

Name-Sadiya Godil

Educational qualification-Graduation completed in BMS finance and pursuing PGDM (Post Graduate Diploma in Management)

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Name: Sadiya Godil

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## **MANAGEMENT LEARNINGS FROM DABBAWALLAS**

Mumbai Dabbawalas are the remarkable paradigm of efficiency, time management and coordination. Undoubtedly the preciseness in their work, their speed and their motto of “No excuses” has led to the affluent business model of ‘Dabbawalas of Mumbai’. The journey started 125 years ago, when a Parsi banker wanted home cooked food at his work place and he gave this responsibility to first ever Dabbawala. Many people liked this idea and the demand for Dabbawala ascended and the inventive and enterprising Mahadeo Havaji Bachche saw this golden opportunity and started the lunch delivery service.

As it is known that, “There is no substitute for hard work” and that’s what the Mumbai Dabbawalas believe and put confidence in. The human resources incorporate dabbawalas as old as 75 years who take pride in their potential to support themselves with their hard work.

### **Challenges Faced By Dabbawalas Previously**

Although we have to be mindful of the fact that the world we live is far from perfect, and with great power comes great responsibilities and difficulties, the world-renowned Mumbai dabbawala system took dreadful hit during COVID, and employees were left with no work. The COVID-19 pandemic has dealt a cruel blow to the men in white. Thousands of dabbawalas retreated to their original homes in rural locations as the virus raged across Mumbai, a city of over 20 million people, crippling the century-old food supply chain.

### **Summons That Can Be Faced In The Future Followed By The Solutions**

With the changing world, the breakthrough advancements in technology, there can be several challenges or summons in the future too which can be faced by Mumbai Dabbawalas. With the technological upgradation and innovation and the growth of food delivery apps and the current logistics methods, Dabbawalas may face contention or competition, till now the reliable and quick services, affordable price have allowed them to continue thriving alongside the new food delivery startups in Mumbai. But it is a known phrase that “Change is the only constant”. The natural world is in a constant state of movement and change is a fundamental aspect of reality. Thus, they can gain their foothold in technology, by launching their own app, which allows the customers to quickly connect with the dabbawalas. For example: if someone wants to commence with the service of dabbawalas, He/she can just open the app and type in the details and initiate the

service also the app can be designed in such a way where people can also track their food status, how long will it take for the tiffin to reach them. Along with that they can also provide customers the alternative to pay through online payment gateways or online payment apps either on their app or face to face which makes it easier and convenient for customers, in this case customers don't have to think twice in case they are going cashless. Along with this, the use of QR codes can be implemented to store and retrieve information about customer, their meals, dabbawalas etc which will help in quick and untroubled sorting and arranging.

The skills of the employees working in the dabbawala organisation can be escalated by providing training in technology, customer services (A strong customer service training program will include exercises for improving interpersonal communication, product knowledge, conflict resolution, crisis management, and more) and also, food safety. They can make cell phones available to every worker which will make easier and convenient to coordinate and communicate with each other and will allow them to cope with growing pace of technology. Also, dabbawalas can also variegate their services like providing catering, events to attract and draw new customers. They can consider this suggestion with the intention of expanding their business model by getting into different categories.

Investing in methodical and efficient transportation can be great plan for the dabbawalas where they can adopt the GPS tracking where the tracking system allows the monitoring of dabbawalas location and delivery status for error-free and quick delivery followed by the use of streamlined and faired routes which will again help in reducing the cost and improved delivery time. Additionally, we know that sustainability improves the quality of our lives, protects our ecosystem and preserves natural resources for future generations. In the business or corporate world, sustainability is associated with an organization's holistic approach, taking into account everything, from manufacturing to logistics to customer service. Going green and sustainable is not only beneficial for the company; it also maximizes the benefits from an environmental focus in the long-term. Thus dabbawalas can make themselves more sustainable and ecological by reducing food waste from less to zero and also by promoting more environmentally responsible practices and increasing the corporate social responsibility.

As it is known that brand revamp is the process of changing something to make it more modern and efficient. It requires a company to revise its marketing strategy via a new name, logo or design. This is the strategy that can be adopted by dabbawalas in order to make their brand more appealing and striking to

younger generations and modern audiences. They can take support of social media and the power of advertising and promotion to reach the modern audience. Various ways can be adopted like storytelling, short film to showcase their culture and heritage.

With the growth of education sector in India, it can be challenging for dabbawalas to hire the employees or the workers from younger generation as the previous ones retire, in order to make this job more suited and agreeable for the workers, dabbawala organisation can work towards more employee welfare and training. Salary of the dabbawalas can be increased along with this, improved lifestyle can be provided. Convenient ways of working can be adopted in order to make their toil easier. For example-Instead of using a heavy tiffin tray which is placed on the head of dabbawalas a trolley tray can be used. Adjacently, they can also collaborate with restaurants or food establishments to expand their offerings. For example: They can provide the customers with an option of eating food from outside like restaurants or any eating house and not the home cooked food once in a week, through this the customers will get variety in their food from dabbawalas itself and they can stick to dabbawalas instead of switching and ordering from other online food delivery platforms. As we are aware of the fact that dabbawalas travel by local train in a special department provided to them which shows the support provided to them and their notable work, thus in the future they can seek assistance from local authorities for variety of things such as infrastructure, regulations and promotions.

## **Conclusion**

As it is known that “In any given moment we have two options: to step forward into growth or step back into safety.” —Abraham Maslow. That being so, we believe that for the growth and development, some things need to be changed as the world doesn't just stand still. We have to learn how to use dynamic patterning to bring change to life. So that, we are not behind others instead we should keep up with this changing world.

Thus, dabbawalas are the lifesavers of Mumbai. Every day, several individuals residing in Mumbai travel to their workplaces, starting from one area of the city, then onto the next, while battling the gridlocks, crowded trains, and other transport challenges. Meanwhile, respective homemakers start to prepare wholesome meals to be served by lunchtime to their husbands. The motto of Dabbawalas is to deliver the tiffin box at a fixed hour. At the moment, there are at least 5,000 active dabbawalas. Furthermore, when individuals finish the lunch

box contents, the empty lunch boxes are returned in the evening to their rightful owners at the same time daily. Thus, it is not easy to be a Dabbawala, it takes a lot of hard work, time management, team work, accuracy and precision to be one. Thus, along with some task or job upgradation with adjacent to this developing, dynamic and growing world they can reach the zenith and achieve immense success.