

Shrinath Balakrishnan

I turn business problems into working technology — and keep it lean enough that the tech budget never becomes the story.

Eight years as co-founder and CTO of Source.One, owning technology and product for one of India's largest B2B industrial distribution businesses. Available for fractional CTO engagements, technology advisory, and fixed-scope builds.

₹3,000 Cr REVENUE THE PLATFORM CARRIED, FY26	0.08% TECH SPEND AS SHARE OF REVENUE	< \$1M CUMULATIVE PLATFORM COST, 8 YEARS	19% → 7% FREIGHT COST ERROR, AFTER ML	20–25 ENGINEERS RUNNING THE WHOLE PLATFORM
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Source.One, FY2018–FY2026.

WHAT I DO

Be the tech brain of the business

Understand the problem from the business's side first, then translate what leadership needs into what actually gets built, on timelines that survive contact with reality.

Ship AI/ML where it moves a number

Pricing, demand and cost prediction, document and conversation automation — with a P&L outcome attached, not a pilot that never leaves the deck.

Right-size the team and the roadmap

Build for the business you have, not the one in the deck. I've run engineering organisations optimised deliberately for cost or for speed, and I'll tell you which one you're buying.

Fix what you've inherited

Architecture reviews, salvage-or-rebuild calls, migrations off the system you've outgrown. I've made that call under a live go-to-market deadline and shipped anyway.

BUILT

The product surface, across the whole value chain

Product and engineering both reported to me, so this is a roadmap I owned rather than one I was handed.

CONVERSATIONAL COMMERCE

Two-way WhatsApp Business API platform — triggered automation, human handoff · Unified per-entity conversation view across reps, calls and email · AI summarisation of calls and chats

COMPLIANCE & RISK

Live document compliance checks against eWay Bill and eInvoice · Corporate group resolution by GST, PAN and directorship, for credit rating and exposure analysis

PRICING & MARGIN

Personalised minimum-price engine by buyer, use case and location · Real-time supplier price matching per order · Freight cost prediction (ML) · Dynamic pricing engine (ML, in build at exit)

CUSTOMER APPS

Buyer app (iOS/Android) — live nationwide pricing, ordering, credit · Supplier app (iOS/Android) — per-location inventory and price self-service

LOGISTICS

Reverse-auction freight quotation, lowest price per vehicle movement · Transporter app built around POD upload and payment tracking · Vision AI checkpoint verification from driver photo and video

INTERNAL OPERATIONS

One-click operational automation including invoice and bill generation · RCA-driven ticketing modelled on Amazon's internal system

Source.One — technology as the business, not a support function

A B2B distribution platform for industrial raw materials — polymers, then chemicals: fragmented, thin-margin categories where technology decides whether the unit economics work at all.

- 01 Inherited an unsalvageable platform.** A subcontracted microservices build, over-engineered and unusable, with a product concept that forced dual buyer/supplier logins. Called it: not recoverable inside the go-to-market window.
- 02 Pivoted to a pragmatic MVP in 3–6 months.** WhatsApp as the front end — already universal among buyers, suppliers and transporters — with a CRM as an improvised back end and custom middleware for messaging and automation. Two-way conversational commerce, years before it was a category.
- 03 Grew past the MVP deliberately.** Replaced the improvised back end with a custom system once it became the bottleneck, unblocking real automation across sales and operations, then shipped native buyer and supplier apps for users who'd outgrown a chat interface.
- 04 Built the freight-pricing ML model** that cut the gap between estimated and actual freight cost from roughly 19% to under 7% nationally — margin recovered directly, in a business where margin is thin by definition.
- 05 Ran all of it with 20–25 engineers**, restructured into three specialised divisions — Product Engineers who own outcomes end to end, Software Architects, and AI Engineers — and deliberately trimmed from 25 to 20 as the business kept growing.

RANGE

I've dropped into unfamiliar businesses before

Depth at one company is worth less to you than evidence I can learn yours quickly. Before Source.One I spent two years in a consultancy doing exactly that — small teams, a new domain each time, architecture chosen per problem rather than mandated.

Red Panda Labs 2015–2017	Digitised Sodexo's paper meal-voucher system; built a Kenyan smart-energy IoT product zero-to-one; launched GlobalCitizen's India platform for the Coldplay concert with a two-person team and near-zero downtime.
Amazon 2012–2013	Retail Services' global ML-driven competitive pricing platform — billions of data points daily across regional competitor listings. Led an end-to-end AWS rewrite of a subsystem during Amazon's internal cloud migration.
Microsoft 2011	Azure disaster-management team: analysed a multi-region cloud outage and designed mitigation strategies.

ENGAGEMENTS

Embedded 2–3 DAYS / WEEK	Advisory A DAY OR TWO A MONTH	Fixed scope DEFINED DELIVERABLE
Acting CTO for a business without one. Own the roadmap, the architecture and the hiring while you decide whether the seat needs to be full-time.	For a founder or CEO who already has a team but no one to pressure-test the technical calls, the spend, and the hires against.	A technology diagnostic, a salvage-or-rebuild recommendation, a migration plan, or a specific ML build with a number attached to it.

Engagements usually start with a paid diagnostic: a couple of weeks to tell you what you have, what it's costing you, and what I'd do about it. Terms are a conversation.

If the tech budget has become the story, that's usually a solvable problem.