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Declaration

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Management Learnings from Dabbawallas and the Vision Ahead

The Mumbai Dabbawallas is an excellent 134-year-old business set up which is remarkably running till date. A group of around 5000 semi-literate men have been delivering delicious home cooked meals to approx. 200,000 customers daily with almost no errors for over a century.... What an achievement it is!

Their success has not made only Mumbaikars proud, but whole nation's chest fills with pride when we look at such hardworking, smart, efficient and dedicated employees who represent an ordinary Indian internationally. They have attracted interest by many international celebrities and institutes, including prestigious Harvard Business School.

This system is an inspiring example of how effective management practices, simplicity and dedication can create a world class service without any use of technology. As MBA students, there are plenty of things we learned from the dabbawallas, some of them are as mentioned below:

- **Time Management** – This is what our dabbawallas are known for! They follow a strict schedule, counting every second without missing any. This meticulous time management is a key factor in their success. In this busiest city, they assure timely delivery to their customers without any excuses.
- **Reliability** – Building and maintaining customer trust is important for long term success. They have earned it by giving error free and timely services to their customers.
- **Adaptability** – Without being adaptive, they would not have survived a hundred-year-old service business. With changing time, they have molded themselves into the newer times as well.
- **Six Sigma Factor** – Achieving a six-sigma performance from Forbes is an impeccable success. This can only be achieved by complete coordination and cooperation between the employees and the organization. Error free services are always applauded irrespective of the type and nature of service.
- **Operational Accuracy** – Complex problems can be solved with simple and easy solutions. Unnecessary hierarchical arrangements can only lead to chaotic and time consuming outputs. An ease in operations can always benefit in numerous ways.

- **Teamwork culture-** Their teamwork culture makes them who they are. This factor plays a crucial role for smooth functioning and gaining high outputs. This brings out maximum efficiency in dabbawalas due to which they can cross function in between their tasks and provide error free services.
- **Decentralized structure-** This empowers all employees to make decisions on their own grounds and in taking ownership of the issues and situations. This saves time as well as provides better solutions.
- **Understanding market:** The dabbawalas have properly and clearly understood their market. They have adapted to the minute things of the Mumbai city and its people hence they are still thriving in business.

And the above list can go on and on! The dabbawalas provide us with meaningful insights in various managerial and social aspects. Despite all of this success there are some challenges faced by them:

- Competition from Food delivery Services
- Aging Workforce
- Economic Instability
- Technological Inclusion
- Health Issues of Employees.
- Trouble in Increasing Market Area

Despite these challenges, the Mumbai Dabbawalas have demonstrated resilience and adaptability over the years. To ensure the continued success and sustainability of the Mumbai Dabbawala Ent. Pvt Ltd., several strategic developments should be considered. Here are some suggestions for their future :

- **Starting their own kitchen-** This can be done by using their existing contacts and preparing homemade food on large scale under 'Dabbawala Ent Pvt Ltd' something like 'The Dabbawala's Kitchen' and not just delivering but selling this food directly on our Mumbai City's busy Railway stations/platforms on small counters. This could be a new venture and also increase the customer base which inturn will increase profits of the company. People will definitely be attracted towards this kitchen's homemade food and the dabbawala's trust earned over the years will be put to a good use.

- **Hiring from different parts of Maharashtra:** They need to increase and strengthen their workforce in near future in order to expand and grow this business to another level. Not just from Mumbai, they should start hiring needful people from all over Maharashtra to have a strong employee base in order to bring new things into business. Attract young or part time workers
- **Being a part of Food delivery services** – This can be done in two ways:
 1. Develop an app and start your own local food delivery system, this time not just from homes but from hotels too. This can seem complicated at first but will eventually help a lot.
 2. If like mentioned above you start a ‘*Dabbawala’s Kitchen*’, you can directly be on these platform as food providers. This way people will get to order homemade and less costly food from swiggy/Zomato as well! This will again capture a different group of customers. In this way without developing your own app and just being present on such platforms you can grow higher.
- **Pairing with the corporates-** Taking advantage of the increasing number of companies in Mumbai, you can pair with them and start providing canteen services to the corporate employees. This could be a massive opportunity to look forward too. Also can offer discounted rates on your existing services. This will surely boost your growth.
- **Branding and Marketing** – Developing strong brand identity will definitely help to grow their business. Creating an image will boost sales and increase your reliability. Can start with small flexs and then small digital ads on social media. Also make best of social media platform, make videos and reels on your offerings and services whilst showcasing you functioning .
- **Broadening the Service offerings** – With tiffins, they can also start delivering different things like groceries, medicines etc Also can include different type of foods. Also can deliver goods/parcels along side food to increase the revenue.

- **Broadening the Area** – Start to expand Area wise slowly. Not only limiting to one side of Mumbai, you can expand your delivery area. Also slowly can try entering into neighboring cities like Pune, Pimpri-Chinchwad, Nashik etc to expand your business. You can also start Dabbawala's kitchen in such cities.

By inculcating new ideas and implementing them strategically and wisely the Mumbai Dabbawala's can thrive in a rapidly changing environment, maintaining their trust and respect in the society while adapting to newer challenges and opportunities in future.