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# **“Management Learning from the Dabbawalas”**

## **Introduction**

One such kind in India is ‘Mumbai Dabbawala’ system which has been delivering delicious home-made healthy food to lakhs of people for over 100 years. The Dabbawalas—originating from the busy city of Mumbai in India, have gained worldwide acclaim for their incredible feat of delivering homemade lunches with an accuracy and reliability second to none. Despite Mumbai being densely populated and infamous for its chaotic traffic, Dabbawalas have managed to deliver with an accuracy level of 99.99% which fascinated people around the world so much that they were studied too.

The term "dabbawala" means a person who carry the box which actually is instance for their tiffin boxes getting transported from this E lund Malvi dorrar of hell. Around 200,000 lunchboxes are delivered across the city every day by around 5,000 Dabbawalas in a unique coding system which ensures that each meal reaches its specific customer. Of all the examples seen so far, it is this semi-literate workforce operated system which rightly portrays what dedication & teamwork combined with innovative management practices can deliver.

The Dabbawala system highlights the sine qua non attributes of good logistics, punctual service and customer satisfaction. So much so that business leaders and academicians across the world are trying to understand how they succeeded, with many of them failing. Again, the Dabbawalas are a testament to what can be done with something as simple and straightforward as just showing up every day.

## **Key Management Lessons of the Dabbawalas-**

The management brilliance and efficiency of delivering home-cooked meals by scores has made Mumbai's dabbawalas an international sensation. They accomplished this by applying some important management lessons that we can use for every industry and business.

### 1. Clearly Defined Organizational Structure:

The Dabbawalas work in a very structured manner with each person assigned specific roles at every stage. The process from pick-up to delivery is planned and executed with utmost care. This will enable the smooth functioning and timely delivery of food to customers.

It helps to reduce the possibility of any mistakes and also makes it set specific tasks.

### 2. Time Management:

Key Time management is one of the most critical parts for Dabbawalas as they have to deliver meals within a specific time limit. The one thing they have mastered other than design is punctuality and reliability which has gained their clientele trust.

Being specific to a deadline and establishing clear target dates, will help to stick with focus and deliver on-time.

### 3. Quality Delivered :

Yet the Dabbawalas have strict norms on delivering best quality services throughout the period of their work. They feel proud of themselves and make sure that every meal is brought to the customer in new condition.

If you are more interested in quality than quantity, then it helps to build the trust of such customers by showing your reputation.

### 4. Strong Work Ethic:

The Dabbawalas are known for their work ethic and dedication towards their job. They do their utmost to collaborate with the final time order and handle every shipment carefully. That is what makes their dedication and love for work different from others.

Cultivating a good work ethic helps us to grow productivity and achieve individual and organisational goals.

## **Strength and opportunities-**

The Dabbawalas excel in one aspect and it is their dedication towards the work. These workers would push their working hours into extra innings in circumstances that are often difficult so as to get every lunch box out and delivered on the designated time. They take a great pride in what they do, and are committed to uphold the high standards that their forefathers have accomplished. Their strong emphasis on quality has helped in delivering consistent positive results and ensuring that they are known for being reliable which, in turn, helps to foster longevity with their clientele.

Organization standpoint Another great strength of the Dabbawalas lies in their vast organizational and logistics skills. Hundreds of thousands of lunches are transported daily in Mumbai their method works in the midst of imaginable swarming harum-scarum streets via a mixte recipe involving bicycle, train and handcart. The school evolved an intricate coding system to ensure that each box makes it from lunch lady to child at precisely the right time, with fewer than one mistake per every six million lunches. They are very organized on this level, it really differentiates them from other delivery services.

The dabbawalas are very closely knit together and have a great sense of community between them. It is a team of workers who pride themselves on efficiency and speed, often helping each other out to make their lunchbox delivery faster. They will use this sentiment of togetherness and unity to get through when things are at their most trying during the average day on Deliveroo. This community built them a great, long-lasting revenue model.

Although, the Dabbawalas are full of strengths but there exist many areas where they have scope for improvement. Notoroisly, Dabbawalas do have ample of oportunitites to spread their branches rather than just delivering office lunch boxes. They have also introduced other delivery services, like grocery shopping and parcel delivery to help raise their income stream crowd. The Dabbawalas could press on by widening their offering and evolving to meet the needs of always-changing customers making certain that in future they do not have more pressing issues than lunch!

So, one of the other opportunities for Dabbawalas is to use technology in order to make their processes much easier and efficient. Although the Dabbawala famously use a manual coding system to track their lunch boxes, perhaps they would be better served activating new logistical software like GPS position and digital order systems for added efficiency. For that, Dabbawalas should start investing in new technology and train them to be proficiency with using it which can further develop their standing image for punctuality as well as accuracy.

### **Challenges faced by Dabbawala-**

Another organisation like any other, the Dabbawalas have their own shortcomings and challenges. The main weakness of the Dabbawalas is, they using old fashion technique and dependent on manual work most. The Dabbawalas deliver from 200,000 to 300,000 meal boxes daily. They have effectively done so for the last century with a delivery mechanism little unchanged in over two centuries bicycles and trains and that probably won't keep up as Mumbai grows denser and its work day lengthens rapidly into nights full of inbound commuters blocked at each step by an inevitable arrest opposing any change.

But the Dabbawalas run in a razor-thin margin market with time to be managed. Increasing trend of online food delivery services and growing need for quick, hassle free meals is taking over the traditional habits a threat that dabbawalas who work on operation costs as low as Rs 100/month must not overlook given their competitive positioning in India's highly price sensitive market and changing dynamics.

In this whole process, one of the static problems is availability and affordability of education for Dabbawalas staff. A lot of Dabbawalas, also known as LUNCHBOX DELIVERY MEN are the ones who hail from backward classes which leave them with very few scopes to get educated and grow their career. But it may be hard for the Dabbawalas to innovate and become competitive, without proper training and support.

Apart from this, the Dabbawalas face problems of delivering meals in a stretched city such as Mumbai. Driving or trying to get around the crowded streets and jam-packed subway stations can be a scary effort, especially during busy hours. It could

mean that there will be delays and disruptions in the delivery chain meaning potential damage to their reputation as being timely and reliable.

## **Vision Ahead Of Dabbawala\_**

**Service** First of all, dabbawalas are committed to serving their customers fiercely. They value the little pleasures of life like a warm homemade meal & they make sure that every lunchbox is delivered on time and just as beautiful! They can be seen rain or shine, wearing their iconic white uniforms and carrying wooden crates through the crowded streets of Mumbai with endless dedication to their customers.

**Satisfaction** The dabbawalas are highly motivated and try very hard to keep their customers happy. By personally caring for the preferences and food restrictions of their customers, they tailor each meal delivery to do just that. A sacred office worker needs a vegetarian meal, special request for that extra spice, anything at all the dabbawalas walk to get it right.

**Dependability** We can not speak of the success that has been building for over a hundred years without mentioning reliability or trust. Operating in a city as sprawling and confounding — with its traffic jams, logistical nightmares, old infrastructure failures and broken promises -- the dabbawalas are running perhaps one of India's most highly efficient networks by making less than one mistake in six million deliveries. Their customers trust them and rely on this level of consistency and precision daily.

**Better Problem-Solving Skills**The rich success of the dabbawalas is due, in part, to their extraordinary problem-solving capacity. Despite getting delayed trains, rain or other unexpected hiccups what never changes is how everyone stays calm & somehow finds a way to deliver every lunchbox on time. This comes from their commitment to the job, and many aspects that we all have in mind when conducting our projects focusing on excellence.

At the heart of it all, above anything else they are driven solely by their unwavering commitment to pursue a standard so high and perfection that they would not sacrifice. They are high achievers who set lofty standards for themselves and consistently push their field to do the impossible. Be it adapting to latest technology which will help in increasing the efficiency or bringing new trainees into the

dabbawala system so that they can be a part of this almost 130 years old traditions, they are always exploring different avenues wherever improvements might be made.

Dabbawalas are not self-satisfied with their performance as they consideredn “dab-wallahs” is same, but dhaba wala and tiffinwala must be different roles by hiring personnel. They are consistently looking for ways to perfect their processes, simplify operations and improve client satisfaction. They focus on making changes in the areas required and keep upgrading their motives with continued training, solicit feedback from customers and tweak things to stay ahead of competition.

### **Conclusion-**

The Dabbawala system in Mumbai is a classic example of dedication, innovation management practices and efficient operations. Amid obstacles, their capacity to serve home cooked meals with a precision and expedience unparalleled in any other part of the world has lessons for organizations around the globe. Organizations will improve their output and get adapted to new conditions through embracing simplicity, empowering teams, optimising time of each team member ensuring people skills are beginning with when a problem is posed.

Today, as businesses grow in scale and complexity within an ever more crowded world, the tales of our Dabbawalas continue to show us that sometimes the simple solutions are often on right under our noses. Organizations should put these principles into practice, with consistent efforts to innovate and adapt if they are to reach the efficiency levels of customer satisfaction that make Indian lunchbox couriers outstanding very efficient.