

Teamwork & time management is the mantra of 'Mumbai Dabbawalas' success

NEW DELHI, November 26, 2013. FICCI Ladies Organisation (FLO) today organized an interactive session on 'One Day at a Time' with **Mr. Sakaram Sitaram Gavande** and **Mr. Abhishek Dinkar Ekal, 'The Dabbawalas from Mumbai'**.

In his presentation, **Mr. Abhishek** explained the concept and working of a 'Dabbawala'. He is a person who carries and delivers freshly cooked home food in lunch boxes to office goers at their work place. A unique service provided in Mumbai, which has now gained international acclaim.

He said, almost 85% dabbawalas are illiterate and the remaining 15% are educated up to 10th grade. However, through years of dedicated work, time management, strike-less work and gaining experience in logistics, the dabbawalas have created a place in the sun.

There are some management learnings of Dabbawalas which can be adopted by corporates such as low capital investment, low operational costs, focus only on serving customers satisfactorily, not to be over dependent on technology, build business around existing infrastructure, penalize employees for non-compliance, abandon bad customers, cooperation is the key for success and always follow ethics in business.

Speaking about the origin of Dabbawala, Mr. Abhishek said that it all started about 125 years ago when a Parsi banker wanted to have home-cooked food regularly in office and gave this responsibility to the first ever Dabbawala. Others liked his idea and the demand for Dabba delivery soared.

Dabbawalas' service remains essentially low-tech and the success of the system depends on teamwork and time management, the envy of any modern-day manager.

There is no system of documentation at all. A simple colour coding system is used that doubles as an ID system for the destination and the recipient. There are no multiple elaborate layers of management either, he added.

Mr. Abhishek said, the service is uninterrupted even on the days of extreme weather. The local dabbawalas at the receiving and the sending ends are known to the customers personally, so that there is no question of lack of trust. Also, they are well accustomed to the local areas they cater to, which allows them to access any destination with ease. Occasionally, people communicate between home and work by putting messages inside the boxes.

Mr. Sakaram said that the service is recognized as delivering 6 sigma level of accuracy in Dabba delivery, which means there is only one mistake in six million chances.

He added that though the work sounds simple, it is actually a highly specialized trade that has developed over a century and has become an integral part of Mumbai's culture. The main reason for their popularity could be the Indian people's preference and love for home-cooked fresh food.

The **Chairperson of YFLO, Ms. Garima Sharma**, appreciated the precision and dedication that the dabbawalas bring to their daily work.

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