out to greet her personally, the entire extended family will hear about it by evening. “He didn’t even come out to say hello. Just sitting on his laptop. Do we come here every day?”

I muted my mic. Told my wife to handle it. Went back to the code review. Twenty minutes later, my aunt knocked on the door herself. “Beta, are you going to sit on this computer all day? At least come have chai with us.” I smiled, said I’d be right out, unmuted my mic, and told my colleague I needed 10 minutes. He said, “Sure, take your time.” He was in Portugal. He didn’t know what a dangerous aunt was. He didn’t need to.

That moment taught me something nobody tells you about remote work. It’s not a job. It’s a lifestyle. And your family, your guests, your neighborhood uncle, your mother who often needs yogurt from the shop – they are all part of it whether they signed up or not.

The Instagram Lies (What Remote Work Is NOT)

Let me start with what remote work is not, because most people get it wrong before they even begin.

Remote work is not sitting on a beach with a laptop and a coconut. I don’t care how many Instagram reels you’ve watched. Nobody is writing production code with sand in their keyboard and a 2G cellular hotspot from a Thai island. Those reels are “content”. They’re not reality.

Remote work is not “work from anywhere” either. Technically you can do that, yes. But practically? You need stable internet, a quiet space, and a routine that doesn’t fall apart every time someone rings the doorbell. In Pakistan, the first question every morning is if there’s electricity or not. The second is if the internet is working or not. And then you think about backup UPS or generators too.

These are realities you live with. Whether you like it or not.

Remote work is not freelancing. It’s not gig work. It’s not Fiverr’s \$5 logos. It’s not Upwork. It’s not bidding or sending proposals.

When I say remote work, I mean a full-time job with a real company, a real *fixed* salary, real teammates, and real expectations. You just happen to be sitting in Karachi or Lahore or somewhere else instead of San Francisco or London.

In the simplest terms: you are employed by a company. You do the same work any employee does. You have a manager, you have deadlines, you have code reviews and standups and Slack messages. The only difference is location.

You are not in their office. You are in *yours*. Most probably, bedroom or home-office, or shared co-working space if you fancy for it.

That’s it. That’s the whole definition of “the remote work”.

But that one difference – **location** – changes everything.

You might be thinking how?

In one of my masterclass sessions, I asked the group: “What is a remote job’s definition?” One person said, “A remote job is where you just need your laptop, your hands, and your brain. You can sit anywhere and work whenever you want without restrictions.”

I told him, “It sounds like you’ve been watching too many Instagram reels.”

Another person got an interesting answer. He said it needs a lot of discipline. He said it’s not as easy as influencers make it look like when they say they’re working from a beach.

He was right. Absolutely right.

That’s the thing people don’t understand until they’re six months into a remote job: you still have a boss. You still have deadlines. You still get messages at inconvenient times. You still need to show up, be professional, deliver work, and communicate. The location changed. The job didn’t.

And to do this, remote job, you need **discipline**. A lot of it, honestly.

An Indonesian company once offered me a position. The salary was about \$2,700. They required me to be online from 11:00 AM to 7:00 PM Pakistan time. I had to inform them in advance if I can't come online. Even for a one-hour lunch break.

I said no.

My wife asked why. I told her that sitting at home for 8 hours straight is impossible. You can do that in an office. You cannot do it at home. Not with my lifestyle. Not with anyone's lifestyle who is doing remote job, honestly.

If a company is making you sit with your webcam-on for 8 hours a day, tracking your mouse movements, cutting your salary if your keyboard goes idle for 20 minutes – that is NOT a remote job.

That is an office job done from your **bedroom**. You just saved on the commute. That's the only difference.

A student of mine got a job at a Korean company. They had a rule: if your keyboard or mouse stayed idle for 20 minutes, your salary would be deducted. 20 minutes. That's the time it takes to read a technical article on Medium, or think through a problem, or go make a cup of chai.

My student, being a Pakistani, found a Pakistani solution. There's a device called a "mouse jiggler." You put it under your mouse, it vibrates, the cursor keeps moving, and the computer thinks you're working. It costs about \$15.



Figure 3. Mouse Jiggler

My student didn't want to spend \$15. So he took a heavy spoon from the kitchen, opened Notepad, and placed the spoon on a key. The key kept typing endlessly "aaaaaaaaaaaa" scrolling across the screen while he went to get his cup of chai.

He saved \$15 and and probably felt proud about it.

I'm not proud of this story. We tell it like it's funny, like it's **jugaad** (workaround), like we're clever for outsmarting the system. But it makes me sad. This is the kind of dishonesty that gives developers a bad name. I've talked about this a lot – how we brag about fooling our managers. It's a mindset problem. And if you're reading this book planning to do the same thing, you're going to struggle in a real remote job.

Because real remote companies don't track your keyboard. They track your output. And if your output is garbage, no amount of spoon-on-keyboard tricks will save you.

Only one thing is going to help you in remote job. That's the discipline. People often think it like "I will open a laptop in morning and will do the work for few hours". But, believe me when I say this.

It's very hard and requires a lot of discipline and self-motivation to wake up on Monday morning and get on your desk and do the work. You know that no-one is watching you. No one is online. And if you can just slack for the day, it won't be much of a big issue. That's where your discipline is tested.

That's when you will understand what a remote job really is.

* * *

COVID Remote vs. Actual Remote: The Great Divide

When COVID-19 hit in 2020, a lot of companies got excited¹ and they were like “Yay! We're going remote too!” They told their employees to work from home and thought that was enough.

It wasn't.

Although they changed the policies and let their employees work from home, but they didn't change their work-culture and how the company used to operate. And that turned out to be a problem for these companies.

When COVID-19 settled, articles started popping up everywhere. “Remote work is unproductive.” “Remote work doesn't work.” “We're going back to the office.” Companies started pushing hybrid models, forcing people back onsite²³⁴⁵.

At the same time, other companies were saying the opposite. “Remote work is the best thing that happened to our company.” “Our team has never been

¹COVID-19 – global pandemic (2020-2023) that forced millions of companies to adopt remote work overnight. The largest unplanned remote work experiment in history, fundamentally changing how companies view distributed teams. <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

²Amazon announced a full five-day return-to-office mandate for all 350,000 corporate employees, effective January 2025, reversing its previous hybrid policy. <https://hubblehq.com/blog/famous-companies-workplace-strategies>

³Disney CEO Bob Iger required employees to return to office Monday through Thursday starting January 2023, citing the need to improve “creativity, culture, and employee careers.” <https://tech.co/news/companies-ended-fully-remote-work-2024>

⁴Meta announced in June 2023 that all office-based workers must return for at least three days per week, shifting away from its remote-first stance during COVID-19. <https://tech.co/news/companies-ended-fully-remote-work-2024>

⁵Goldman Sachs mandated a full five-day return to office in March 2022, with CEO David Solomon calling remote work “an aberration.” <https://hubblehq.com/blog/famous-companies-workplace-strategies>

more productive.” “We can never go back to an office.”⁶⁷⁸

How can both be true?

I thought about this for a long time, and then I figured out: the companies that praise remote work are mostly the ones that were remote *before* COVID. They had been doing it since either the start or many years. They built their entire culture around remote work. Nebula is one of them. WordPress’s creator Automattic is one of them. DuckDuckGo, Doist, Toptal, Gitlab – these companies have always been remote-first. They were born remote.

And the companies that struggled? The ones that went remote out of excitement during COVID. They told their employees to stay home but didn’t change a single thing about how they worked. The same 6 meetings a day. The same mandatory attendance. The same “be online from 9 to 5.” They just moved the office to everyone’s bedroom and called it remote.

That is not remote work. That is an office without walls. You can attend 6 meetings a day at office, but it’s hard to do same at home.

A friend of mine is doing an onsite job in Pakistan. During the COVID, his company went remote. One day, he called me and said, “Wajahat, I don’t know how you do a remote job. We’ve gone crazy. We’re working 14 hours a day. Our condition is terrible.”

I replied him, “That’s not possible. Install a timer in your laptop. Tomorrow, show me how many hours you actually coded.”

The timer I recommended was WakaTime.⁹ It’s a plugin that works with VS Code, JetBrains, Android Studio, and many other IDEs. It tracks your actual coding time. Not the time the compiler is open. Not the time you’re vibe coding with Claude Code or Lovable. The actual time your fingers are writing code.

His productive coding time didn’t even reach 4 hours. Literally 4 hours. And he thought he was working 14 hours a day, when in fact his actual output was less than 4.

⁶Airbnb adopted a permanent “Live and Work from Anywhere” policy in 2022, allowing employees to work from home or anywhere in their country with no pay impact, with team gatherings about once per quarter. <https://hubblehq.com/blog/famous-companies-workplace-strategies>

⁷GitLab has operated as a fully remote company since its founding, running all operations on its own product and maintaining its commitment to remote-first work. <https://builtin.com/awards/fully-remote/2023/best-places-to-work>

⁸Nvidia continued offering remote work options post-pandemic, with leadership publicly supporting distributed teams. <https://www.business.pitt.edu/return-to-office-mandates-dont-improve-employee-or-company-performance/>

⁹WakaTime – automatic time tracking for developers. Free tier available. Works with VS Code, JetBrains, Android Studio, and 100+ other editors. <https://wakatime.com>

That's the productivity myth. Look busy do nothing stuff. We spend 8 hours in the office, or claim we're working 8 hours from home, but when you measure it, the real number is embarrassingly low. The problem isn't that people are lazy. The problem is that COVID-remote companies never learned how remote actually works. They kept the same culture, the same meeting overload, the same expectations – and then blamed remote work when it didn't perform.

The biggest and most common issue: communication. A remote company communicates in a whole different style than an onsite company does. We will talk about this in details in coming chapters.

* * *

Remote Work Is a Lifestyle (Not a Job)

I always say remote job is not a job. Remote job is a lifestyle. It's the most important thing in this chapter. Maybe in this entire book.

When you have a physical job, your life has a clear structure. Wake up. Get ready. Get in the car. Complain about the traffic. Reach the office. Make chai. Do some work. Have lunch. More chai. Some office politics. Then get back in the car. More traffic. More complaining. Reach home.

And now your personal life begins.

Dinner with the family. Kids' homework. Netflix. Maybe go out for chai with friends. And sleep.

Repeat it next day.

There's a clear divider in this routine. A borderline. The evening rush hour and traffic is your borderline. On one side of it, is your work life. On the other, is your personal life. If you switch jobs tomorrow, only the work side changes. New office, new manager, new traffic. But the personal side stays the same. Your family doesn't even notice you changed jobs.

Now, let's remove the commute. Remove the office. Remove the borderline entirely.

That's remote work.

There is no line anymore. You have to draw it yourself. You have to decide where work ends and life begins. And nobody is going to help you with that. Not your company, not your manager, not your family. You are on your own.

And this is where it gets real for us in Pakistan. In traditional brown families, everyone's experience is probably similar to mine.

Mom: "Beta, let's go to the market, we need to do some shopping for home."

Me: "I'm working."

Mom: "Do it later. You can open this laptop in evening too. Let's go now."

Or maybe my most favorite and most annoying one, when you are in deep work or in some meeting and then suddenly, mom calls.

"Son, hurry up and go get some yogurt, the curry is burning!"

"Mom, I'm in a meeting, I can't go get yogurt right now!"

Just because I am sitting at home does not mean I am free. I am working. I have deadlines. I have a team waiting for my code review. But to the family, I'm just sitting on a laptop. It doesn't look like work to them. There's no office, no uniform, no commute. So it must not be real work.

I had a neighbor who often used to come to meet me as he was retired. My wife used to do a job in a hospital those days and she used to commute there. One day, my neighbour said to me:

"Why are you wasting time here sitting all day on this computer thing? Why don't you go to Dubai and get a labor job or drive a taxi?"

I had to explain him for a while on what exactly I do and this computer thing is actually a job and brings the food on my table.

This is pretty common in countries like Pakistan, India etc. And that's the whole challenge here.

It took about a year for my family to understand what was happening. A full year. And then something funny happened. I told them I was going to switch jobs. Guess what they said?

"It must be remote. We won't manage without it now."

They got used to me being home. I was useful now. A free driver. A free hospital companion. A free errand runner. Always available.

That is the lifestyle. Your whole family adapts to it. Your neighbours adapts to it. Your friends adapt to it.

And it doesn't matter whether they signed up for it or not. So, remote job is not a job. Remote job is a lifestyle.

* * *

Boundaries or Burnout: Your Choice

A student reached out to me once on LinkedIn with a question: “I want to attend your remote jobs masterclass but I don't want to do remote jobs. I want help with landing the onsite jobs abroad, in Europe or at least in Dubai. Does the masterclass cover that aspect too?”

Honestly, the question like this about remote vs abroad is a lot common to me. I have discussed this in details in the coming chapters as well. But I always wondered what exactly might be the reason that people choose onsite over remote jobs.

I found the an interesting answer for this. To my surprise, its not about living in Europe etc. It's about getting exhausted. It's about mental health. The real problem is not remote jobs itself. Rather it's the boundaries for remote jobs.

Physical Space

The first boundary you need is physical space. I'm not saying you need three monitors, fancy lights, an expensive chair and desk setup. I don't have any of that. I have a simple desk, one screen, a laptop, and a normal mouse – not even an Apple one. I deliberately keep my setup simple because if I get used to three screens and a mechanical keyboard, my productivity will drop the moment I'm traveling or working from somewhere else. This is how people get trapped, even in remote jobs.

A simple laptop is enough. A screen is a bonus.

What matters is having a physical space that your brain associates with work. This is so much important but at the same time, most of the new remote workers neglect this and then get burnt out easily.

My old apartment was small and didn't have a separate room which I can call a home-office. So I made a rule then. If I'm working for the job, I will sit on the sofa. If I'm doing personal work like the GDE stuff, watching Netflix, scrolling my phone, I will sit on the bed.

It sounds silly. But it puts your brain in the right mode. "I'm on the sofa, so I'm working." "I'm on the bed, so I'm relaxing." This physical boundary is what you can call your evening rush-hour traffic borderline. This will literally save you from being exhausted and burnt out.

Believe me I have seen so many people leave remote jobs and do onsite due to exhaustion and not able to manage mental health.

Remote work is not like you wake up in pajamas and grab a coffee and open the laptop. People do this, but then you can say goodbye to the productivity. You will be working, yes, but that's not the peak productivity you can get. You will be on "look busy do nothing" pattern then.

No matter what kind of physical barrier you make, but do it. And do it today. If you can go to a different room for work, that's even better. Having a home office will help you with the remote work a lot. And it will even be good for your family as they will also get used to it. They will think "Oh yes, Wajahat is in office. I will ping him once he comes out of it".

Routine

Never, ever wake up and go straight to your laptop without washing your face. This is the most common mistake. You roll out of bed in your sleeping clothes, open the laptop, and start working. Don't do this. Treat it like a real job. Take a shower. Put on decent clothes. It doesn't matter if you have video meetings or not. It's about getting yourself into the "work" form. This is the discipline that separates people who last in remote work from people who burn out in three months.

Remote work happens in chunks. This is something nobody tells you. You don't sit for eight hours straight like you do in an office. You get two hours, then you drop the kids at school. Two hours, then it's lunch. Two hours, then your mother needs something. Two hours, then evening tea. Two hours, then dinner.

It happens in chunks. You have to plan your work around those chunks. Once you accept this, remote work becomes manageable. If you fight it – if

you try to force yourself to work 8 continuous hours like you're in an office – you will fail.

And onsite job will be better in this case for your mental health then. I see so many people ignore mental health during remote jobs, that it gets them depressed literally. I have talked about this in details in a dedicated chapter in this book later.

* * *

The Dark Side Nobody Talks About

Most of the people I meet in my remote job masterclasses think that remote work is all about those beautiful shiny \$. But remote work has a dark side too and nobody talks about it much, especially when they show the laptop on a beach in Instagram reels.

Admit it that you are alone. You sit in a small room. Your entire work life is a screen and a pair of headphones. Your colleagues are boxes on Zoom. Some of them you've never even seen in person. They are in Portugal, Canada, the UK. You are in Karachi. Or Lahore. Or Islamabad.

During Eid, I feel it the most. I open LinkedIn and see people posting photos. Office parties, cakes, "Eid Mubarak" cards from the team, gifts. Their companies celebrated with them. Nobody celebrated with me. My teammates didn't even know it was Eid. Why would they? They're not Muslim. It's not their holiday. It doesn't show up on their calendar.

When I see companies taking their teams to Naran Kaghan, or playing volleyball at the beach, or having team lunches at Port Grand – I feel that loneliness. Because my team is scattered across 15 countries. We don't have office lunches. We don't have team outings. We have Zoom calls and Slack threads.

It gets lonely. And if you're not careful, it gets depressing. I'm not exaggerating. I've seen talented developers quit remote work because the isolation was too much. They needed people around them. They needed that morning chai with colleagues. They needed to hear someone laugh in the next cubicle.

There's nothing wrong with needing that. It's normal. But you need to know this going in.

The cure, for me, has been physical exercise. Go for a run. Go for a walk. Swim. Play cricket. Go to the gym. Whatever gets your blood moving. If you sit in your room all day and then sit in your room all evening and then sit in your room all night – you will get depressed. You will get anxious. You will snap at your children. You will take your frustration out on your wife. Your productivity will drop.

Some remote companies do care for employees' cultures. They send Eid gifts and do team retreats once a year or so. But most of the remote companies are only Zoom and Slack.

Another thing helps me with this is socializing. And community events are a perfect place for that to me. This is one of the biggest reason I attend events, speak at them, and meet these amazing talented people around the world and hear their fascinating stories. This is such an energy booster that I can't emphasize it more.

I have a friend in Dubai. He's very talented. I kept telling him, "Buddy, why don't you go remote? You'll make better money, have more freedom."

He tried it. Got a great remote opportunity. Did it for 4 months. Then quit and moved to Dubai for an onsite job. He told me he couldn't do remote work. He needed to talk to people. He needed a team around him. He needed the office energy.

I told him he could have joined a co-working space. Gotten the best of both worlds. He didn't want to. He preferred the office.

He's earning less in Dubai than he was in his remote job. Plus, Dubai is expensive. But he's happier.

And that's what matters most. Not everyone is built for remote work. Some people need the social interaction. Some people need the structure of an office. Some people need that commute to separate their work brain from their home brain. If that's you, that's completely okay. This book might not be for you in that context. But still this book will help you in landing those onsite roles too. Or maybe you read it and decide to try remote work anyway. That's your call.

But if you do choose this lifestyle, know this: there is no going back. Once your family gets used to you being home, once you get used to the flexibility,

once you experience the salary in dollars while living in Pakistan – you will never look at an onsite job the same way again.

This is a one-way train. Make sure you want to board it before you buy the ticket.

* * *

Communication Will Make or Break You

I need to tell you something that will come up in almost every chapter of this book.

Communication is the oxygen of a remote team.

If you can't communicate clearly in writing, remote work will eat you alive. It doesn't matter how good your code is. It doesn't matter how many years of experience you have. If your team can't understand what you're working on, what you're stuck on, what you've finished, and what you need help with – you will fail.

In an office, people can tap your shoulder. In a remote team, they can only read your Slack messages. If those messages are unclear, incomplete, or nonexistent, you're invisible. And invisible people get fired.

We'll go deep on this in Chapter 7. I'll show you the difference between asynchronous and synchronous communication, how proactive beats reactive every single time, and why Pakistani developers specifically struggle with this. For now, just know this: the number one reason talented developers fail at remote jobs is not technical skill. It's communication.

Remember what I said in the introduction. This is a winner-takes-all game. One job. One seat. Not top five, not "strong second candidate." The developer who communicates better than you is the developer who gets it – regardless of whose code is cleaner.

Start working on it today.

* * *

Are You Ready? Honestly?

There's a framework in the remote work called the **Remote Competencies Audit**. It's a list of 47 skills that remote-first companies look for when they're evaluating candidates. Not just your technical skills. The real stuff – how you write, how you manage yourself when nobody is watching, how you handle two days of silence when nobody checks in.

I want to give you a taste of what that audit covers. Seven categories. Here are three questions from each.

Be honest with yourself as you read them.

Communication

- Can you write a clear Slack message or email without someone needing to ask three follow-up questions?
- Do you document your decisions and processes so your team doesn't have to ask what you did or why?
- Do you actually listen in virtual meetings – or are you half on your phone while nodding?

Tools and Technology

- Are you comfortable with Zoom, Google Meet, or MS Teams – or do you still struggle to unmute yourself?
- Can you navigate Jira, Trello, or Asana without needing a tutorial every time?
- Are you comfortable with GitHub, Google Drive, Dropbox – version control and file sharing?

Self-Management

- Can you manage your own time and prioritize tasks without a manager telling you what to do next?
- Can you work from home without the chai break, the doorbell, the mother needing yogurt, and the neighbor's wedding destroying your entire day?
- Can you motivate yourself on a Monday morning with no commute, no office, and no colleagues to see?

Teamwork and Collaboration

- Can you build real working relationships with teammates you've never met in person?
- Can you make decisions asynchronously – where the discussion happens over hours or days, not in a single live meeting?
- Can you coordinate work across timezones – handoffs, scheduling, keeping context clear?

Adaptability

- When your internet dies before a big meeting, can you handle it without falling apart?
- Can you receive critical feedback in writing – over Slack, in a code review – without getting defensive?
- When the isolation gets heavy, can you manage your own morale and keep going?

Professionalism and Growth

- Is your workspace professional enough for video calls – or does the background look like a storage room?
- Are you actively learning and upskilling – or waiting for your company to tell you what to study?
- Are you building your online presence – LinkedIn, GitHub, open source – so the right people can find you?

Leadership *(for those targeting senior or lead roles)*

- Can you manage and motivate a team spread across five countries and three timezones?
- Can you build a positive team culture when your team has never shared a single meal together?
- When you share a decision, can you ensure it actually reaches everyone who needs to know – not just the people on the call?

That's 21 of the 47. Just a sample. But if some of those questions made you uncomfortable, that's useful information.

The full audit – all 47 skills, a proper scoring system, and a gap analysis plan – is in Chapter 17. That's where you'll calculate your score, identify your weakest areas, and build a 30-day plan to close the gaps. By the time you reach it, you'll have the full context to make it count.

For now, just sit with the questions and reflect on them.

* * *

Remote work is not a better version of your current job. It's a completely different life.

It's waking up and creating your own structure from scratch. It's telling your aunt you can't have chai right now because you're in a standup with someone in Toronto. It's explaining to your mother, for the hundredth time, that sitting on a laptop is real work. It's dealing with loneliness during Eid. It's exercising not because you want to, but because you'll fall apart if you don't.

It's also the best thing that ever happened to me and my family.

The salary changed our life. The flexibility changed our lifestyle. The independence changed how I think about work entirely. I've traveled to the Netherlands, Turkey, Singapore, the US – all while keeping my job. I didn't have to take leave for most of those trips because my company is asynchronous. I worked from airports, hotel rooms, and coffee shops in three continents.

But none of that comes free. It comes with discipline, boundaries, and a communication style most of us were never taught.

This chapter was your reality check. Everything that follows in this book – the journey, the Pakistan-specific challenges, the job types, the salary structures, the resume building, the interviews – all of it rests on this foundation. If you understand what remote work really is, you're ready for the rest.

If you thought it was a beach and a laptop, now you know better.

* * *

Chapter 2 — My Journey

Every night at 11 PM, I put my head under cold water in sink. Literally.

Not because I wanted to. But because I had to. I had been at work onsite all day. Then stuck in Karachi traffic for more than an hour. Then dinner with the family. Then pretending to be a normal human being for a bit. And then, when the house went quiet and everyone was asleep, I opened my laptop and started applying.

11 PM to 1 AM. Every single night.

That was the window. Two hours of scrolling through job boards, reading descriptions, tweaking cover letters, and hitting “Apply.” Sometimes I would do 10 in a night. Sometimes 20. Most nights, I lost count. I just kept going until my eyes gave up or the clock hit 1 AM, whichever came first.

In the morning, I would wake up and have seen email notifications on phone. And there it would be. The same sentence, in a slightly different style, from a different company.

“We are moving forward with another candidate.”

Red. Red. Red. Red.

I had an Excel sheet. Every job I applied to got a row. Company name, role, date applied, status and so on. That status column was a wall of red. I would scroll through it sometimes, not even reading the names anymore, just watching the color blur past. Red, red, red, red. Hundreds of rows of the same answer.

Remote Jobs Hunt

File Edit View Insert Format Data Tools Gemini Extensions Help

100% Zoom

Find

Summarize this data

A1	Company	Status	Website	Date Applied	Next Action	Job Link
1		Rejected		8/13/2020	Got the rejection email	
2		Rejected		8/12/2020	Only for Canadians.	
3		Rejected		8/17/2020	Got the rejection email	
4		Missed		8/12/2020	Didn't apply on time and job got removed	
5		Rejected		2020-09-01	Got the rejection email	
6		Rejected		2020-09-02	Got the rejection email.	
7		Rejected		2020-09-03	Communicated more, but they are looking remotely in USA.	
8		Rejected		2020-09-07	Got the rejection email.	
9		Rejected		2020-09-08	Rejected.	
10		Rejected		2020-09-09	Rejected. Looking for someone from Toronto	
11		Rejected		2020-09-08	Rejected. Looking for someone from US	
12		Rejected		2020-09-11	Got the rejection email	
13		Rejected		2020-09-11	Got the rejection email	
14		Rejected		2020-09-16	Got task feedback. Rejected. Sent a follow up email, but rejected again	
15		Rejected		2020-09-23	Got the rejection email	
16		Rejected		2020-09-23	Got the direct rejection email.	
17		Rejected		2020-09-28	Got the rejection email	
18		Rejected		2020-09-19	Applied through StackOverflow	
19		Rejected		2020-10-01	Rejected after form. They needed someone with C++ and salary was high	
20		Rejected		2020-10-05	Rejected due to country	
21		Rejected		2020-09-23	They didn't like my task. Rejected	
22		Rejected		2020-10-14	Got the rejection email directly	
23		Rejected		2020-10-07	Got the rejection email. Sent the follow up	
24		Rejected		2020-10-06	Got the rejection email. Sent the follow up	
25		Closed		2020-10-20	No reply. Job closed.	
26		Closed		2020-10-20	No reply. Job closed.	
27		Closed		2020-10-20	No reply. Job closed.	
28		Closed		2020-10-20	No reply. Job closed.	
29		Closed		2020-10-20	No reply. Job closed.	
30		Closed		2020-10-20	No reply. Job closed.	
31		Closed		2020-10-20	No reply. Job closed.	
32		Closed		2020-10-20	No reply. Job closed.	

Sheet1 Copy of Sheet1

Figure 4. Excel Sheet of my jobs filled with red rows

For 17 months, this was my life. Let me tell you how it started and what I learned along the way.

* * *

Before the Hunt

I didn't start looking for a remote job because I was desperate. I was actually in a pretty good position.

In 2018, I was working at Contour Software, which runs Trapeze Group. Contour is the best company I've worked at in Pakistan. I mean that. If you ever get a job there, take it without thinking twice. The work culture is solid, the people are good, and they treat you like a professional. I was already working from home there, but it wasn't "remote" in the way the rest of this book talks about remote. It was a Pakistani company. Pakistani salary. Pakistani ceiling.

I had 12 years of experience in Android development. I was a Google Developer Expert. I had written 2 technical books before this one you are reading. I had spoken at local and international conferences. I even did a TEDx talk too.



Figure 5. Me, speaking at TEDx MUET

On paper, I looked like someone who should have no trouble landing a remote job.

On paper. Right.

The market in 2020 was hot. COVID had just happened. Companies were shifting to remote work overnight. The dollar was strong. Startups were hiring like crazy. Everyone was talking about the “remote revolution.” If there was ever a time for someone with my profile to make the jump, this was it.

So in July 2020, I started my hunt. And I was confident. Maybe too confident.

I thought, with my background, it would take a month. Maybe two. Apply to fifty companies, get five interviews, land one job. Simple math. Clean Excel sheet.

Guess what?

I was wrong.

* * *

But Why Remote? Why Not Abroad?

People assume I wanted a remote job for the money. The money was part of it, obviously. Who wouldn't want to earn in dollars and spend in rupees? But that wasn't the whole picture.

In 2017, I had cleared all the interviews at Facebook. A UK relocation offer. The package was 186,000 pounds sterling, plus a list of benefits, and all the relocation support you could want. Jang Group (Pakistan's largest news network) and Geo TV did a story on me. “Boy from Hala gets Facebook offer.” It got viral in Pakistan.

I turned the offer down. Was I stupid? Maybe. Maybe not.

The reason was simple. I didn't want to leave Pakistan. My family was here. My parents were here. My life was here. I had seen what happens to people who relocate. They get a big salary and a small apartment. They trade their entire support system for a number on a paycheck. Some of them thrive. Many of them don't.

In the later years, I got job offers at Twitter, Volvo Cars, and few other companies in Singapore, Germany, Sweden and so on. And my answer was always same. I don't want to leave Pakistan.

I have a friend who is a talented graphic designer in Karachi, earning good money on Fiverr. Level 2 seller, pulling in \$200-\$250 per project. That's solid money when you're spending in rupees. He kept talking about Australia, so he finally went. Got a graphic design job. His manager micromanaged him until he was miserable, then replaced him with someone from his own community. Two and a half years later, that talented designer is driving an Uber. In Australia. While his Fiverr profile collects dust.

I didn't want that story. I wanted the global salary without leaving Pakistan. Remote work was the answer. Not freelancing. Not contract gigs. A real, full-time remote job with a real company. That was the goal.

And for seventeen months, that goal felt like a joke. It was more like a grind.

* * *

The Grind of 1237 Job Applications

1,237 applications.

That's not a rounded number. That's not "about twelve hundred." I counted every single one. 1,237.

Approximately 300 interviews. Code tests, whiteboard leetcode sessions, take-home assignments, system design discussions, behavioral interviews, culture fits. Three hundred times I showed up, smiled through the camera at midnight, and tried to prove I was worth hiring.

The rhythm was always the same. Apply at night. Sleep. Wake up. Check email. See rejection. Go to work. Come home. Eat dinner. Wait for the house to go quiet. Put cold water on my head. Open the laptop. Apply again.

I kept that Excel sheet updated religiously. Every application got logged. Every response got tracked. After a few months, I stopped being surprised by rejections. I was surprised when I got a response at all.

This is the winner-takes-all game in numbers. 1,237 rows. One green. Every red was someone else sitting in the seat I wanted. Not because they were

better. Just because they got there first, or got there right, or got there through someone who knew someone. One job. One winner. The spreadsheet doesn't lie about the math.

Most companies never even replied. They just took my application and sent it into whatever void job applications go to die in. The ones that did reply had a template so similar I could predict the exact wording. "After careful consideration..." followed by "we have decided to move forward with another candidate who more closely aligns with our current needs." I used to wonder if there was one person somewhere writing all these rejection emails for every company in the world.

Some interviews went well. I could feel it. The technical questions landed. The conversation flowed. I connected with the interviewer. And then, 3 days later, the email would come. "Moving forward with another candidate." No explanation. No feedback. Just the same sentence.

Let me be honest about the numbers. I wasn't applying to 1,237 random jobs. I was strategic. I targeted companies that explicitly said "worldwide remote." I tailored my resume. I wrote cover letters. I followed up. I did everything the career advice websites told me to do. Turns out the "worldwide remote" starts from US and ends up in Europe and rest of the world doesn't count in the "worldwide".

It didn't matter. The rejection rate was the same whether I spent 30 minutes crafting a perfect application or 5 minutes submitting a quick one. The Excel sheet didn't care about effort. It only tracked results. And the results were red.

* * *

The Rejection Patterns

After 300 interviews, you start seeing patterns that no career coach will ever teach you.

Not all rejections are the same. I didn't learn this from a book. I learned it from living it.

The first kind is the ghosting. You apply. You hear nothing. Weeks pass. Months pass. You check the job posting and it's been taken down. No email.

No rejection. Nothing. You just cease to exist in their system. This is the most common type, and in some ways, it's the easiest to handle. No news is no hope, no job. It's that simple.

The second kind is the speed rejection. You apply on Monday, you get rejected on Tuesday. Sometimes within hours. This one used to sting at first, but I grew to appreciate it. At least they didn't waste my time.

The third kind is the string-along. This is the one that hurts. You pass the screening. You pass the first interview. You pass the second interview. You do the take-home assignment over a weekend, spending 8 hours building something for free. You pass the technical review. Then they ask you to do a fourth round. You do it. You nail it. And then you get the email.

"We are moving forward with another candidate."

Four rounds. Two weeks of your life. And they won't even tell you why.

The fourth kind is the country rejection. This one is special. You go through the entire process. You ace every round. The hiring manager loves you. And then someone from legal or operations sends an email that says something like, "Unfortunately, we are unable to extend an offer to candidates in your region at this time."

Translation: we don't hire from Pakistan. They knew where I was from before the first interview. My LinkedIn says Karachi. My resume says Pakistan. But they let me go through four rounds before checking with their legal team.

The fifth kind is the salary bait. They list a range of \$100,000 to \$140,000. You get excited. You interview. You do well. And then the recruiter says, "So, based on your location, we'd be looking at a localized compensation of around \$35,000." You applied for a \$100,000 job and they want to pay you \$35,000 because you live in Pakistan. Same work. Same hours. Same output. One-third the pay. Because of your postal code.

I experienced all five. Hundreds of times. In different combinations. From different companies. The details changed. The pattern didn't.

* * *

The Emotional Toll in Real Life

After 12 months of nightly applications and morning rejections, I started doubting everything. Not just my job search strategy. Everything.

I started doubting my skills. Maybe I'm not as good as I think I am. Maybe 12 years of experience doesn't mean what I think it means. Maybe the Google Developer Expert thing is just a title and doesn't actually make me better than anyone else.

I started doubting my life choices. Maybe I should have taken the Facebook offer. Maybe I should have left Pakistan when I had the chance. Maybe remote work from Pakistan is a fantasy that sounds good on Instagram but doesn't work in real life.

I started underestimating myself. In interviews, I could feel it. The confidence was slipping. When you've been rejected 300 times, it's hard to walk into interview 301 with the same energy you had at interview #1.

There were nights when I opened the laptop for my 11 PM session and I couldn't do it. I just sat there. The Excel sheet open. Hundreds of rows red. I didn't type a single thing for 20 minutes. Not because I was lazy. Because the weight of it was too heavy that night. After 12 months, rejection stops feeling like information. It starts feeling personal. It starts feeling like evidence.

That feeling is normal. If you're in the middle of your own job hunt and you're feeling it right now, you're not broken. You're not weak. You're just tired. And tired is okay. Tired is what happens when you do something hard for a long time without seeing results.

The only thing that isn't okay is stopping. So keep going and do NOT give up.

* * *

Finally a Job Offer

After 17 months of red rows in my Excel sheet, the timeline of 'that' week looked like a miracle.

Monday: a screening call with a company called Nebula.

Tuesday: first technical interview.

Thursday: second technical interview.

Friday. I get an email from Nebula. Subject line: “Nebula Contract Agreement (Offer Letter).”

I shared this moment in details in the Introduction section of this book already.

After 1,237 applications, it happened in 1 week. Literally 4 days.

What I will tell you is what I was thinking during that week.

I was thinking: this is too fast. After a year and a half of nothing, it can’t happen in 4 days. I was thinking: they’ll probably reject me after the 1st round. I was thinking: “I’ll see you soon” probably means “I’ll see you **rejected** soon.”

I had been conditioned. A year and a half of rejections will do that to you. Even when the answer was finally yes, my brain couldn’t accept it. It took the actual email to make it real. And even then, it took a few minutes of staring at the screen before I believed it.

After I joined Nebula, something changed in how people reached out to me.

I used to do these 1-on-1 sessions on career guidance, android help, tech advise and whatever. After the job, I became “the guy who actually did it.” My inbox exploded. DMs on LinkedIn. Messages on WhatsApp. Emails from people I had never met. Everyone had the same question.

“How did you get remote job? Can you help me?”

The first few times, I just replied with general advice. “Polish your resume. Be active on LinkedIn. Keep applying.” But I quickly realized that general advice was useless. Every person had different problems. Some had great skills but terrible resumes. Some had great resumes but couldn’t interview. Some had both but were applying to the wrong companies. Some were making one critical mistake that was getting them rejected before a human even looked at their application.

So I dedicated one-on-one sessions specially on this topic. Sat with each person, looked at their resume, reviewed their LinkedIn, fixed their profiles, ran mock interviews. Told them exactly what I did wrong so they wouldn’t repeat the same mistakes. Every session was different. Every person had a different gap.

I did 118 of those sessions and some group sessions for 400+ students.

That's when I realized something important.

Most Pakistani developers are making the same mistakes. The same five or six things, over and over. It's not about talent. We have plenty of talent. It's about knowing how the system works and how to navigate it. Nobody teaches us this. Not our universities. Not our companies. Not the generic career advice from people who have never had to explain to a bank why they're receiving dollars from abroad.

This book is everything I learned from failing 1,236 times and succeeding once. Everything I taught in those sessions. Not theory. Not motivational fluff. The actual system, built from the grind, tested on real people, proven by real offers.

* * *

My journey taught me that the problem isn't talent. Pakistani developers have plenty of that. I've met developers in Lahore who could code circles around engineers at top Silicon Valley companies. I've seen students in their sixth semester who had more practical experience than people with ten years on their resume.

The problem is everything else. The systems we don't understand. The reputation we didn't create but have to live with. The infrastructure that makes it harder for us than for a developer sitting in Toronto or Berlin.

That's what we need to talk about next in this book.