

IGNITE & INSPIRE SERIES

How to Succeed in Uncertain Times: Managing the Unknown

Wednesday, April 16, 2025 | 4:30 - 6:30pm | BBC 032

Speaker bio:

[John Baird](#)

Executive Coach and Principal Partner, Velocity Group

John is considered to be one of the premier executive coaches in Silicon Valley, having coached CEOs and Founders for over 25 years. John built his career working with the top leaders at companies ranging from early stage start-ups to Fortune 500 firms like Apple and Nike. His first company ExecutivEdge (with Michele Bolton) in many ways set the standard for executive coaching in Silicon Valley over 20 years ago. He considers his 25 years of coaching work at Apple, from their fast growth period to the present, to be among his most significant achievements.

John's passion for bringing strong leadership and culture building skills to early stage ventures resulted in the founding of the Velocity Group in 2015 (with Ben Tauber). John is currently the Senior Partner and Board Chair at Velocity. He and Managing Partner Edward Sullivan have positioned Velocity as the "go to" coaching firm for early stage companies beginning to scale. They have worked with companies at various stages of growth including Marketo, Krux, AirTable, Clover Health, CultureAmp, Doordash, Grail, MasterClass, Remitly, and many others. Most recently, John serves as a Fellow at Sapphire Ventures.

John brings a strong business perspective to his work, helping leaders leverage their natural talents and expand their skill sets to the next level. John is passionate about innovation and change and helps leaders scale and transform their teams and organizations while building cultures of inclusion and diversity. CEOs have found his advice, counsel and practical tools critical to scaling their companies and avoiding many of the pitfalls along the way.

Moderator:

[Rangapriya Kannan](#)

Dean, Lucas College and Graduate School of Business

Rangapriya (Priya) Kannan is the dean of the Lucas College and Graduate School of Business and a professor in the School of Global Innovation & Leadership. Her research primarily focuses on how individuals achieve innovation within limited resources using creative resourcing and reframing. Kannan's background includes expertise in leadership to affect strategic change, designing interdisciplinary programs, employee development, alumni and community outreach, and creating inclusive work environments. Her educational background includes a PhD from UCLA Anderson School of Management and degrees from SJSU, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, and the University of Bombay.

