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## **Management Learning's From Dabbawala**

The Mumbai Dabbawalas is a unique and efficient lunch delivery service has been operating since 1890. They deliver home-cooked meals from residences to offices across Mumbai, serving approximately 200,000 customers daily. The service is renowned for its remarkable efficiency and reliability, despite the challenges of Mumbai's crowded city.

The dabbawalas utilize a color-coding system to manage the delivery of tiffins. Each box is marked with specific identifiers, including abbreviations for collection points, destination stations, and handling instructions. This system allows them to handle around 400,000 deliveries within a span of 3-4 hours, with each tiffin changing hands multiple times during transit. The dabbawalas travel on Mumbai's suburban railway network for transportation. They are known for their punctuality, with a failure rate of just 1 in 16 million deliveries, earning them a Six Sigma efficiency rating from Forbes in 1998. Their operations are characterized by manual handling, with each dabbawala typically dressed in a white kurta, pajama, and a white Gandhi cap, symbolizing their identity.

The Mumbai Dabbawalas are not just a delivery service; they represent a cultural phenomenon. They provide a vital link for the city's working class, allowing them to enjoy home-cooked meals despite their busy schedules. The service has become a symbol of reliability and community, with many dabbawalas passing the trade down through generations. Their impact has been recognized globally, with case studies conducted by institutions like the Indian Institute of Management and features in major publications such as The New York Times. The Dabbawalas have also attracted the attention from notable figures, including Prince Charles, who invited them to his wedding. In short, the Mumbai Dabbawalas represent an efficient, community-oriented service that has adapted to the needs of urban life while maintaining a strong connection to tradition and home-cooked meals.

The Dabbawalas have received numerous accolades for their system, including mentions in case studies by Harvard Business School and recognition from various international organizations.

Problems faced By Mumbai Dabbawalas:

### **Problem**

The Mumbai dabbawalas are not able to expand their business outside Mumbai because of the connectivity issues. They have thrived in Mumbai because of the Mumbai Local trains. Such is not the case outside Mumbai. They don't have local trains to travel to. This will create a lot of problem while picking up tiffins and delivering them, if they want expand their business outside Mumbai.

### **Solution**

They can deliver tiffins hiring tempo service in other cities of our country. Many Dabbawalas can team to deliver tiffins in a particular area.

### **Problem**

Covid 19 crisis

Like so many working in India's cities, the Dabbawalas lost their income overnight when Prime Minister Narendra Modi ordered a lockdown in March. Nine months later, with Mumbai's commuter trains still not fully running and offices half empty, many have abandoned the city, surviving on subsistence farming and wondering if they will ever work again.

The dabbawalas are symbolic of the opportunities that had once been available to hundreds of millions of Indians, but now at risk as the country struggles to revive what had been the world's fastest-growing large economy. Young men with little education, hailing mostly from the villages nestled between the green flat-top hills of the Sahyadri mountains, would travel to nearby Mumbai to learn the trade.

### **Solution**

India's economy is showing signs of improvement. Lockdown restrictions have largely lifted and migrants are trickling back to cities. Local authorities have taken steps to get the dabbawalas back to work, such as allowing them to ride commuter trains still closed to the public. Yet the dabbawalas fear they may be permanent casualties of the economic upheaval wrought by the pandemic. Now the situation has fully recovered. So now they can get back to work.

## **Problem**

### Work Home Culture

As work from home culture is on the rise, the Mumbai Dabbawalas are losing their business. Also, many organisations are having hybrid work culture. In this case also dabbawalas are at a loss.

## **Solution**

Dabbawalas should try to adapt by delivering groceries and other essential items. They should try to expand their business now. They should also try to cook home-prepared meals and provide to the customers. They should also partner with the food delivery platforms to provide home cooked meals.

## **Problem**

### Technological Adaptation

While some efforts have been made to modernize their operations through digital platforms, the transition has been slow. Many dabbawalas still rely on traditional methods for customer acquisition and service delivery, limiting their growth potential in an increasingly digital world.

## **Solution**

Efforts are being made to enhance operational efficiency through digital tools. This includes the use of mobile apps for order management and route optimization, which can help streamline deliveries and reduce costs, making them more competitive against larger delivery services. To address the technological gap, initiatives are being taken to train dabbawalas in using smartphones and apps, particularly for those who struggled with the QR-code system implemented by local trains. This training is essential for keeping pace with modern delivery demands and improving their operational capabilities.