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## **Management Learning's from Dabbawala**

The spirit of Mumbai lies in its people and the work they indulge in. The city is said never to sleep and always delivers the best work. This identity is integral to Mumbai's Dabbawala,' The people are always on time every time. They have been delivering the dabba(Tiffin box) every day on time for the last 134 years. The beauty of the system lies in the manual colour-coded delivery service, which most world-class corporations fail to achieve, made possible by the modest dabbawala whose identity has been the simple white doti kurta with Gandhi cap. These people are classic examples of what optimised smart solutions can do; their system is so sufficient that it has sustained even at times of technological bloom.

The dabbawala is originally from the Maval region of Maharashtra; these people belong to the Varkari community, which is a sect of devout followers of the Vithoba (Vitthal) centred in the town of Pandharpur. The people of this community are deeply connected to lord Vithoba with a deep sense of devotion, discipline, and dedication. This deep connection with their root had a significant impact on the efficient system created by Dabbawala. This system was created by Mahadeo Havaji Bachche a person who identified a problem in the system and started the dabbwala delivery service. This happened when a Parsi banker needed a reliable service to have his lunch delivered from his home to his office. Mahadeo Havaji Bachche then established the world's most reliable delivery service, 'The Dabbawala' This happened in the late 19th century. He created a livelihood for many people who came from the rural part of Maharashtra, giving them a future in the city.

The system of timely delivery is done following the colour-coded system developed by the enterprise. The process starts in the morning. The dabbawala are assigned locations to pick up the customer's dabba and collect them all at the local station. Once these dabbas are collected they are sorted to the destination and the delivery is done accordingly. The motivation to deliver the lunch box before lunch

is strongly ingrained in them, nothing stops a dabbawala. They have gained recognition from all around the world, they were personally visited by King Charles of Britain.

The system developed by this dabbawala is timeless, and so efficient in its way that even when the world was disrupted with the invention of the internet and AI their system stood its ground. But the question is not the efficiency of the system but the limitation that it comes with, in this business delivery system the space for increasing revenue is not exponential but rather linear which makes the revenue generation process slower and hinders the way of beating the national inflation rate, which hampers the progress of the dabbawala.

To keep up with the development in a monetary sense Dabbawala is a name in the market which needs to capitalise into a brand, keeping their belief system in place and expanding in the areas related to food and delivery. They can start their small cloud kitchen which serves fresh thali near the corporate and IT parks in Mumbai and Pune on a pre-booking basis, so they can deliver the pre-booked meals with their delivery system, this will create an opportunity for female employment as well into the system. It will also keep the value system of homemade food in place and create a new source of income without disturbing the original delivery chain. This will also create a place for young dabbawala to participate and make it a full-fledged company. In a later stage, they can expand into pre-mix meal packages under their brand, which can provide people with an authentic home-cooked taste. As the name Dabbawala already has the trust, the distribution to local chai places, restaurants and canteen would be easy for them in Mumbai and Pune areas for their pre-mix meal package. These pre-mixed meals can be a way for dabbawala to connect nationally and globally with people all around. With an established food business, they can get into catering food all around with a special menu. They can represent the Maharashtrian cuisine in the catering world and create a place for the food of Maharashtra globally.

A crucial aspect of their expansion strategy should be the incorporation of technology. While their manual system is a marvel of efficiency, integrating technology would help streamline operations, reduce errors, and enhance customer experience. By developing a robust online presence, including a user-friendly app

and website, the Dabbawalas could make it easier for customers to place orders, track deliveries, and make payments. This digital transformation would not only modernize their services but also attract a younger, tech-savvy clientele.

Moreover, an online platform would allow the Dabbawalas to collect valuable data on customer preferences and behaviors, enabling them to offer personalized services and promotions. This data-driven approach could help them optimize their operations, forecast demand, and manage resources more effectively, ensuring that they remain competitive in a rapidly changing market.

Expanding their digital presence also opens up opportunities for online marketing and branding. The Dabbawalas could use social media to share their rich history, showcase their daily operations, and engage with customers. This would not only increase brand visibility but also reinforce their identity as a trusted and reliable service provider. Collaborations with local influencers, partnerships with businesses, and targeted online campaigns could further strengthen their brand and attract new customers.

In conclusion, the Dabbawalas are at a pivotal point in their journey. By playing to their strengths—timely and reliable delivery, deep local knowledge, and a strong sense of community—they can successfully expand their services within Mumbai and Pune. Embracing technology and building a robust online presence will be key to their growth, allowing them to modernize their operations, reach new markets, and secure their place in the future of the city they have long served. Through strategic expansion and digital innovation, the Dabbawalas can continue to be a symbol of Mumbai's spirit while ensuring their relevance and success in the years to come.